In early March, the European Environment Agency came out with its five-yearly ‘State and Outlook’ report on the European environment (SOER). The report makes sobering reading: while it notes the considerable achievements of four decades of EU environmental policies as well as the economic and employment opportunities they have created, it also highlights major challenges linked to unsustainable systems of production and consumption which have degraded Europe’s natural capital and are resulting in long-term, cumulative impacts on ecosystems and human health in and outside Europe. It suggests the need to move beyond environmental protection in the traditional sense to a transformation of the economy.

The report can be seen as an implicit call for action to put environmental sustainability at the centre of Europe’s development path. It comes at a timely moment, as the Europe 2020 Strategy undergoes its mid-term review and the world is just months away from adopting a set of universally applicable Sustainable Development Goals. But is it a call that will be heeded by today’s political leaders?

At the centre of the EU’s policy process is the European Commission. Unfortunately, the priorities of the Juncker Commission appear to have been drawn up for a different continent than the one described in the EEA report, one in which limitless economic growth can be pursued irrespective of its environmental consequences: apart from climate change, environment is almost entirely absent from the Commission’s Political Guidelines, and the Commission’s Work Programme for 2015 has very little in it that will deliver on the commitments made in the 7th Environmental Action Programme (7EAP).

From its first day in office, the Commission lost no time in mounting a major attack on EU environmental protection policy, as described in the last issue of
Metamorphosis. This generated impressive pushback – not only (and predictably) from environmental NGOs but also from Member States, MEPs and progressive industry. In December, the public debate on the Commission’s 2015 work programme was dominated by critical reaction to the threatened withdrawal of the legislative packages on air and waste, which led to the Commission backing down on scrapping the air package. It went ahead with withdrawing the waste package but when presenting the planned withdrawal to the Parliament, Commission First Vice-President Timmermans, faced with having to explain why the Commission was axing a proposal that would create as many as 180,000 new jobs while making business more competitive and reducing dependency on financially and environmentally costly imported resources, gave the rationale that the withdrawal was to pave the way for a more ambitious proposal covering other aspects of the circular economy as well as waste.

As it approaches the end of its first six months in office, the Commission would be well advised to acknowledge, in the light of scientific knowledge (e.g. SOER) and political feedback, that it got it wrong on the environment. The months ahead offer a number of opportunities to correct this mistake and restore environment as a priority:

• First and most obviously, the Commission must ensure that the new circular economy package is genuinely more ambitious, not only broader in scope but also with binding provisions, including targets, that are at least as ambitious as the ones in the previous package.

• Second, the ‘better regulation’ Communication planned for end of April provides an opportunity for the Commission to demonstrate that it is really interested in more effective regulation rather than pursuing a deregulation agenda that has environmental protection as its main target. The proposed measures should include a reformed impact assessment process which has sustainability as its primary point of reference and should under no circumstances set a target to reduce ‘regulatory burden’, whether in the form of ‘one-in, one-out’ or a continuous overall reduction in regulatory costs to business.

• Third, the Commission should give credibility to its claim to believe in better implementation and the rule of law by coming forward with legislative proposals on access to justice and environmental inspections – the former all the more important since the disastrous rulings of the European Court of Justice in January which have virtually ruled out access to justice for environmental NGOs at the EU level. Non-binding measures alone will be inadequate.

• Fourth, the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy provides an opportunity to better integrate environmental considerations through clearly referencing the 7EAP and including a new headline target backed up by environmental indicators and targets aimed at reducing resource use in absolute terms.

• Fifth, the ongoing fitness check of Natura 2000, another policy that together with air and waste was on the ‘hit list’ of Environment Commissioner Vella’s mandate, should not result in the opening up and weakening of this flagship EU conservation policy.

• Finally, the EU needs to rewrite the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, with a 2030 time horizon, now fully incorporating the SDGs and thus demonstrating that Europe is ready to play its part in creating a more sustainable world – something that Europe 2020, with its focus on competitiveness and growth, manifestly fails to do.

During his pre-confirmation hearing in the European Parliament last autumn, Vice-President Timmermans said that ‘better regulation will fail if it is an attack on the environment’. We agree. But words must be followed by actions. Taking the above six steps would give a sign that the Commission is starting to take its environmental responsibilities seriously and is not impervious to science and reason.

ADVOCATING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE
MAKE SUPERMARKETS FAIR

Some 80% of EU citizens believe that European companies have a social and ethical responsibility when investing in developing countries (EuropeAid: Eurobarometer 392, 2012), yet far fewer are aware of the practical consequences of unsustainable business practices.

Since European consumption is often directly linked to production on the other side of the world, the EEB Global Policies and Sustainability unit will participate in a new 3-year long project called SupplyChange – Make supermarkets fair. The project focuses on those (usually cut-price) generic supermarket products which carry the logo or name of the supermarket itself, for which labour and environmental conditions are less likely to have been
The EJOLT project launched a new phase of the Global Atlas of Environmental Justice, an interactive map that catalogues 1400+ environmental conflicts around everything from mines to toxic waste sites and from oil refining to deforestation. The atlas is not only a tool for journalists, campaigners and scientists – it also gives the often essential backing and cover to harassed activists in places like Kazakhstan and Western Sahara.

This collaborative research project is supported by the European Union and coordinated by Prof. Joan Martinez Alier. The new atlas was re-launched at an international conference on environmental justice organized by the European Environmental Bureau.

Aside from the new dynamic interface with a feed featuring new, updated and commented cases plus the improved search and filter, the main novelties of the atlas are its featured maps.

Fracking Frenzy
As conventional oil and gas resources start to run out, the fossil fuel industry is turning to unconventional energy sources such as shale oil and gas, and coal-bed methane. This map draws from the report Fracking Frenzy by Friends of the Earth and features data on reserves and water risk to show how concerns over water are mobilizing "Fracktivist" movements: http://ejatlas.org/featured/fracking-frenzy.

Mining in Latin America displays how the continent’s mining boom stretched the mining frontier into environmentally and socially sensitive areas. In these conflicts, 40% have seen violent repression or criminalization of activists. The map uses data from the Global Witness report "Deadly Environment" highlighting how environmentalists are targeted. http://ejatlas.org/featured/mining-latam

Climate Debt. By over-consuming the available capacity of the Earth’s atmosphere to absorb greenhouse gases the developed countries have run up a climate debt. This map highlights this spatial mal-distribution of climate change sources and impacts. It was made by Rikard Warlenius from the Human Ecology Department at Lund University. http://ejatlas.org/featured/climate-debt

While EJatlas’ coverage of conflicts continues to expand, many regions, like Central Asia, the Middle East and China, are not duly represented yet. The EJatlas editors invite organizations and academics with expertise to contribute to the further development of this constantly expanding database. They also invite collaboration in the creation of featured maps on issues of concern.

After its first launch in March 2014 and its coverage in 130 media on all continents, the atlas was used almost a million times. This renewed atlas promises to be even more useful to activists, journalists and researchers alike. At the current rate in which we allow the economic system to move both the extraction and waste frontiers into ever more sensitive areas, the types of conflicts mapped are bound to increase in number as well as in intensity. As Atlas coordinator Leah Temper wrote in The Guardian: “From Banja Luka (Bosnia) and Gezi Park (Turkey) to Rosia Montana (Romania) and land wars across India, social conflicts are increasingly often around environmental resources. Such struggles have sometimes toppled governments, such as the coup in Madagascar in 2008 that brought “land-grabbing” to global attention. But most of the time, the evictions, forced relocations and the violent repression of those impacted by contamination from gold mines, oil extraction, plantations and agribusiness operations are rarely covered in the press. Ecological violence inflicted upon the poor is often not news but simply considered to be part of the costs of “business as usual”.”

The Environmental Justice Atlas will make it a lot harder for bad businesses to avoid the global spotlight on their malpractices.

ENVIRONMENTAL DEMOCRACY IN REVERSE?
Dismay at Recent ECJ Rulings

The Aarhus Convention, a UNECE Convention1 signed in 1998, is, as Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, put it, “the most ambitious venture in environmental democracy undertaken under the auspices of the UN.” Apart from rights of access to environmental information and public participation in environmental decision-making procedures, this Convention also provides for access to justice for members of the public in environmental matters.

Challenging acts and omissions contravening provisions of environmental law has long been part of the EEB mission. Yet there is a tough hurdle to overcome. The legal requirement2 set by the EU courts is that there must be proof that the offending act is of “direct and individual concern” to the EEB or any other environmental NGO that mounts a challenge.

The European Court of Justice (ECJ) developed the so-called “Plaumann test”, meaning that persons not the addressee of a decision can only claim to be individually concerned “if that decision affects them by reason of certain attributes which are peculiar to them or by reason of circumstances in which they are differentiated from all other persons”3. The ECJ applied the Plaumann test for the first time in an environmental case in 19984 and has done so ever since. As a result, all environmental NGO claims have been declared inadmissible for procedural reasons, on the grounds that NGOs usually address the Court only with a non-material interest in a healthy environment.

This is a major obstacle to enforcing the access to justice requirements of the Aarhus Convention, to which the EU itself has been party since May 2005. NGOs expected the internal review procedure (Art 10 of the Aarhus Regulation5), whereby environmental NGOs meeting certain criteria may challenge so-called “administrative acts” or the omission of such acts before the EU institutions having adopted or failed to adopt them, to implement the provisions of the Aarhus Convention with regard to the EU Institutions. The reply of the EU institution whose act is being challenged to the NGO most likely enables the latter to meet the criterion of “direct and individual concern” and thereby qualifies it to have legal standing before the ECJ.

The flaw however is that the EU Aarhus Regulation only provides for a review of administrative acts defined as “measures of individual scope”. Thus the Aarhus Regulation is only applicable in limited cases, such as for permits approving genetically modified organisms or chemical products. In the internal review procedure under the Aarhus Regulation, acts of general scope, by far the biggest category of environmental law, cannot be challenged.

In two cases, on the Commission Regulation setting maximum residue levels and the Commission Decision granting the Netherlands a temporary exemption from air quality obligations, environmental NGOs challenged this restrictive transposition of the Aarhus Convention. Yet while NGOs won the appeals before the General Court, unfortunately the ECJ overturned the General Court rulings.

In its findings, the ECJ held that the access to justice provision of Art 9 (3) of the Aarhus Convention was not “unconditional and sufficiently precise”, thereby giving the EU legislator a broad margin of discretion in its transposition of the legislation.

These rulings of the ECJ are a sorry setback for environmental democracy. New legal avenues now have to be urgently tested by the EEB and its partners. Meanwhile, the rulings will enable the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee to resume its consideration of a communication submitted by ClientEarth in 2008 alleging non-compliance by the EU with the Convention.

Barbara Goby
Lawyer, EEB member Umweltdachverband, Austria

1 United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.
2 See Art 263 (4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.
FIXING A BROKEN POLICY ON BIOFUELS

The penultimate step in the long process towards reaching agreement on biofuels policy revision has been taken with the European Parliament's Environment Committee vote on 24 February that took account of indirect land use change (ILUC) impacts. If the trilogues are successful, the final vote should take place in April.

After years of delay, negotiations and increasingly damaging impacts of some biofuels, it became more urgent than ever to address the social and environmental sustainability of European biofuels policy, a core pillar of EU policy on climate. While biofuels were initially promoted for the climate benefits they would deliver in comparison with fossil fuels, they were in many cases found to be worse for the climate due to ILUC.

Not only was the vote a step closer to limiting the damaging impacts of biofuels, it would also improve certainty for the advanced biofuels industry, which needs predictability after years of investment uncertainty. The vote acknowledged the harm caused by some biofuels in setting a cap on their contribution to renewable energy targets and correcting the carbon accounting of biofuels through the inclusion of ILUC factors. What is more, the vote set sustainability criteria for advanced biofuels – those made from waste and residues - to avoid repeating past mistakes.

Now that the Parliament has agreed on its second reading position, negotiations with the Council will start. These are expected to be difficult as the Council position is far less ambitious than that of the Parliament. However if decision makers are serious about the climate challenge, then what the Parliament adopted is a bare minimum.

European Parliament rapporteur Nils Torvalds must stay strong on limits to land based biofuels, ILUC and sustainability of advanced biofuels.

Faustine Defossez, Senior Policy Officer for Agriculture and Bioenergy

THE SOAPBOX OF ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Energy efficiency has once again found its place on the soapbox of European politics. Everybody is talking about it. Everyone seems to know how much money can be saved. Everyone is talking about how many jobs can be created if Europe realises the full potential of the energy efficiency sector.

“The EU is already a world leader here [in energy efficiency]; but I think we can do so much more. It starts with taking “efficiency first” as our abiding motto. Before we import more gas or generate more power, we should ask ourselves: can we first take cost-effective measures to reduce our energy?”.

This excerpt from a speech by Energy Commissioner Arias Cañete on his vision for the Energy Union delivered on 17 February before the Lisbon Council sounds like the words of an environmental NGO. But is it for real or is it just greenwash?

Unfortunately if we take a good look at the Energy Union, we find two sad realities:

a) Billions of euro to be spent on new gas suppliers, new gas pipelines and interconnections in the electric grid

b) a complete makeover of the energy market, cutting all subsidies for renewables to save the struggling electricity dinosaurs like EdF and eOn.

Soapbox speeches on energy efficiency are dangerous if they are not backed up with concrete action. Europe must make a clear political decision that energy efficiency and sustainable renewables are where to spend our scarce money.

Our elected representatives in the European Parliament voted for a binding efficiency target of 40% to keep the EU on a cost-efficient path. The European Commission is aware that Europe has to step up ambitions on energy savings and and strengthen our 2030 climate and energy targets. The EEB demands:

• 40% end-use savings
• domestic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions of at least 60%
• at least 45% from sustainable renewable sources

Without these steps, the Energy Union remains just a soapbox speech.

The EEB together with NGO partners has long advocated for a better energy system to protect the global climate. It is time for the benefits of energy efficiency to be finally recognised in European energy policy both in words and in fact.

Roland Joebstl
Policy Officer – Climate and Energy
GREEN LIBERTY SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION CAMPAIGN

Green Liberty was founded in 1991 to inform people about the social and environmental implications of trends in consumerism, trade and globalization. The campaign empowers people to make meaningful decisions directly and indirectly and enables people to oppose abuses of power. Green Liberty today has considerable experience of working on issues of sustainable development and consumption.

One example is our work with the project “Action Town”¹, funded through the EU’s Seventh Framework Programme for Research (FP7), that identifies ways in which NGOs can provide new insights for research in sustainable consumption and production. The goal is to reach an absolute decoupling of economic growth from resource use.

A further example of our work is the Green Liberty consumer guides² on sustainable living. We regularly work with the media to raise awareness of sustainable living in society. We have also undertaken studies on sustainable consumption, such as “Current Status and recent changes in consumption and production patterns in Latvia”³, a background report for UNEP and we have actively advocated for sustainable consumption and production in Latvia and globally.

Currently Green Liberty is focussed on supermarket supply chains in Europe to make them more sustainable through projects such as Make Fruit Fair! led by Oxfam Germany and FairSuperBrands led by Christliche Initiative Romero. A large part of this campaign is to increase consumer awareness; however, given that consumers have limited power to overcome structural barriers, we are also planning to work with supermarkets and decision makers to focus on delivering the political and redistributive solutions necessary to achieve sustainability.

In the near future we will organise EU wide roundtables, training for activists, media campaigns, journalist trips to producer countries, production of online and social media tools, an online petition and urgent calls for action. We will produce documentaries, undertake advocacy activities and much more.

This work is closely linked to current global post-2015 development debates to foster active citizenship in the European Year of Development (2015).

Janis Brizga
Green Liberty, Latvia

¹ http://action-town.eu/

INSTITUTE FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND ECOLOGY, CROATIA

The Institute for Rural Development and Ecology (IRRE) is a civil society organisation founded in 2012 in a small village called Gradec, 40 km from the Croatian capital Zagreb. Besides working on rural development issues such as improving the quality of life of rural areas in Croatia, IRRE also works on waste prevention and reduction.

Currently IRRE is running an information campaign for a new waste system in Gradec Municipality. As part of this campaign we have held fifteen workshops tailored for children as well as adults. We also supported the municipality with grant writing for obtaining new infrastructure investment for separating waste collection.

One of our greatest achievements was the adoption of the first official zero waste management plan. This sets a goal of less than 50 kg of waste per person. The current uncertainty on the part of EC President Juncker over the circular economy package fortunately does not affect the municipality of Gradec, as it produces very modest amounts of waste – 110 kg per person. Unfortunately, there is already a negative impact on other municipalities in Croatia that have until now avoided requirements for separate waste collection and recycling.

Targets such as those put forward in the recently withdrawn Circular Economy Package are extremely important for Croatia. For the long term, since waste treatment infrastructure has to be planned 20-30 years in advance, Croatia can benefit from clearly defined goals. Sadly the 50% target by 2020 is likely to be missed.

As for cohesion funds, a staggering 90% of those available for waste management will be spent on mechanical-biological treatment and incineration. And just 10% will be spent on recycling projects.

New, progressive and intelligent targets are needed so that Croatia can avoid being trapped by inefficient technologies.

Marijan Galovic
IRRE, Croatia
 Despite widespread recognition that loss of species and loss of habitats have a devastating effect on the health of ecosystems and their ability to provide ecosystem services, some dark clouds are gathering over Europe’s flagship nature conservation laws, the Birds and Habitats Directives.

This year the European Commission is carrying out a “Fitness Check” on both directives as part of its Regulatory Fitness and Performance (REFIT) initiative. The mandate of the Commissioner responsible for the environment, Karmenu Vella, requires that he carry out as a priority “an in-depth evaluation of the birds and habitats directives and assess the potential for merging them into a more modern piece of legislation”.

Although the formal purpose of the Fitness Check is to assess if policies are fit for purpose and if objectives can be achieved more effectively in other ways, several vested interests are already actively seeking to weaken the legislation. This would be bad news for nature, and bad news for people.

Together with environmental organisations BirdLife Europe, Friends of the Earth Europe and WWF’s European Policy Office, the EEB firmly believes that the EU nature directives are effective, flexible and popular among European citizens. Any attempt to revise them, even under the pretext of “modernisation”, could damage nature conservation for years to come and create uncertainty for investors.

Introducing changes that throw into question site designation, for example, would lead to protracted negotiation and conflict. This would put a halt not just to nature protection, but also to important planning procedures. Given the current shockingly high rate of biodiversity loss and environmental degradation, the possibility of reaching the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy targets would be severely compromised.

There is clear evidence that the EU nature directives are effective and deliver demonstrable improvements for the species they protect. Many iconic species such as beavers, wolves, cranes and white tailed eagles achieved spectacular comebacks thanks to the directives. The designation of the Natura 2000 network, and species protection regimes established by the directives, help bridge the gap between strict protection of endangered nature and promoting sustainability.

The nature directives are certainly not negative as regards their economic impact. Comprehensive studies undertaken by the UK government found that, “in the large majority of cases, implementation of the directives is working well, allowing development of key infrastructure and ensuring that a high level of environmental protection is maintained”.

The benefits of implementation

The overall failure to reverse the loss of biodiversity in Europe is largely the result of poor implementation of the directives in many Member States, for example the failure to complete the Natura 2000 network in the marine environment.

The directives offer an outstanding cost-benefit ratio. Full implementation of the Natura 2000 network throughout the EU would cost an estimated EUR 6 billion per year, yet the 27,000 protected areas would return a value of up to 300 billion EUR through ecosystem services for the general public:

- Clean and purified water
- Clean air and non-toxic air
- Fertile and healthy soils
- Carbon storage
- Flood protection
- Tourism services and revenue
- Better public health

The value of Natura 2000 and of biodiversity goes far beyond quantifiable ecosystem services. Conserving our natural heritage is vital for the quality of life of present and future generations.

Leonardo Mazza
Senior Policy Officer – Biodiversity, Water and Soil Protection
GETTING RID OF PLASTIC BAGS

It is a sign of trying times for environmentalists in Brussels when success is determined by Commission non-intervention. Yet that is precisely what happened when a directive to limit plastic bags was adopted, despite Commission threats to derail it.

The Council and Parliament were reaching agreement to limit single use plastic bags, when suddenly First Vice-President Timmermans, tasked with delivering ‘better regulation’, threatened to withdraw the original Commission proposal. He argued that the compromise text about to be agreed had increased in scope and was not what the Commission had intended.

Uniting against this regressive stance, both Parliament and the Council stuck to their more progressive line and agreed in November to give Member States three options to cut plastic bag use:

- Adopt a plastic bag reduction target of 90 bags per person per year by 2019 and then 40 bags per person per year by 2025 (from current levels of 190 bags per person per year)
- Introduce a ban on the handing out of plastic carrier bags for free by 2018
- Ban plastic carrier bags at national level completely.

Clean air package in place

The centrepiece of the EU Clean Air Package, the National Emissions Ceilings Directive (NEC), came under threat as part of the approach by the new European Commission to modify or withdraw certain proposals from the previous administration. Not just environmental NGOs were shocked but also health groups and governments.

Opposition from Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) was loud and clear. Active media work by NGOs including the EEB resulted in extensive media coverage of the Commission’s stance. Finally the Commission decided to leave the proposal in place.

MEPs and the Council should adopt their positions by the summer. The only caveat is that the Commission announced it would “modify the proposal as part of the 2030 Climate and Energy Package follow-up.” At present, there is still little clarity about what that means. The EEB continues to keep a close eye on developments.

Sébastien Pant
Communications Officer - Air Quality and Resource Efficiency

AN EFFICIENT SUCCESS STORY FOR ENVIRONMENTALISM

With storm clouds hanging over the European project, it is noteworthy that celebrated green regulations at EU level are generating more success stories for citizens to get behind. New energy efficiency rules for a host of home appliances will deliver enormous reductions in carbon emissions and slash home and business energy bills on top.

The fireworks started on 1 January with a range of new measures under the Energy Labelling Directive, followed by new design standards for ovens and other kitchen appliances from 20 February under the Ecodesign Directive.

Rolled together, the yearly savings from the 1 January rules alone will save 244 terrawatt hours every year by 2020, corresponding to nearly nine percent of the EU’s entire electricity consumption. This is equivalent to the output of 330 medium size coal power plants or the CO2 from 49 million cars. The 20 February rules mean that, with poor quality ovens coming off the market, a typical new oven will save every home €230 in reduced fuel bills.

Big numbers, but both framework directives could work even harder and are expected to be reviewed this year. The EEB leads the Coolproducts campaign, pushing to maximise the ambition of the directives. Our work with journalists led to some 60 articles in national media in the first two months of 2015 alone. Next on the EEB to-do list: convince European Commission Vice President Frans Timmermans that the market alone will not deliver such efficiency savings and the EU has a praiseworthy role to play. We need a progressive framework revision, and a healthy 2015-17 Ecodesign working plan so that more product groups can benefit from Ecodesign’s Midas touch.

Jack Hunter
Communications – Coolproducts and MarketWatch
TOXIC PLASTIC CHEMICAL ‘DEHP’ MUST BE BANNED

Towards the end of 2014 the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) delivered a highly controversial scientific opinion. ECHA recommended continued use of DEHP, a substance of ‘very high concern’. DEHP (di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate) is used to manufacture thousands of PVC plastic items that are found in our homes and places of work.

In the face of clear scientific evidence of health and environmental risks, should DEHP authorisation be allowed? The decision is now in the hands of the European Commission.

In the past few months, the EEB has built up a coalition of 55 NGOs to make a stand against DEHP authorisation. The harmful properties of DEHP and the wide availability of safer alternatives on the market are, for the EEB and partners, clear reasons for rejection.

Granting DEHP authorisations for use in PVC products would contravene the provisions of REACH. And what is more, procedural and substantive legal flaws in the ECHA’s scientific opinion process have come to light.

If they granted authorisation the European Commission would be rubber stamping ‘business as usual’ at the expense of innovation and safer products on the European market. Can the new European Commission be seen so blatantly to be protecting “dirty” and obsolete industries? Acting against the interests of “green” companies whose sustainable innovation in safer chemicals and products will help to build a more resilient economy and a healthier society, would be a worrying signal indeed for them to send.

The EEB and our NGO partners have been raising awareness on the process around DEHP. Policy makers and citizens groups are equally shocked by the case. The latest news is that the Commission has delayed a draft decision until April.

The EEB and NGO partners are calling upon the European Commission to reject authorisation and to respect the REACH goals of protecting people and the environment from toxic chemicals and progressively replacing them with safer alternatives. In the case of DEHP, there should be no reason to grant authorisation.

Why should people accept the risks caused by a substance of very high concern while safer alternatives are already available?

• Tatiana Santos
  Senior Policy Officer – Chemicals and Nanotechnology

SAVING THE WOLVES IN SWEDEN

In January, a large-scale licensed hunt on endangered wolves was carried out in Sweden. Over 40 wolves were killed after authorities granted permission. This happened despite the fact that Swedish courts previously have ruled such hunting to be illegal, and despite two EU infringement processes.

According to scientific estimates, a favourable conservation status for wolves in Sweden equals over 700 individuals, assuming improved connectivity between the Scandinavian and Finnish populations. Even if the number of wolves has grown the last decade, the population’s situation is far from what is required by the Habitats Directive.

Against that background the European Commission had criticised Sweden and opened an infringement case in 2010. On the same grounds, national administrative courts repeatedly issued injunctions or annulled the Swedish EPA’s wolf hunting decisions, after appeals from the EEB member Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) and others.

Nevertheless, Sweden opened another large-scale licensed hunt this winter by letting the EPA delegate hunting decisions to regional county administrations. Under such circumstances, appeals should be made to the EPA. The result is that national courts are circumvented and environmental NGOs are denied access to justice. This attempt to avoid judicial review has led to another EU infringement case.

Swedish NGOs went to court when the hunting permission was granted, claiming that hindrance to their access to justice was illegal. The new situation prevented an injunction and the final decision is still under trial by the Supreme Administrative Court. Meanwhile the culling was carried out and some ten to thirteen per cent of the entire endangered population was killed.

The EEB and other NGOs have written to Commissioner Vella, reminding him of his statement to “not hesitate to resort to all the means at [his] disposal to penalise those who intentionally fail to live up to their obligations.”

We now urge the Commission to rapidly take Sweden to the European Court of Justice in the first infringement case on illegal hunting.

• Johanna Sandahl
  SSNC President
On 1-2 December 2014 the EEB celebrated forty years of environmental action by holding a high-level conference that explored the environmental challenges facing Europe and the wider world and the opportunities for overcoming them.

The way in which the new European Commission had started to deal with the environment was a particular focus for discussion, in light of President Juncker’s plans to focus on growth, competitiveness, jobs and better regulation. In an intense and interactive ‘world-cafe’ session, the conference also debated how the environmental movement could be more effective.

Bringing together several hundred environmentalists from all corners of Europe, the conference included high-level speakers from the European institutions, academia and civil society and began with a keynote address from the new European Environment Commissioner Karmenu Vella. Commissioner Vella set out his environmental objectives for the coming five years. He stressed that the new Commission has no intention to weaken environmental protection.

Other high-level speakers included the Danish Environment Minister Kirsten Brosbøl, European Environment Agency Executive Director Hans Bruyninckx, OECD Environment Director Simon Upton, former EU Commissioners Connie Hedegaard and Janez Potocnik and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner via video message.

The conference report as well as videos, interviews, photos and speaker powerpoints are available on the conference website: www.eebconference.eu/documentation

EEB ‘TWELVE STARS AWARDS’ PRESENTED TO FOUR OUTSTANDING INDIVIDUALS

To mark its 40th anniversary in 2014, the EEB presented four EEB ‘Twelve Stars for the Environment’ Awards. The winners are outstanding individuals who in different ways have made an exceptional contribution to the cause of environmental sustainability in Europe. The Awards were presented on 1 December 2014 at the BIP House of the Capital Region, Brussels. The winners had been selected by the EEB Board following an open nomination process and recommendations for nominees from the EEB Twelve Star Award Committee consisting of the EEB President, Vice-Presidents and Secretary General.

The winners of the 2014 Awards were as follows:

- Christer Ågren
  AirClim, Air Pollution & Climate Secretariat, Sweden, for his contribution to combating air pollution in Europe

- Corinna Zwielag
  BUND für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland, Landesverband Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Germany, for her contribution to the Baltic Green Belt and nature protection in Europe

- Janez Potocnik
  European Commissioner for the Environment 2010-2014, Slovenia, for his science-based approach to promoting environmental sustainability

- Posthumous award to Marc Pallemaerts in memory of an outstanding Belgian champion of the environment, and for his contribution to strengthening environmental law

The winners were presented with a piece of art created from household waste by Belgian artist Natacha de Locht.

Read the full rationales of all winners here www.eebconference.eu/12-stars-award

Emma Ernsth
EEB 40th Anniversary Conference Manager
Hot off the Press!

Visit www.eeb.org/index.cfm/news-events to read the full stories

US ORGANISATIONS URGE CHANGE TO EU BIOENERGY POLICIES

Our Southern forests are the most biodiversity rich in North America. Seeing these forests being chopped down, manufactured into pellets and shipped over to Europe to be burned in big power plants is causing increasing discontent across the communities in Southern states of the US."

This was the message of Adam Macon from Dogwood Alliance, North Carolina, when visiting European decision-makers in early February. His message is backed up by an appeal sent to the EU’s new Environment and Climate Commissioners last December signed by more than 50,000 American citizens urging changes to EU renewable energy policies.

Increasing demand for renewable energy sources without any environmental safeguards has led to the rapid development of a new pellet manufacturing industry in the Southern US. Pellet factories are filled with whole tree trunks. Valuable wetland hardwood forests are being cut just to feed the European energy markets.

The EEB, together with BirdLife Europe, hosted a coalition of the American NGOs - Dogwood Alliance, Natural Resource Defense Council (NRDC) and Southern Environmental Law Center - bringing their ‘voices from the ground’ to inform EU policy makers of the destructive impacts of EU policies. They met with EU and also UK policy makers, and urged them to address the unsustainable growth of bioenergy use in the new EU climate policy framework after 2020.

Sini Eräjää
EEB/BirdLife Europe
Bioenergy Policy Officer

More info:
www.shame-no-name.org
(from 9 April 2015)

Nick Meynen
Project Officer -
Global Policies and Sustainability

* www.ejolt.org

March 2015
Newsletter # 74

> Continued from page 2: ‘Advocating environmental justice - make supermarkets fair’

taken into consideration. The 28 EU-country project was launched in January 2015, financed by the European Commission’s DG Development and Cooperation.

By working within this project, the EEB will be able to more powerfully bring change to the dynamics of global trade. Global trade shapes our economic policies and has a direct effect on our environment. Since the project includes co-applicants from developing countries, it has the potential to expose the links between the agricultural sector in developing countries and supermarket consumption in EU countries.

The EEB regularly exposes such links, whether through our work on ecological footprint calculations, spreading awareness on the dynamics of land grabbing, or more recently as part of our work for the EJOLT project. Under the EJOLT project, the EEB provided evidence of environmental injustices in a report on industrial tree plantations. Massive growth in consumption of paper and palm oil in the EU has contributed to the dramatic expansion of plantations, from 15 to 60 million hectares over the past 20 years. This expansion has often been at the cost of a more valuable rainforest.

The Supply Chains project will expose such environmental injustices and their links to Europe on a scale never seen before. The project will also inform some 25 million European citizens about sustainable production and consumption through a pan-European awareness raising campaign in all EU member states, as part of the European Year of Development activities.

The economic recession has driven consumer demand for in-store generic brands as a way to reduce people’s food bills. Today the share of supermarket generic products is at almost 40% of global food retail sales. *

More info:
www.shame-no-name.org
(from 9 April 2015)
UPCOMING EVENTS

LATVIAN PRESIDENCY NATURE CONFERENCE
“EU BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY TO 2020 IMPLEMENTATION”

26-27 May 2015, Riga, Latvia

The mid-term review of the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 is scheduled for late summer 2015. The aim of this conference is to discuss successes and challenges in implementing the strategy, resulting in input for the mid-term review. It will offer opportunities for Member States and civil society representatives to take stock of progress achieved and share experiences gained in implementing the different activities foreseen in the Strategy. The conference is jointly organised by the Latvian Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development (MEPRD) and the Latvian Fund for Nature, with support from the European Environmental Bureau.

For more information on the conference please visit the page of the Latvian Presidency’s website dedicated to the conference:


COMING AND GOING

ROLAND JOEBSTL
Roland joins the EEB as the Policy Officer on Climate and Energy. He previously worked for Austrian EEB member Umweltbundesverband. While there he was an active member of the EEB energy working group.

ABRAHAM LOMBRANA
Abraham joined the EEB as Secretary and Events Coordinator. Prior to joining the EEB team, he worked in different public institutions at regional, national and international level.

ALISON ABRAHAMS
Alison is leaving the EEB after three years as Communications Officer. We wish her well in her new job with the Party of European Socialists.

SEBASTIAN BECHTEL
Sebastian is with the EEB for a 4 month internship. He has a Bachelors degree in international law and is focussing on the Aarhus Convention.

BARBARA GOBY
Barbara has joined the EEB on a three-month secondment. She is a lawyer with EEB Austrian member organisation Umweltbundesverband, specialising in the Aarhus Convention.

FEATURED PUBLICATION

ENV.net Advocacy Toolkit

At the beginning of 2015 the EEB published an advocacy toolkit as part of the ENV.net project. The toolkit is helping NGOs in EU accession states gain and consolidate advocacy skills.

This newsletter is produced by the European Environmental Bureau (EEB). The EEB is the largest federation of environmental citizens’ organisations in Europe. It groups together more than 140 member organisations from 33 countries.

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Publication free of charge.
Printed on 100% recycled, chlorine-free paper using vegetable ink.
Production: fuel. - www.fueldesign.be
The EEB gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance for this newsletter from the European Commission. This publication reflects the authors’ views and does not commit the donor.
Photos: Istockphoto