

EU MATTERS

NIEL's Monthly European Environmental News



Agriculture

[We need a rapid transition to more sustainable, healthy, fair and climate-friendly food systems – EESC](#)

Food is at the centre of our lives and an integral part of the European culture. Food also plays a crucial role in our economy: it is the Union's biggest manufacturing sector in terms of employment and contribution to GDP. Also, the food we eat, the ways we produce it and the amounts wasted have major impacts on human health, on natural resources and on society as a whole.

[No water, no agriculture](#)

The state of Europe's water ecosystems puts a big question mark over the future availability of freshwater, for people and for all manner of industry, not least for food production and agriculture, writes WWF's Jabier Ruiz. Water is one of nature's most valuable resources, and the role it plays in our daily lives and economies cannot be overstated. But it is under threat.

Air Quality

[Challenges for achieving clean air — lessons from ten cities across Europe](#)

Implementing EU air quality legislation to protect human health and the environment from pollution can be demanding for countries and cities. The European Environment Agency (EEA) has worked together with a number of European cities to better understand policy implementation challenges. The EEA's report summarises key findings on the cities' progress over the past five years and highlights on-going challenges for improving air quality at the local level.

Biodiversity

[Better planning and methods needed to restore nature](#)

Maintaining natural capital is vital for the function of our societies and people's well-being. A new briefing from the European Environment Agency (EEA) analyses how to plan for green infrastructure and ecosystem restoration, which in turn can enhance biodiversity, support green economy and create job opportunities.

[Towards post-2020 regime for biodiversity: making EU trade deliver for conservation](#)

With the 2030 benchmark in the horizon, the EU needs to step up the contribution of its trade policy to biodiversity and sustainable development. IEEP identifies concrete opportunities how improving the integration of protected areas into EU trade agreements will help to support global biodiversity conservation as well as multiple sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Circular Economy

[Commission delivers on Circular Economy Action Plan](#)

All 54 actions under the Circular Economy Action Plan launched in 2015 have now been delivered. The European Commission have published a comprehensive report on the implementation of the Circular Economy Action Plan it adopted in December 2015.



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

[Circular Economy in EU – Record recycling rates and use of recycled materials in EU](#)

The recycling rates and use of recycled materials in the in the European Union (EU) are steadily growing. Overall, the EU recycled around 55% of all waste excluding major mineral waste in 2016 (compared with 53% in 2010).

[Innovating to tackle plastic waste in Europe’s cities](#)

On 16 May, ICLEI Europe and the [PlastiCircle project](#) will join forces to host the special conference ‘Circular Cities – Innovating to tackle plastic waste’. More than 100 stakeholders from across Europe will gather in Brussels to assess European Union policies on the circular economy for plastics, the role of cities in tackling plastic waste, and the industry innovations driving circularity in Europe’s urban areas.

Climate Action

[“Net-zero agriculture in 2050: how to get there?”](#)

A new report commissioned by the European Climate Foundation, shows that it’s feasible and highlights actions and policies needed to reach that point. Agriculture is a major contributor to GHG emissions, having been responsible for approximately [10% of economy-wide GHG emissions in the EU in 2016](#) and moving the sector towards net-zero emissions by mid-century, consistent with the ambition of the Paris Agreement, presents one of the most transformational challenges faced by the sector since the development of post-war agriculture. Nevertheless, agriculture along with other rural land-using sectors, is unique in its ability to both reduce its own emissions, but also increase carbon removals from the atmosphere, and contribute to emission reductions in other sectors through the substitution of carbon intensive materials and energy.

Energy

[Resource extraction responsible for half world’s carbon emissions](#)

Extraction industries are responsible for half of the world's carbon emissions and more than 80% of biodiversity loss, according to the most comprehensive environmental tally undertaken of mining and farming.

Freshwater

[Industrial emissions to water decreased in Europe but levels are still a challenge for European waters](#)

Direct emissions released to water bodies from Europe’s large industrial sites have decreased in recent years for many pollutants. However, industrial pollution transferred through the sewer systems to urban waste water treatment plants (UWWTPs) has slightly increased, putting pressure on the waste water treatment infrastructure. While EU legislation tracks emissions from large industries, the extent of emissions from many small facilities remain largely unknown at European level.

[New IEEP report on assessing costs and benefits of EU water policy](#)

IEEP has developed a bottom-up, multicriteria methodology to assess costs and benefits of EU water policy, which has been applied in eight river basin districts across the EU. A similar methodology could support progress towards a number of EU, national and international policy objectives at the river basin and local level, including the achievement of SDGs.

Marine

[MEPs praise new single-use plastics rules to tackle marine litter](#)

MEPs and the European Commission have welcomed Parliament’s adoption of “ambitious” measures to tackle marine litter coming from the 10 single-use plastic products most often found on European beaches. The rules, which not only cover single-use plastics, but also abandoned fishing gear and oxo-degradable plastics, place the EU “at the forefront of the global fight against marine litter,” according to the Commission



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