

## Environmental News, Research & Analysis (ENRA)

January 2022

### **Agriculture/ Food**

#### [Farmers paid to protect soil during winter in new post-Brexit subsidy regime](#)

Having left the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, the UK government has set up its own farm subsidy system that is designed to offer "public money for public goods. This means that payments will only be for protecting species, planting trees and hedges, cutting greenhouse gas emissions, and protecting watercourses and the soil.

#### [CAP – The real test is about to come](#)

With the agreement on the EU's Common Agricultural Policy just signed, IEEP explores what is left to play for, and where the funds should be directed to be in line with the EU Green Deal.

#### [EU country choices fundamental in achieving CAP objective on natural resources](#)

The potential of the CAP in addressing sustainable management of natural resources was not fully exploited over 2014-2020. Member States did not allocate sufficient funding to the most targeted measures, and/or chose a minimalistic approach for cross-compliance and greening conditions. These are among the key findings from the '[Evaluation of the impact of the common agricultural policy on biodiversity, soil and water \(natural resources\)](#)' published by the European Commission.

### **Air Quality**

#### [Traffic-induced air pollution dropped in 2020 due to restrictions](#)

Traffic-induced air pollution fell last year largely due to COVID-19 restrictions, according to a new report by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Air pollution remained within EU limits throughout 2020, the report says, thanks to a work-from-home order which meant fewer people were making a daily commute. However, the levels of several pollutants still exceeded air quality guidelines.

#### [Reducing Methane Emissions In the EU Energy Sector](#)

The EU is determined to lead global action against methane emissions. It recently launched the Global Methane Pledge with the United States and supports the International Methane Emissions Observatory and the voluntary Oil and Gas Methane Partnership. The Commission is now proposing a set of concrete legislative actions to reduce methane emissions in the energy sector in Europe and in our global supply chain.

### **Biodiversity**

#### [ICYMI – Horizon Magazine monthly focus on climate change and biodiversity loss](#)

The Horizon Magazine dedicated the month of November 2021 to the twin climate and biodiversity crises with a series of articles looking at how science, research and innovation are contributing to understanding and addressing them.

#### [How to ignite ecosystem restoration in your community](#)

Grassroots action for the restoration of your local ecosystem is a means to engage yourself and the community around you to become part of the change that you are trying to achieve, according to the IUCN Community-Organizing Toolkit on Ecosystem Restoration.

### **Circular Economy/ Waste**

#### [Long-awaited Social Economy Action Plan sends major signal of support to social enterprises active in the circular economy](#)

RREUSE warmly welcomes the European Commission's publication of the Social Economy Action Plan (SEAP), establishing a 9-year framework to ensure social economy actors are appropriately recognised and further supported within Europe's low carbon, circular and digital future.

## **Climate Action**

### [Podcast | COP26: Main overview and outcomes](#)

The 26th edition of the United Nations Climate Change Conference ended in Glasgow on 13 November. In the fallout of the negotiations, Michael Nicholson, Head of UK Environmental Policy at IEEP, gathered experts from two member organisations of IEEP's Think Sustainable Europe network to try and give an overview of what COP26 meant for global action against climate change.

### [European Commission presents guide for a fair transition towards climate neutrality](#)

The Commission issues policy guidance for a fair and inclusive transition towards climate neutrality to complement the package on delivering the Green Deal presented in July. The proposed Council Recommendation sets out specific guidance to help Member States devise and implement policy packages that ensure a fair transition towards climate neutrality.

### [Questions and answers: A fair transition towards climate neutrality](#)

What is the proposal for a Council Recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality about?

### [Is the EU Paving The Way Towards Zero-Emission Buildings?](#)

Decarbonising Europe's building stock is essential to achieve EU environmental and climate targets, but EU plans to improve buildings' energy performance risk falling short.

### [Is renewable hydrogen a silver bullet for decarbonisation?](#)

A critical analysis of hydrogen pathways in the EU: Clean hydrogen will offer decarbonisation solutions for sectors where direct electrification would be either technologically impossible or too costly, though future demand should not be overestimated. Hydrogen will most likely be used in hard-to-decarbonise industrial processes, some segments of the transport sector, as well as for long-term energy storage.

### [In 2022, we must place youth at the centre of our Green Deal and climate policies](#)

With 2022 being the European Year of Youth, the EU is striving to give young people more and better opportunities for a future that is greener, more digital and more inclusive. The 8th meeting of the Green Deal Going Local working group focused on an assessment of COP26 climate conclusions and the prospects for enhanced cooperation with the UN in view of the next COP27 summit.

## **Energy**

### [Europe 'can eradicate energy poverty' by quitting fossil fuels: EU official](#)

While EU member states provide financial support to poor households affected by rising energy bills, the European Commission is focusing on long term solutions like energy efficiency and renewables, which have the potential to "eradicate energy poverty" once and for all, an EU official dealing with the issue has said.

### [EU sets technology-neutral threshold for 'sustainable' energy production 'in line with science', but gas threat remains](#)

The first 'taxonomy' delegated act has been adopted, setting a technology-neutral level at 100g of CO<sub>2</sub>/kWh for any investments in energy production activities to be considered as 'sustainable'. The set threshold is in line with science, and will help the EU reach its 2050 carbon-neutrality goal and fulfil its Paris Agreement commitments. Specific provisions for gas are not off the cards, and will

## **Environmental Crime**

### [Protection of the environment through criminal law](#)

The European Commission has adopted a proposal for a new EU Directive to crack down on environmental crime, fulfilling a key commitment of the European Green Deal. The proposal intends to make protection of the environment more effective by obliging Member States to take criminal law measures.

### [Factsheet for Commission proposal to revise Environmental Crime Directive](#)

## [Questions and Answers on the revised EU Directive on environmental crime](#)

### **Forestry/ Woodland**

#### [European Forests for biodiversity, climate change mitigation and adaptation](#)

Forests hold a significant share of biodiversity in the EU. The resistance, resilience, adaptation, and biodiversity of Europe's forests are linked to our ability to thrive in a changing climate. But, forests are under pressure by inadequate management practices and current and future climate changes. Their protection, restoration, and adapted management (such as close-to-nature forestry) is essential.

#### [What COP26 does for forests and what to look for in 2022](#)

The Glasgow COP26 Declaration on Forests and Land use, endorsed by 141 countries, stresses the need for transformative steps to move the world onto a sustainable and resilient land-use path – inextricably tying forests and the fight against climate change.

### **Freshwater/ Water**

#### [Legality of hydropower plants called into question following North Macedonia state audit](#)

Serious violations in the issuance of concessions for small hydropower plants, which calls into question the plants' legality were found in a North Macedonia State Audit Office report. The report confirms that the national development strategies for energy and the use of renewable sources, on the basis of which, most of the concessions have been issued, were developed without a strategic environmental impact assessment.

### **Governance**

#### [Online forum on digitalisation, sustainability and environmental justice](#)

An online discussion forum, managed by IEEP with the support of the Institute of Research for Ecological Economy, will gather digital and environmental Civil Society Organisations to address the most burning issues related to digitalisation, sustainability and environmental justice. The forum will run until 28 January 2022. The topic of environmental justice in the digital age is currently underexplored. To address this topic, build bridges and share ideas and information between key civil society organisations working in digital and environmental matters, IEEP launched the forum.

#### [Natural Resource Governance Framework \(NRGF\)](#)

The NRGF is a knowledge basket with an innovative, robust, inclusive, and credible approach for assessing and improving NRG at multiple levels and in diverse contexts. Included is a central Framework with principles, criteria, and cross-cutting values to inform NRG. It also includes guidance tools, processes, and relationships through which the initiative is mobilising.

### **Marine**

#### [The Blue Carbon Policy Project is operational](#)

The UN negotiations on climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development, have the potential to enhance coastal conservation, restoration and sustainable use of coastal ecosystems. Each process and its outcomes address one part of this issue, however no single process addresses the full suite of issues and solutions for conservation of coastal ecosystems and their multiple benefits. The goal of the Policy Framework for Blue Carbon Ecosystems is to facilitate alignment across global policy processes to enhance conservation, restoration and sustainable management of coastal ecosystems.

### **Sustainable Development**

#### [European Sustainable Development Report 2021: Transforming the EU to achieve the SDGs](#)

The third edition of the flagship Europe Sustainable Development Report tracks the performance of the EU, its Member States, and other European countries on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

#### [Supporting sustainable development of regions & cities a 'top goal' of EU's international partnerships](#)

Regions and cities will be central to the European Union's efforts to support sustainable development in Europe and across the world in the coming years, the European Commission told politicians and officials from scores of countries at an event co-organised by the European Committee of the Regions.