

ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS, RESEARCH & ANALYSIS (ENRA)

*NIEL's monthly roundup of the latest international research information and policy analysis relevant to Northern Ireland.*



*Agriculture*



*Air Quality*



*Biodiversity*



*Circular Economy*



*Climate Action*



*Economic Growth*



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*Food*



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*Planning*



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## ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS, RESEARCH &amp; ANALYSIS (ENRA)



### Agriculture

#### [Nutrient Overkill: We Need To Talk About Intensive Animal Rearing](#)

Europe faces a water crisis. A crisis of scarcity, excess, and pollution – which boils down to a crisis of policy. But the answers are there in black and white. As this European Commission approaches the end of its mandate, there are a number of legislative tools designed to combat these crises that it has yet to deliver on or failed to enforce. It must urgently do both.

#### [Renewal of the approval of glyphosate](#)

As required by EU legislation on pesticides, and in line with the Comitology rules, in the absence of a qualified majority in the Appeal Committee, the European Commission was legally obliged to adopt this decision before the expiry of the previous approval (15 December 2023). The Commission, based on the assessment made by EFSA of the impact of glyphosate on the health of humans, animals and the environment, and which did not identify critical areas of concern that would prevent a renewal of approval, therefore adopted the proposed Implementing Regulation to renew the approval of glyphosate, subject to certain conditions and restrictions.

#### [Applying the polluter pays principle: an emissions trading system for agriculture](#)

Approximately 13.2% of the EU's total greenhouse gas emissions can be directly attributed to agricultural activity, with estimates climbing even higher when emissions from on-farm energy use are included (EEA 2023). It is therefore necessary to significantly reduce agricultural emissions in order to reach climate neutrality in 2050. Applying the polluter pays principle to this sector offers a valuable policy approach to drive the transition towards a sustainable agri-food system.

#### [Applying the polluter pays principle to agricultural emissions](#)

An emissions trading system (ETS) for agriculture can provide financial incentives for farmers to adopt more climate-friendly practices. For an on-farm ETS this mainly depends on the emissions covered and cost-effective on-farm mitigation measures available. For an upstream or downstream ETS, the impact will depend on the extent to which incentives are passed on to farms.



### Air Quality

#### [Commission welcomes deal on first-ever EU law to curb methane emissions in the EU and globally](#)

The Commission welcomes the provisional agreement reached between the European Parliament and Council on a new EU Regulation to reduce energy sector methane emissions in Europe and in our global supply chains. Methane is a powerful greenhouse gas - the second biggest contributor to climate change after carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) - and is also a potent air pollutant. The agreement is therefore crucial to delivering the European Green Deal and reducing our net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030. It will oblige the fossil gas, oil and coal industry to properly measure, monitor, report and verify their methane emissions according to the highest monitoring standards, and take action to reduce them.

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### *Biodiversity*

#### [Commission welcomes agreement between European Parliament and Council on Nature Restoration](#)

The Commission welcomes the provisional agreement just reached between the European Parliament and the Council on the Nature Restoration Law. Once adopted and applied in the EU Member States, the law will be a key contribution to reaching climate neutrality by 2050 and increasing Europe's preparedness and resilience to the effects of climate change.

#### [A strong and ambitious Nature Restoration Law is vital for the business sector](#)

Restoring nature has never been more urgent. The business sector, recognising its share of responsibility and the urgent need to act, has called on EU policymakers to adopt an ambitious EU Nature Restoration Law that provides an enabling legal framework for nature restoration in which businesses can engage.

#### [From risk to resilience: the business imperative of Nature Restoration](#)

This briefing highlights the importance of a robust and effective Nature Restoration Law for businesses to scale up their investment and action for nature restoration. Drawing on concrete business examples from [Corporate Leaders Group Europe](#) members, the research demonstrates that companies can achieve nature restoration in line with the Nature Restoration Law objectives while maintaining their business operations.

#### [Managing Megafires: an experiment in participatory governance yields new management strategies](#)

This study explores participatory fire-management strategies, including landscape values from experts and local people, to strengthen wildfire-prone regions by creating resilient landscapes that protect ecological and social functions. The Montseny Biosphere Reserve (MBR) in Catalonia, Spain, is a fire-prone region. The area has become warmer over the last few decades (average of 1.2–1.4°C), increasing the risk of intense 'megafires'.



### *Circular Economy*

#### [Trashy Tech: Europe's Dirty Secret of Destroying Unsold Electronics](#)

Destruction of unsold electronics is rampant across Europe. Yet the European Commission remains in denial about one of the most environmentally harmful market practices and is dragging its feet on a ban in the EU's upcoming Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation



### *Climate Action*

#### [New report shows that the health of current and future generations hang in the balance from unchecked climate change](#)

In its eighth report, the Lancet Countdown project has made some dire projections for human health should we fail to stem the climate crisis. The lives of current and future generations hang in the

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balance, according to the authors of a new report into the consequences of inaction on limiting temperature increases.

### [Commission funds 171 new LIFE projects in environment and climate across Europe with over €396m](#)

The European Commission has approved 171 new projects across Europe under the LIFE Programme for environment and climate action, worth more than €396 million. Thanks to the programme's co-funding requirements, it will mobilise a total investment of more than €722 million, which represents a 28.5 % increase compared to last year. Projects from almost all EU countries will benefit from EU support under the following sub-programmes: nature and biodiversity; circular economy and quality of life; climate change mitigation and adaptation; and clean energy transition.



### **Economic Growth**

*No new stories this month*



### **Energy**

*No new stories this month*



### **Environmental Justice**

### [Guardians of the treaties or neglectful custodians: Flaws in EU environmental governance](#)

EU environmental law exists to protect people and the environment and to build avenues towards a liveable future, but it can only do that if it is applied. Each day laws designed to protect are ignored, without legal consequence. But whose role is to step in when EU countries fail to uphold the law, and why are they failing to do so?

### [Grassroots Group seeks to Change the System, One Step at a time](#)

A grassroots movement in Belgium seeking system change brought together the country's largest trade union, e-NGOs, anti-poverty groups, eco-entrepreneurs and others.

### [Commission welcomes political agreement on protecting the environment through criminal law](#)

The European Commission has welcomed the provisional agreement reached between the European Parliament and the Council on the protection of the environment through criminal law. As proposed by the Commission in December 2021, the new directive will improve the effectiveness of criminal law enforcement and help achieve European Green Deal objectives by fighting against the most serious environmental offences which can have devastating effects on both the environment & human health.

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### **Food**

*No new stories this month*



### **Freshwater**

[Landscape features around reserves are key to increasing freshwater-reliant species diversity](#)

Species that rely on freshwater habitat are declining in Europe. This study finds that biodiversity within smaller sites in the European Natura 2000 network is highly impacted by the land use of surrounding areas. The Birds and Habitats Directives are fundamental to Europe's nature conservation policy, with the Natura 2000 reserves covering 18% of the EU's land area and more than 8% of its marine territory.

[Commission refers GREECE to the Court of Justice for failing to provide updated flood risk and flood hazard maps](#)

The European Commission has decided to refer Greece to the Court of Justice of the European Union for failing to provide updated flood risk and flood hazard maps as required by Directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks ('Floods Directive'). Article 14(2) of this Directive obliges Member States to review, and if necessary, update, flood hazard maps and flood risk maps by 22 December 2019 and according to its Article 15(1), Member States had to communicate to the Commission the review and where applicable, the update of those maps three months after that date, i.e. by 22 March 2020.



### **Marine**

[Marine plastic: new method for choosing the best clean-up technologies](#)

Researchers have developed a framework for evaluating technologies that reduce marine plastic pollution. The method could help decision-makers find the best solutions for meeting the objectives of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). Decision-makers face a host of challenges in tackling marine pollution.



### **Planning**

[Infographic – What is light pollution?](#)

What is light pollution? Check out this infographic, which explains more about artificial light at night

[Light Pollution: Mitigation measures for environmental protection](#)

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The increase in world population, together with growing urbanisation, has led to a significant raise in the use of artificial lighting both indoors and outdoors at night, resulting in light pollution, which has a negative impact on the natural environment and well-being of living organisms, including humans.



### *Sustainable Development*

#### [Think Sustainable Europe](#)

The idea generator behind the Think2030 platform, Think Sustainable Europe (TSE) is a pan-European network of sustainability think tanks, led by IEEP, that provides policymakers across the continent with sound, science-based analysis and recommendations.



### *Transport*

#### [Commission adopts new proposal on combining transport modes for more sustainable freight](#)

The proposal on combined transport aims to make freight transport more sustainable by improving the competitiveness of intermodal freight – the transportation of goods using two or more transport modes – vis-à-vis road-only transport. The proposal updates the current Combined Transport Directive and completes the Greening Freight Package, the bulk of which was adopted in July 2023. The package will help the freight sector do its part in the EU achieving its Green Deal goals.



### *Woodland/Forestry*

#### [Why do we need EU legislation on forest monitoring?](#)

Europe's forests are under increasing stress from climate change, the direct or indirect impact of unsustainable human activities, and related land use changes. Hazards like wildfires, pest outbreaks, droughts and heatwaves, often reinforcing each other, are likely to lead to more frequent and intense catastrophic events that do not stop at national borders. These pressures undermine forest resilience and pose a threat to the capacity of forests to perform their different environmental and socio-economic functions, including their role as natural carbon sinks.

Monitoring to improve resilience of European forests

#### [Commission proposes comprehensive monitoring to improve resilience of European forests](#)

The Commission is proposing a Forest Monitoring Law that will plug existing gaps in the information on European forests and create a comprehensive forest knowledge base, to allow Member States, forest owners and forest managers to improve their response to growing pressures on forests and strengthen forest resilience.