1% FOR LIFE!

By Jeremy Wates, EEB Secretary General

Editorial

In the light of mounting economic and environmental problems the new EU 2020 Strategy has among its aims to promote a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy. It states: “The EU must now take charge of its future.” However when it comes to the allocation of its financial resources the EU does not put its money where its mouth is. One very clear example of this is provided by the EU’s own environment fund ‘LIFE’ which accounts for a staggeringly small 0.2% of the EU Budget 2007-13.

The EU Budget as a whole represents just 1% of the EU 27’s Gross National Income (GNI). This is even small compared to some EU Member States’ national spending. The relatively small size of the amount available makes it even more important to spend it wisely. Several studies have shown us that greening the EU Budget would not only benefit the environment but also provide jobs and boost the economy more than investments in ‘sectors of the past’. The roughly 1000 billion Euros could be, if well used, a powerful instrument to steer the EU economy towards a greener, more secure future.

One important element of greening the EU Budget is to put in place a robust environmental fund providing a dedicated pot available to boost the environmental sector. To spend just 1% of the budget on such a vital area should not be a big ask. LIFE often acts as “seed money” attracting funding from other sources to work for the environment as well as providing dedicated funding for action that is not possible under other instruments. For example it should cover at least 20% of the estimated €6 Billion costs of implementing the Natura 2000 network, the EU’s cornerstone ecological policy. Thus a reasonably sized LIFE is still important besides the greening of the larger EU Funds.

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The good news is that spending more on LIFE is easily justifiable because it has shown itself to be extremely successful and efficient. LIFE has played an undisputed role in enhancing the implementation of EU environmental law. For example it has targeted 37% of bird species and 50% of animal species protected under the EU’s Habitats and Birds Directives with half of them achieving “favourable conservation status” - the objective of the Directives - for one or more of the targeted species.\(^1\) LIFE is also important to further innovation with Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) to help industry adopt more environmentally friendly practices and technologies and to fund environmental communication. Perhaps most pertinently, LIFE provides jobs, in particular in less-developed areas. Visitor expenditure resulting from the estimated visits per year to Natura 2000 sites is estimated to be in the range of € 50–85 billion per year and directly and indirectly supports between 4.5 and 8 million full time equivalent jobs.\(^2\)

The high cost-effectiveness is possible because LIFE builds on direct involvement of local stakeholders such as SMEs, scientific institutions, local and regional authorities and NGOs. The misallocation of resources and underspending characteristic of other EU Funds is not an issue here.

We at the EEB have already pointed out that the European Commission’s proposal for the next Multiannual Financial Framework for 2014-2020 largely misses the chance to green the EU economy and has failed to allocate enough resources to LIFE (which was increased by 0.07% only). It seems that while more and more countries join the calls from UNEP and the OECD on greening the economy the EU is set to miss that train. The EEB has drafted an open letter to increase LIFE which can be signed by representatives of different (also non-environmental) sectors. I hope that the European Parliament and Member States will be far-sighted enough to steer the boat in the right direction and ask, besides the greening of CAP, Cohesion and other funds, for a meaningfully sized environmental fund. •

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1 LIFE 2014-2020 Impact Assessment p.9

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The European Commission has recently released its communication: Improving the delivery of benefits from EU environment measures: building confidence through better knowledge and responsiveness (COM (2012) 95 final). This has been published as a supplement to earlier communications on improvement of implementation and enforcement of EU environmental law. The Communication focuses on a few objectives aimed at improving the effective information systems and responsiveness at all levels of governance. On the assumption that knowledge and responsiveness are complementary facets of implementation, the Commission concentrates on matters such as enhancing the effectiveness of the Access to Information Directive, engaging different stakeholders in monitoring of implementation, improving access to justice, better handling of complaints and improving the information system at EU level.

Despite the extensive knowledge of environmental problems and (in some areas) ambitious legislation, there is still a lack of effective solutions and the implementation process often takes too long. That is why the EEB welcomes another instrument aimed at improving the situation. However, some important issues have been ignored or insufficiently addressed. The EEB has repeatedly emphasized the need for instruments improving the implementation and enforcement such as a Framework Directive on minimum criteria for environmental inspections and adoption of an Access to Justice Directive.

As correctly noted by the European Commission, only by ensuring the correct implementation of the acquis will it be possible to realize environmental objectives. The costs of non-implementation of EU legislation is estimated at 50 billion euro a year. However, not only financial costs should be taken into account. The EEB believes that concerning implementation and enforcement, next to the above mentioned directives, the EU should pay attention first to the development (as soon as possible) of structured implementation and information frame-works (SIIFs), providing more public access to relevant data, not only by answers to individual requests, but also through open online databases. Also, networks of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) should be included among those who are expected to be approached to hold dialogue on compliance promotion, in addition to networks of inspectors, prosecutors and judges. Finally implementation and enforcement should be treated as a priority in the 7th Environmental Action Programme.

As expected, the Communication is broad in its outlook and lacks concrete proposals. Its objectives should be treated as general guidelines that need to be further discussed and clarified. The EEB considers the document as a step in the right direction, provided that the issues raised in it will be subject to public discussion and will be followed up on with concrete measures. •
THE 2012 BLUEPRINT TO SAFEGUARD EUROPE’S WATERS

The European Commission will publish by the end of 2012 a ‘Blueprint to safeguard Europe’s Waters’, reviewing the EU’s water policy. Currently, the EU’s principal piece of water legislation is the Water Framework Directive (WFD) which established a legal basis to protect and restore waters across Europe and ensure their sustainable use. It aims to get all waters in a healthy state by 2015. However, water pollution, water abstraction for agriculture and energy production, land use change and the impact of climate change threaten the viability of this objective. The 2012 Blueprint will represent the EU’s policy response to these challenges.

The WFD has proved to be a useful instrument for raising public and political awareness of water issues. Through the WFD, success was achieved in improving crossborder cooperation, as well as achieving some reduction in pollution. However, there remain areas in which progress is still desperately needed. The integration of water with agricultural, energy and transport policy is still in its early stages and needs to be improved significantly. We are also witnessing an alarming decline in European freshwater biodiversity.

Member States also failed to adequately apply economic instruments for better water protection in the first round of River Basin Management Plans. This was a lost opportunity, especially in times of economic crisis.

The EEB believes that urgent action is needed to strengthen WFD implementation and to achieve healthy European waters in our lifetime. A thorough reform of the CAP is vital in order to maintain high quality and quantity of water resources. Currently agriculture pollutes water with nutrients and pesticides and water resources are fast depleting due to large scale irrigation.

EU action to tackle climate change and the development of renewable energy must be compatible with the EU’s objectives of stopping and reversing biodiversity loss by 2020. Energy efficiency and energy saving should be prioritized everywhere over building new energy-producing plants which might cause biodiversity loss. Rivers are still significantly adapted in order to improve the navigability for boats — this can negatively impact on the ecology of rivers, causing, for example, a loss of flora and fauna and a reduction in drinking water resources. For the EEB, the sustainability of developing inland navigation has to be assessed for all harms, before approval is granted.

The implementation of the WFD is increasingly undermined by the possibility granted to Member States to postpone the achievement of prescribed targets and the widespread use of exemptions. Such practices should be exceptional and only used if all conditions are justified, and exercised under the careful supervision of the Commission.

As in many countries, the current economic crisis and the national budget cuts have adversely affected the implementation of nature and water legislation. A more sustainable way to react to this crisis would be to allocate more national and EU funds towards the achievement of the WFD objectives as this would deliver significant long term benefits to society.

The WFD economic tools must also be applied better to ease public budgets and taxpayers’ bills. It is important to ensure that not only households are required to pay for water use, while other sectors like agriculture, mining, navigation or hydropower get away without paying their fair share.

The WFD is an effective tool to tackle both existing and future water related challenges if rightly implemented. However, increased efforts are needed in order to ensure this actually happens, and as soon as possible. This can only be achieved when the EU as a whole commits itself to its ecological obligations.

For more detailed recommendations check out our position on the Blueprint and 10 Rivers publication available on the website.

By Sarolta Tripolszky, Policy Officer: Biodiversity, Soil Protection & Water
In the midst of the Danish Presidency of the Council of the EU and soon after the Commission released its legislative proposals on the future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the EEB together with Birdlife Europe organized a high level conference in Copenhagen in Denmark where the Danish Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Mette Gjerskov delivered the keynote speech and the speakers were asked to respond to the question whether the new CAP is the right path to sustainable farming in the EU.

The conference created a timely opportunity to exchange views on the new proposed CAP with a focus on the key role the Danish Presidency has to play in this process. Representatives from the trio presidency, Commission officials, European Environmental Agency (EEA) officials, MEPs, different stakeholders (NGOs, consumers, ...) and farmers were given the opportunity to give their own assessment of the proposals after having been faced with the “truth behind the CAP” via a video created by the EEB pointing out the facts and effects of the current EU agricultural policy on several environmental issues.¹

In her speech, the Minister emphasized that there was a crucial need to think green and that the proposal of the Commission for the new CAP contained some promising green elements but she added that we have to ensure that the new elements are properly green and are effective. From the environmental NGOs’ side, it was made clear that in times of austerity and budget constraints in all Member States, a new CAP is obliged to set priorities and show it can deliver towards these.

However participants were very quickly reminded of the reality of Brussels’ politics and Christel Schaldemose MEP (S&D, Denmark) who was invited to speak explained that the focus in the AGRI Committee was not on greening. She admitted that the report from the AGRI Committee would most probably water down the proposal from the European Commission and that the focus will be on how to maintain the status quo without adding too many requirements.

The support from NGOs and civil society for a strong CAP budget will nonetheless remain strictly conditional on the assumption that the new CAP will at least constitute a step in the right direction and provide effective environmental outcomes and does not end up as a mere green washing.

It is unacceptable to expect hard-pressed taxpayers to agree to their money being spent on wasteful or, worse, harmful subsidies. It is being proposed that the Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF) dedicates a large part of its resources to the CAP under a promise that the money will be better spent. Despite the introduction of some new and slightly promising measures, if adopted unchanged, the proposals will be far from being a real reform, but in fact constitute a backtracking on previous reform rounds.

Civil society, including several farmers took the opportunity in Copenhagen to call on the Council and the European Parliament to finally stand up for a real reform and work constructively towards improvements to make sure that what has been proposed can deliver for society, farmers and the environment instead of hiding behind vested interests and a “no change” strategy. It is the first time in history that Parliament has a real power of co-decision in such an important policy and it should not miss this opportunity.

The Rapporteur in charge of the report in the Agriculture Committee is expected to present his report in June this year while the vote in this Committee should take place in November. The Plenary vote is expected in December. •

By Faustine Defossez,
Policy Officer: Agriculture and Bioenergy

To see some abstracts of the conference, the report and the presentations please follow this link http://www.eeb.org/index.cfm/news-events/ or visit our website: www.eeb.org

¹ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-854H7ytR0
THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS’ INITIATIVE: “WATER AND SANITATION ARE A HUMAN RIGHT, WATER IS A PUBLIC GOOD, NOT A COMMODITY!”

The concrete goals of this campaign are:
1. To achieve guaranteed water and sanitation services for all in the European Union. We believe that the European Union must implement the human right to water insofar as water and sanitation services are subject to European law (as a Service of General Interest). The European Union must promote national implementation of this human right by setting binding targets for all Member States to achieve universal coverage;

2. To put Human Rights above market interests with no liberalisation of water services. Water is a limited natural resource and a public good fundamental for life and health. It is a ‘natural’ monopoly and must be kept out of internal market rules.

3. To achieve Global/Universal access to water and sanitation for all. We believe that the EU should increase efforts to ensure water and sanitation can be enjoyed universally. It must set targets and make the achievement of universal (global) access to water and sanitation part of its Development policy.

An official Citizens’ Committee for this European Citizens’ Initiative has been established. The minimum formal requirement for such a committee is 7 people from 7 different Member States; the Citizens’ Committee for this Initiative counts 34 people from all 27 Member States. This already shows the wide support for this campaign. The campaign will take place not only in all EU-27 countries, but also in Russia, Turkey, Norway and western Balkan countries. Signatures can only be collected for the European Citizens’ Initiative in the EU-27, from people that are allowed to vote in their country. In most countries this means that you have to be over 18 years old to sign for this ECI.

Campaign Website: www.right2water.eu

At European level the public service unions will cooperate with the European Anti Poverty Network (EAPN), the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA), ‘Women In Europe for a Common Future’ (WECF). The initiative has the support from European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and many NGO’s, both at European and national level. Campaign ambassadors in several countries include mayors, MEPs, Senators, academics and civil society representatives. The campaign was presented in Marseille in March, both at the World Water Forum and the Alternative World Water Forum. It was well received since the human right to water and sanitation is at the core of on-going discussions in the framework of Rio+20 (Sustainable Development) and European Water policy. It showed that support for this campaign is wide spread, not only in Europe but also in other parts of the world.

The ECI was submitted to the European Commission on the 1st of April 2012 for validation. The European declared this initiative within its ‘power to act’ and thus approved it on Schuman Day - 9 May. The collection of signatures will now begin. This summer right2water should be visible all over Europe and we will encourage people to sign up, both online and on the streets.

By Jerry van den Berge,
European Federation of Public Service Unions
GET DIRTY - SOIL AWARENESS GROWS!
The German Soil Association, which represents professionals working on soil protection in Germany, is very active in raising awareness of issues affecting soil. It does this through several events and campaigns. In cooperation with the German Soil Science Society, the German Soil Association initiated the "Soil of the year" in 2004. During the following years, different soils such as urban soils or floodplain soils were selected to be 'Soil of the Year'. Every year on the 5 December, the so-called 'World Soil Day', the soil of the year is recognised during a celebration in Berlin.

In 2012, fen soils were chosen to be the 'soil of the year'. Together with soils of bogs they are called Histosols – more commonly known as peatland soils. Peatland acts as a huge carbon sink. Therefore, drainage and conversion of peatland to arable land considerably influences climate change as carbon will be released as carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Peatlands as an important carbon sink are increasingly being destroyed. The protection of Histosols is therefore imperative. In Europe, the existence of many soils like Histosols is threatened by rapidly increasing land consumption for intensive agriculture as well as by soil sealing due to urbanization. •

www.bvboden.de
By Gabriele Broll, BV Boden

FRANCE ABOUT TO BAN PERC DRY-CLEANERS?
Perchloroethylene (PERC) is a chlorinated solvent used in dry-cleaning. It is classified as a probable carcinogen to humans. Studies have shown it is also toxic to the nervous system and can affect many other endpoints (kidneys, liver, immune system and reproduction). It has already been banned in newly established dry-cleaning facilities in Denmark and in the US. Yet, PERC is still widely used in France with 90% of the 5000 dry-cleaning facilities in the ‘Hexagon’ relying on this process, despite the fact that alternatives are already operational.

Up to 15000 workers in France are occupationally exposed while neighbours and shopping malls customers can also unwittingly breathe in this toxic chemical. Réseau Environnement Santé (RES) held a press conference in February to denounce an avoidable health scandal. Since then, some progress can be reported. The Parisian municipality announced its desire to phase-out all 500 existing PERC facilities in the capital while the National Federation of Dry Cleaners has begun negotiating with the Ministry of Environment for a short-term ban of all PERC facilities over 15 years old. RES will soon meet with the French Environmental Safety Agency (ANSES) which could trigger a fast move towards substitutes to PERC.

RES is a network of scientists, patients associations, environmental NGOs and health professionals. This original blend and our mode of action, advocating regulatory action on the basis of independent science, has again proven successful, just a few months after winning a ban on Bisphenol A in food contact materials. •

www.reseau-environnement-sante.fr/
By Réseau Environnement Santé (RES)
ONE STEP CLOSER TO **MERCURY FREE DENTISTRY**

In the EU, mercury in dental tooth fillings is the second largest use of mercury, comprising 23.5% of the annual consumption. Much of this ends up in the environment – in soil, the atmosphere (via cremation, etc) and surface and ground waters – and can be consumed in fish. The EEB has repeatedly called for a phase out of mercury in dentistry, a threat to human health and nature that many of us carry around in our mouths.

Mercury is highly toxic to humans, especially while the nervous system is still developing. Methylmercury bioaccumulates and biomagnifies, especially in the aquatic food chain and may cause adverse effects to the cardiovascular system and the brain development. Mercury can pass through both the placental barrier and the blood-brain barrier, therefore, exposures during pregnancy are of highest concern.

Although the health impacts from direct exposure from amalgams are still being debated, the significant contribution of dental mercury waste and its persistence in the environment are unquestionable.

To that end, the final-draft ‘Study on the potential for reducing mercury pollution from dental amalgam and batteries’ was released by BIO Intelligence Service for the EC in March 2012. In order to reduce the environmental impacts from the use of mercury in dentistry, the report recommends a ban on the use of mercury in dentistry as well as improvements to the enforcement of EU waste legislation regarding dental amalgam. The EEB welcomes these recommendations but remains concerned, that mercury emissions to air caused by dental amalgam via cremations will continue, since no EU measures are proposed-- and existing requirements have “no teeth”.

In this vein, the EEB\(^1\) has released a new report “The Real Cost of Dental Mercury,” showing that dental amalgam is much more costly than the alternatives when “external” costs to society are factored in.

Society pays for the uncontrolled releases of mercury from amalgam use through additional pollution control costs, the loss of common (publicly-owned) resources and the health effects associated with mercury contamination. Furthermore, mercury-free alternatives are available, affordable and safe.

The environmental concerns, the substitution principle, and the precautionary principle regarding direct health effects from amalgams all show the need for an amalgam phase out. The EEB is therefore urging the European Commission and Member States to act immediately to phase out the use of mercury in the dental sector as quickly as possible. •

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**ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS**

Together with other NGOs working on transparency, Client Earth is concerned that the recast of the Access to Documents regulation is eroding the right enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty, to access information.

Following the adoption of a position by the European Parliament on the European Commission’s proposal to recast Regulation 1049/2001 on public access to EU documents, the file is now being considered in the Council.

NGOs fear that there will be a backtracking in the standards of the right of access to EU documents enshrined in the regulation as it stands today and in clear violation of the requirements for increased transparency and public participation of the Lisbon Treaty. The Council is considering extreme measures such as amending the definition of a document and introducing blanket exceptions for documents adopted within infringement proceedings, court proceedings or legal opinions from institutions’ legal service which will exclude large amounts of information without justification.

The new provisions, if adopted, would expand confidentiality, allowing the EU institutions to take more decisions behind closed doors, without the possibility for the public to participate. They would reduce accountability, thus harming the legitimacy and democracy of the EU.

Contrary to what the Danish Presidency had committed to, these proposals are not balanced by any significant improvements that would make the right of access more effective. The amendments from the European Parliament ensuring more openness, including the need for increased transparency within legislative processes, are completely left out.

ClientEarth with the EEB and other NGOs have called on the Danish Presidency and the Member States to reconsider those amendments, or, at a minimum, to only allow changes that would align Regulation 1049/2001 with the Lisbon Treaty (extending the institutional scope to all EU bodies, offices and agencies) and the Aarhus Convention with regard to environmental information. Should the Council reach a common position along the lines currently being considered, the European Parliament will need to face its responsibilities and reject the Council’s position to ensure that Regulation 1049/2001 is not watered down and that the fundamental right of public access to information is still ensured at EU level. •

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\(^1\) European Environmental Bureau, Mercury Policy Project, Consumers for Dental Choice, the International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology and Clean Water Action co-released the report the US, on 16 April 2012

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By Elena Lymberidi-Settimo, Project Coordinator ‘Zero Mercury Campaign’

By Anais Berthier - Client Earth
SUCCESS CORNER

8 YEARS ON… ECOLABEL PAPER CRITERIA AGREED
After 8 years of discussion, the European Ecolabel criteria for paper products have finally been agreed. The EEB and BEUC European Consumer Organisation have welcomed this development as a positive, albeit overdue, step in the evolution of the EU Ecolabel.

The EU Ecolabel provides information to consumers about products and services with limited negative environmental impacts. For each product group (paper being an example) a separate set of criteria is developed for awarding the Ecolabel. The EEB, which works together with BEUC, represents environmental NGOs in the scheme. The organisations are involved in the process of setting criteria by taking part in the Ad Hoc Working Groups and EU Ecolabelling Board. Nevertheless, the final decision is taken in the Regulatory Committee which is composed of Member States representatives and the EU Commission. On 7 and 8 March, the first meeting in 2012 of the EU Ecolabelling Board (EB) took place. This was followed by the Regulatory Committee where the criteria were voted upon.

During the EU EB meeting in March, DG Environment presented three sets of criteria: for printed paper, for laundry detergents for professional use and for dishwasher detergents for professional use. EEB and BEUC criticised the criteria for laundry and dishwasher detergents due to the lack of a ban on phosphates and unclear criteria for the use of nanomaterials. Eventually, only the criteria for the printed paper were presented for the vote at the Regulatory Committee. Members of the Board voted to approve the criteria.

We welcome ecological criteria for printed paper as an important product group. In our view, the criteria for this product group will lead to greater recognition of the label among European consumers. Nevertheless, eight years' work on one product group is definitely too long. This shows that the scheme still needs improvement, especially in the area of transparency of the decision making process. For eight years the European Commission was not able to agree internally on the final criteria for printed paper. This means that the process of agreeing this has been continuing for almost half of the time that the Ecolabel has existed - considering that in 2012 we are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the EU Ecolabel.

By Lukasz Wozniacki,
European Ecolabel Coordinator

1 The European Commission started working on ecological criteria for printed paper in 2004.

Volkswagen’s stance had previously been among the worst of the notoriously backward looking European car manufacturers. Greenpeace criticised the company’s slow progress and aggressive lobbying, despite claims to want to become the world’s greenest car company. However Volkswagen has now promised to reduce its carbon emissions to 120 grams of CO₂ per kilometre by 2015, a full 10 grams below the EU target.

Their sudden volte face shows that their earlier assertions that energy efficiency gains could not be made to their vehicles were based on lack of ambition rather than science. In 2007, Volkswagen argued that achieving the 120 grams target by 2012 was “technically not achievable”. However, they have now shown that they are perfectly able to meet and indeed surpass fuel efficiency standards. Volkswagen’s shift in position strengthens the case for further use of strict regulatory standards and ambitious targets. Car emission standards will again be reviewed this year for 2020, and new standards set for 2025, and this shows that ambitious targets are not just a green campaigner’s dream but feasible and economically sound for the industry too.

By Alison Abrahams,
Communications Officer
At the end of last year, the European Commission presented draft legislation that should allow public authorities to promote, with their public procurement choices, sustainable production and consumption patterns. However, the proposals are ambivalent and need improvements to deliver. It is for the European Parliament and the Council of (Competitiveness) Ministers, to take up that task in the coming months.

As public tenders represent some 18% of the GDP of the EU, the way public authorities select can make a big difference for producers of clean energy, of products that reduce energy consumption and/or waste, that avoid hazardous materials, as well as for sustainable forest management, organic agriculture and commodities of all kinds which are ‘fair trade’.

**ORIGINAL LEGISLATION FOCUSED ON EU LEVEL PLAYING FIELD AND LOWEST PRICE**

The EU has had legislation to limit the freedom of public authorities in their public procurement policies since 1992. The original purpose was to oblige public authorities, for larger contracts for supplies of goods, services or works, to open up competition across national borders, to ensure the functioning of the EU internal market. It was to put an end to corruption and local favouritism, and to ensure that taxpayer’s money was saved by focussing on the lowest price. The law led to problems when cities wanted to include environmental requirements.

When the city of Helsinki required specific environmental characteristics for city buses, the Commission was mobilised by a company that lost the bid, claiming that the tender was limiting competition. In the end the European Court of Justice decided that Helsinki was justified in its environmental objectives.

**FIRST REVISION OPENING UP FOR ENVIRONMENTAL DEMANDS**

In 1998 a first revision of the EU rules was initiated. The EEB insisted that in the future environmental conditions should be included in public tenders, in line with the Amsterdam Treaty that promoted sustainable development and environmental requirements in all EU policies. At a later stage it joined a coalition of social organisations and trade unions which aimed to influence the decision-making process so that environmental and social quality criteria would be systematically included in public tendering.

**NEW REVISION: LINKING PUBLIC PROCUREMENT TO THE EUROPE 2020 AGENDA**

The 2nd EU Sustainable Development Strategy (2006) promoted “green public procurement”, focussing on the environmental dimension only. Cities started to apply such practices, and at least seven Member States started to introduce systematic approaches. The Environment Directorate of the Commission started to formulate, usually rather weak, guidance for green procurement. Beyond the “environmental performance” of products, services and work, it was henceforth possible to include criteria concerning the production methods of the products bought or used in works, but that was not a systematic requirement.

At the end of 2011, the Commission proposed new legislation, linking this clearly with the Europe 2020 strategy, meaning that besides the open competition objective now also the objective of promoting “smart, sustainable and inclusive growth” is included. However, as always, the devil is in the detail:

- The proposals allow, but do not require, authorities to move from the old “lowest cost” for works/supplies/services approach, to a wider “most economically advantageous tender” approach, and to include requirements relating to the environmental and social impacts of production and use of the works/supplies/services.
The proposal uses “life-cycle costing” to help determine what the “most economically advantageous tender” would be. Life-cycle costing takes into account direct costs for the authority during the use of the supplies/works/service, but also external costs, provided they can be “monetised and verified”. This can work out as a limitation, because not all external impacts can be determined in this way.

- The social requirements are explicitly limited to those involved in the production process.
- Authorities may require labels that certify environmental, social or other characteristics, but again, this is limited.

Existing private labels such as Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certificates come with requirements to producers that go beyond the scope of the proposals, such as on ensuring that the interests of people depending on forests but not working in the forestry company are being respected. The Commission proposal could lead to public authorities being forced to accept forest related products such as paper, furniture, building materials, without the guarantee that their production complies with environmental and social requirements that are considered components of sustainable development. In particular in the environmental field this is unacceptable, also given that the EU has domestic and global goals to halt the decline of biodiversity, and restore it where feasible.

Environmental and social organisations, together with forward looking companies and public authorities have a task in the coming months to assist the EU decision-makers to make the EU procurement policy requirements into a real vehicle for sustainable development.

By John Hontelez,
Chief Advocacy Officer Forest Stewardship Council, former Secretary-General EEB

THE OECD ENVIRONMENTAL OUTLOOK TO 2050, A WAKE-UP CALL FOR INCREASED ENVIRONMENTAL VIGILANCE

EEB Secretary General Jeremy Wates represented the environmental NGOs stakeholder group at this year’s OECD Environment Ministerial meeting, which was dedicated to the theme “Making Green Growth Happen”, with a special focus on the OECD’s Environmental Outlook 2050: “The Consequences of Inaction” report.

The EEB hailed the Environmental Outlook 2050 report as an important wake-up call to the world’s governments to significantly step up their efforts to protect the environment. The Outlook report examines the biggest risks associated with continuing “business-as-usual” between now and 2050 and projects that the global economy will nearly quadruple by 2050, at which point energy demand will be 80% higher than current levels. This could lead to a 50% increase in greenhouse gas emissions globally and worsen air pollution. The OECD predicts that urban air pollution will be the top environmental cause of mortality worldwide by 2050, ahead even of dirty water and lack of sanitation. These prognoses have actually deteriorated since the last Outlook to 2030 report was published in 2008.

While OECD governments have been talking for years about decoupling economic growth from negative environmental impacts, Jeremy Wates warned that words must be followed by actions to tackle the environmental problems at hand and bring about a fundamental change in our growth model. Failure to do so would leave us vulnerable to disastrous environmental, health, and economic consequences. In its Statement to the Ministerial, the EEB called for effective policy tools to back up environmental strategies, including ambitious regulation and standards, environmental taxes and the phasing out of environmentally harmful subsidies.

Some challenges may have been underestimated by the OECD. In particular, the EEB called for a more explicit recognition of the fact that planetary boundaries have already been crossed in the case of biodiversity loss, climate change and the nitrogen cycle. Despite being key environmental challenges soil and land-use issues are missing from the Outlook.

By Agathe Ernoult,
Policy Officer: Energy and Climate
POLISH COALITION CALLS ON MINISTER TO BACK STRONG ENERGY EFFICIENCY DIRECTIVE

In the context of difficult negotiations between the European Parliament and Council on the Energy Efficiency Directive, the European Environmental Bureau has welcomed an “Employment impact” study, which highlights the huge socio-economic benefits that Poland could gain from making its buildings more energy efficient. The study published by the Institute for Sustainable Development in Warsaw shows that building renovation programmes could create up to 250,000 jobs in 2020, generate substantial improvements in air quality, reduce energy poverty and increase energy security.

In a letter given to the Minister for the Economy they ask for binding energy efficiency targets for Member States, a 3% annual renovation target applying to all public sector buildings, and to oppose the weakening of energy efficiency obligations on energy utilities.

“The Polish government, which has presented itself as a supporter of energy efficiency policies should opt for placing Poland as an energy efficiency leader both at the national and international levels” said Andrzej Kassenberg, president of the Polish Institute for Sustainable Development.

Poland has twice blocked agreement in the EU Environment Council on more ambitious carbon reduction targets. Supporting an effective Energy Efficiency Directive represents one way for Poland to play a more constructive role in addressing the climate change crisis.

NEW DEAL ON AIR POLLUTION IS A MISSED OPPORTUNITY

Parties to the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution reached a deal on amending the 1999 Gothenburg Protocol on air pollution at a meeting in Geneva on 4 May 2012.

New national emission reduction commitments to be achieved by 2020 were agreed, as well as updated emission standards for a number of emission sectors, such as industry and transport. Besides stricter limits for the four already regulated pollutants, limits were introduced also for particulate matter (PM2.5).

The commitments made by the EU in the Gothenburg Protocol negotiations are even weaker than if they had carried on as usual, complying with their own legislation in the area. The EU has not even committed to sticking to emission levels that were expected to be achieved anyway. This low level of ambition by the EU and Member States is very disappointing.

“The EU should be leading from the front - using these talks to ensure effective protection of health and the environment. Instead, EU Member States are dragging their feet and some are even challenging past commitments.” said Louise Duprez, Air Pollution Policy Officer at the European Environmental Bureau.

The EEB hopes that EU Member States wake up before 2013, which EU Environment Commissioner Janez Potočnik has announced will be the “European Year of Air”, and during which the European Commission has promised to propose revisions to the National Emission Ceilings (NEC) Directive.

QUICK FIX BUT NO LONG-TERM VISION FROM THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ON THE ENERGY TAX DIRECTIVE

The European Environmental Bureau (EEB) and Green Budget Europe (GBE) have welcomed the European Parliament’s vote on an opinion on the proposed revision of the Energy Tax Directive. The Parliament vote supported raising the minimum levels of energy taxation, aiming to tackle the problem of fuel tourism in Europe. Existing differences in tax rates on petrol and diesel in EU Member States encourage drivers to fill their tanks with the less-taxed fuel.

However, EEB and GBE are utterly disappointed that an opportunity has been missed to put an end to the absurd situation where energy taxes very often go against Europe’s energy and climate objectives, and where the EU requires Member States to exempt some of the most polluting transport modes, such as aviation, from taxation.

“These exemptions and the current fiscal advantage granted to diesel technology directly impinge on the EU’s guiding principles of polluter pays and of technical neutrality” said Agathe Ernoult, Energy policy officer at the EEB.

According to the EEB and GBE, the financial crisis must not be used as an excuse for shying away from reforming tax incentives, which would be phased in over more than a decade and would ensure long-term certainty for industry and consumers alike, as well as ensuring coherence between Europe’s energy and single market policies.
This Newsletter is produced by the European Environmental Bureau (EEB). EEB is the largest federation of environmental citizens’ organisations in Europe. It groups together over 140 member organisations from more than 30 countries.

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FEATURED PUBLICATION

On the occasion of World Water Day 2012 the EEB released a review of European water protection - namely the ‘Water Framework Directive’ - and examined the affect that it had had on ten rivers in Europe. It concludes that rivers still suffer under multiple pressures around Europe with little chance of achieving good water status in the foreseeable future.

Christian Schaible leaves the EEB in June after 4 years spent working on chemicals and industrial policy dossiers. He will however retain his connection to the EEB as he goes to work for French EEB member ‘France Nature Environnement’ in the area of industrial risks (notably IED and Seveso installations / other industrial activities). He will be based in Paris where his partner Caroline and (nearly) 3 year old son Léandre live.

Romina Curecheriu, a law graduate from Romania, joined the EEB for an internship from April until the end of June on biodiversity and agriculture.

Hugues Vaudel will be conducting an internship at the EEB between April and July 2012 working both on air and noise pollution and on Mercury policy. Hugues is currently in his first year of a two year Masters in Sustainable Development.

COMING AND GOING

The EEB and Terra Cypria, with the support of Federation of Environmental and Ecological Organisations of Cyprus (FEEO) and Friends of the Earth (FoE) Cyprus, organised on 10 May 2012 a seminar in Nicosia, Cyprus, to discuss the priorities for the Cyprus Presidency.

H.E. Mr Sophocles Aletraris, Cyprus Minister of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment presented the ambitious environment and CAP priorities of the Cyprus Presidency. Jeremy Wates, EEB Secretary General followed with what European NGOs expect from the Cyprus Presidency.

Jens la Cour from EEB member Danish Society for Nature presented the cooperation between NGOs and the Danish Presidency of the Council of the EU.

The event was extremely well attended. Further information about it will appear on the EEB website.