

EU MATTERS

NIEL's Monthly European Environmental News



Agriculture

[Who should pay for best management practices to reduce soil erosion?](#)

Worsening soil erosion in north-western Europe may be the result of a switch from traditional dairy farming to cash crops. However, even if all dairy farming ceased, reductions in runoff of up to 76% could be achieved if best agricultural practices are employed, at a cost of approximately €45 per hectare for the first three years, new research from the Austreberthe watershed in France suggests.

Air Quality

[Air pollution: agriculture and transport emissions continue to pose problems in meeting agreed limits](#)

Emissions from agriculture and transport continue to pose problems for European Union Member States in meeting EU and United Nations air pollution limits, according to updated data published by the European Environment Agency (EEA). While emissions of most air pollutants remain on a downward trend, ammonia emissions continued to rise in 2016.

Biodiversity

[High soil carbon in Natura 2000 sites brings potential for climate-smart conservation](#)

Natura 2000 sites have, on average, 10% more carbon in their topsoil than non-protected areas, according to new research. They also generally have lower economic value for agriculture. The results suggest that there is significant potential to develop win-win biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation efforts within the EU.

Circular Economy

[New energy-positive waste-water treatment process uses 15% of the energy of current alternative](#)

Conventional municipal waste-water treatment processes are based on aeration, which is energy intensive. Now, researchers have developed an alternative waste-water treatment process. In addition to avoiding the use of aeration in favour of filtration/biofiltration and encapsulated denitrification (the application of capsules containing nitrifiers, which convert ammonium into nitrate), the process also uses waste biosolids to generate electrical energy. The process has been tested in a pilot facility and found to require just 15% of the energy required for conventional approaches.

[Supermarket food waste — alternative waste strategies can reduce the environmental impact](#)

Researchers have examined environmental and economic impacts of supermarket food waste in a new study. Bread and meat products made the largest contribution to the environmental footprint of the supermarket assessed. Alternative waste strategies, such as using bread waste as animal feed, have the potential to reduce these impacts.

Climate Action

[Countries give only limited information on the results of their policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions](#)

Most national policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Europe target energy consumption and energy supply, while economic and regulatory instruments are the most common means of cutting emissions, according to a European Environment Agency report. The report also reveals that EU Member States report the actual effects and costs for only a small number of their policies and measures.



Brexit: Updates on NIEL's EU Policy work after the UK Referendum decision can be found [here](#).

Energy

[A 50% renewable-energy smart-grid solution for the UK](#)

A 50% renewable-energy supply, which is both profitable and secure, is possible for the UK's electricity grid by just 2030 according to a new study. The researchers developed a plan for adapting and operating the UK's electricity grid, designed to be flexibly controlled through smart-grid technology and to overcome uncertainties in renewable-energy supply and demand.

Freshwater

[New water billing system could cut usage whilst being fair and profitable](#)

An innovative system for pricing household water is proposed in a new EU-funded study¹ researched in the US and UK. The tariff is designed by combining the economic value of water with reservoir storage data, and is intended to cut water usage during times of shortage by charging large-volume consumers a higher rate which increases as water becomes scarcer. The tariff increase subsidises water for other users, whilst also ensuring the system is economically stable. A case study suggests that the tariff could cut water consumption in the city of Valencia by up to 18%.

[Europe's rivers and lakes cry out for help as Member States continue to look the other way](#)

The European Environment Agency (EEA)'s 2018 "State of Water" estimates that only 40% of European surface waters are currently healthy. This shows that Member States have not been taking seriously their legal commitment to implement the EU water laws to achieve good status for Europe's water bodies. Instead, they have demonstrated little ambition to deviate from their 'business as usual' mentality.

[Soil and Water: a larger perspective](#)

Land use changes over time have altered relations between soils and water cycles throughout the world. Soils have been lost and degraded, and the closely interlinked processes of soils and water have become an urgent issue for European policymakers. This Thematic Issue aims to provide a review of new research into the links between soil and water issues in Europe, including a message that the soil-water links must be considered at their proper spatial scales.

Marine

[UK government white paper fails to protect British fisheries and marine environment](#)

The government's plans for fisheries after Brexit are promising but alarmingly devoid of detail about its environmental commitments, ClientEarth lawyers say.

Sustainable Development

[EU has little to report as UN meeting reviews progress on SDGs](#)

A high level meeting will review progress and make recommendations on meeting the Sustainable Development Goals, which the EU signed along with 196 parties in 2015. Each year, the High Level Political Forum reviews progress on a number of SDGs. The theme of this year's HLPF is: "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies", and it will focus on the appropriate SDGs. For WWF, it is clear that despite committing to the SDGs back in 2015, the EU's ambition on reaching the goals domestically is insufficient.

[Towards a more inclusive economy: measuring and understanding inequality](#)

New inequality data and metrics reveal inequities of income, wealth, gender, education, health and environmental protection - highlighting the need to go Beyond GDP.

Other

[Environmental compliance short videos](#)

Achieving compliance with environmental laws. How does the law protect the environment? It is not enough to make a law – if people do not comply with it. What aids compliance with environmental laws? How best to focus compliance efforts? What challenges does the future hold? Watch these European Commission videos to find out how new collaborations between scientists, law enforcers and NGOs, or new technologies (such as drones, satellites and smartphone apps) can help to combat environmental crime.



Brexit: Updates on NIEL's EU Policy work after the UK Referendum decision can be found [here](#).