

## EU MATTERS

### NIEL's Monthly European Environmental News



#### Agriculture

##### [The Future of Food and Farming – for a flexible, fair and sustainable Common Agricultural Policy](#)

Simpler rules and a more flexible approach will ensure the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) delivers real results in supporting farmers and leads the sustainable development of EU agriculture. These are the cornerstone ideas of the Communication adopted by the Commission on "The Future of Food and Farming", outlining the ways to ensure that the oldest EU common policy remains future-proof. Allowing Member States greater responsibilities to choose how and where to invest their CAP funding in order to meet ambitious common goals on environment, climate change and sustainability is the flagship initiative.

##### [Nice try – but Hogan's direction of travel not on course to sustainable farming](#)

While Commissioner Phil Hogan's new results-based plan for the future of EU farm policy sounds attractive, the EEB says it remains to be seen how this will be possible if harmful direct payments to farmers are not gradually phased out and replaced by genuine alternatives better focused on ecosystems enhancement and an actual transition to sustainable farming.

##### [EU body calls farm policy's green credentials into question](#)

According to a Report by the European Court of Auditors - the last attempt to 'green' EU farm policy did not lead to any significant increase in environmentally-sound farming practices – despite European governments spending a huge chunk of the EU's annual budget on the scheme.

##### [Livestock worming treatments can reduce seed germination of grassland species](#)

A common anti-parasitic drug used to control gastrointestinal worms in livestock has been shown to inhibit seed germination of three common grassland species. This study shows that anthelmintics may negatively affect plant regeneration. The researchers say that treatments should be carefully timed in order to avoid the strongest impact of the drugs on germination and the consequential negative affect on grassland.

#### Air Quality

##### [National inaction and Commission delays undermining EU air quality protections \(EEB\)](#)

More than ten months after calling out five Member States for their failure to tackle air pollution, the European Commission has missed another opportunity to hold national governments accountable. The Commission has released its monthly infringement package, taking seven Member States to court for various breaches of European law, but failing to pursue further steps against France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK for breaching air quality laws.

##### [Urban vegetation can react with car emissions to decrease air quality in summer](#)

Researchers have shown that emissions from vehicles can react with emissions from urban trees and other plants, resulting in a decrease in air quality in cities in summer; this reduces the otherwise positive impacts of urban vegetation.

#### Biodiversity

##### [Data gathered by the public on UK butterfly populations could be useful for conservation](#)

Researchers have compared the findings of a citizen-science project and a long-running butterfly monitoring scheme in the UK to gain insights into the reliability of data gathering by the public. They found that contrary to the scepticism with which such projects are sometimes viewed much of the citizen-recorded data agreed with the findings of more formal monitoring, particularly for species often found in gardens. This indicates



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that mass-participation sampling not only provides a valuable tool for public engagement, but, in this case, could also provide valid data to inform butterfly conservation.

### [Thousands of species at risk of extinction due to human activity](#)

Unsustainable farming, fishing and climate change had intensified the struggle for survival among vulnerable animals and crops, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Thousands of animal species are at risk of going extinct due to unsustainable farming and fishing methods and climate change, IUCN has warned as it released the latest red list of endangered species.

## **Circular Economy**

### [What role can circular economy play in delivering the Paris Agreement?](#)

Circular economy policies are proliferating and increasingly linked with other policy areas, including climate change. As seen at COP23, the circular economy can be better exploited to decarbonise the economy.

## **Climate Change**

### [Commission unveils Action Plan for the Planet](#)

The Commission has announced a series of initiatives for a modern and clean economy at the "One Planet Summit", in Paris. At the Summit the Commission presented its new Action Plan for the Planet, which includes 10 transformative initiatives for a modern economy and a fair society.

### [EU delivering on climate commitments through enhanced global partnerships](#)

The European Union sees global partnerships and increased cooperation as essential to advancing the Union's strategic interests and to tackle global challenges. To this end the European Union is backing up its political commitment with concrete actions to cooperate more closely with major economies to implement the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change and environmentally-friendly practices more broadly.

## **Energy**

### [Renewables accounted for vast majority of new EU power capacity in 2016](#)

Transition to renewable energy continues in the European Union (EU) but has lost some pace in the past two years. According to new European Environment Agency (EEA) estimates, renewables accounted for 86 % of the EU's new capacity for electricity generation installed in 2016. Overall, EU Member States also continue to cut more capacity from conventional sources than they install.

## **Marine**

### [Rapid and significant sea-level rise expected if global warming exceeds 2°C, with global variation](#)

The world could experience the highest ever global sea-level rise in the history of human civilisation if global temperature rises exceed 2 °C, predicts a new study. Under current carbon-emission rates, this temperature rise will occur around the middle of this century, with damaging effects on coastal businesses and ecosystems, while also triggering major human migration from low-lying areas. Global sea-level rise will not be uniform, and will differ for different points of the globe.

## **Natural Capital**

### [How to value and account for ecosystems](#)

Healthy ecosystems allow for human life to exist and thrive. The healthier our supporting ecosystems, the more reliable the flow of benefits — such as pollination and clean water — they will provide. There is a risk that, without efforts to measure and value these services, the default value can be 'zero'. This short film introduces the key debates on valuing ecosystem services or read the In-Depth Reports, Taking stock: progress in natural capital accounting, and Ecosystem services and biodiversity.

## **Planning**

### [Sustainability in the built environment](#)

The European Construction Industry Federation's director of technical and environmental affairs shares the impact of policy on sustainability. Sustainability in the built environment is hard to define. Its meaning can be all-encompassing, alluding to the people-planet-profit model of what used to be known as Corporate



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Social Responsibility. On the other hand, given current EU policy developments, the emphasis can be on the second element, with efforts directed towards environmental aspects.

### ***Sustainable Development***

[Harnessing the SDGs for charting Europe's future course](#)

Eurostat's latest report on EU performance against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlights a number of challenges for the EU, including inequality, poverty, gender and biodiversity. The SDGs were adopted by all the Member states and the international community in 2015, but the news from this report will probably miss Brussels headlines. Hitting the headlines or not, the SDGs should not be ignored by policy makers. They could be the key to launching the eagerly awaited debate on Europe's future political priorities.

### ***Transport***

[TERM 2017: mixed progress for Europe's transport sector in meeting environment, climate goals](#)

Europe's transport sector is making only mixed progress in meeting its environment, health and climate policy targets, according to a European Environment Agency (EEA) assessment which tracks the short and long-term environmental performance of this key economic sector across the European Union.



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