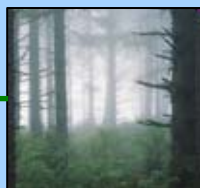
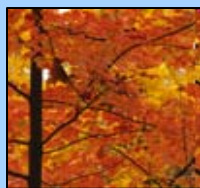


EU Environment Policy Brief



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The monthly newsletter that keeps you informed about developments in EU environment policy

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BOOKSHOP

BIODIVERSITY



Commission biodiversity campaign scoops international award

The European Commission's campaign to raise awareness about the problem of biodiversity loss has won a European Excellence Award. The awards – decided by an independent jury of 30 communications experts – are intended to honour outstanding achievements by communications professionals. The campaign, which centres round a viral film and the slogan "we are all in this together", won the Environment and Ecology category. The campaign has had considerable success. The website has already received more than 3.5 million visits, while the viral video has been seen by at least 1.5 million people. There are also more than 55,000 active users of the biodiversity application on Facebook. As well as raising awareness, the campaign, which is still running, has motivated thousands of people to take individual action to protect and care for nature.

[Press release](#)

[Biodiversity campaign website](#)

[Biodiversity page on Facebook](#)

Commission steps up efforts to tackle high death rate in bees

Healthy bees are important both for honey production and as pollinators of plants such as fruit trees. In recent years, an increase in bee mortality has been reported in several countries around the world. To get a better understanding of the reasons behind this increase, the European Commission has set out its ideas on a series of specific actions. So far, scientific studies have determined neither the exact causes nor the precise extent of the problem. Beekeeping is a widely-developed activity in the EU, both at professional and hobby level, with about 700,000 beekeepers in the European Union. The paper adopted this month will assist efforts to find solutions to the problem.

[Press release](#)

CHEMICALS

Commission proposes new legislation to improve safety at European chemical plants

The Commission this month presented draft legislation to strengthen rules on the control of major accident hazards involving chemicals. The revision of the so-called Seveso II Directive will align the legislation to changes in EU chemicals law and will clarify and update other provisions. This includes introducing stricter inspection standards and improving the level and quality of information available to the public in the event of an accident. The Seveso II Directive and its predecessor, Seveso I, were prompted by a major accident at a chemical plant in Seveso, Italy, in 1976. The legislation aims to prevent accidents involving large quantities of dangerous substances and applies to around 10,000 industrial establishments in the EU. The new Directive should apply from 1 June 2015.

[Press release](#)

Commission publishes review of EU mercury strategy

A review of the EU's strategy on mercury published this month shows that all 20 priority actions set out in 2005 have been or are in the process of being implemented. One of the key elements of the strategy – a ban on all exports of mercury from the European Union – will apply from 15 March 2011. This will reduce the global supply of mercury thereby limiting emissions of the highly toxic heavy metal into the environment. Other developments include the recently adopted Industrial Emissions Directive, which will contribute to the reduction of mercury emissions from large pollution sources. A study on the life cycle of mercury in dental amalgam will be carried out in 2011. In the coming years, as well as continuing and strengthening implementation actions underway, the Commission will focus its efforts on negotiating a global legally binding instrument on mercury. Mercury is considered a major risk to human health and the environment and is acknowledged as a serious global environmental problem. Emissions into the environment are transported regionally and globally in the atmosphere.

[Mercury Strategy review](#)

First REACH registration closes: a step nearer to safer use of chemicals in the EU

More than 24,600 files were submitted to the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) by the deadline for registration of the most widely used and most dangerous substances. The 30 November deadline was set by REACH, the Regulation for Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals. As a result, European industry will possess more in-depth knowledge of the potentially hazardous effects of the chemicals they are dealing with. This will lead to safer use of chemicals, increased industrial competitiveness and a cleaner environment. Under the legislation, companies cannot place a chemical substance they manufacture or import on the EU market unless it has been registered with ECHA by the deadline. There are two further registration deadlines in 2013 and 2018 for chemicals produced or imported in lower volumes. Lessons learned from the first registration will help ensure as smooth a process as possible for future registration deadlines. Firms also have to notify ECHA on the classification and labelling of their chemicals by 3 January 2011 in line with new rules. The purpose is to make information about the hazards of substances available to all stakeholders and to allow all companies placing the same substances on the market to come to an agreed classification.

[Press release](#)

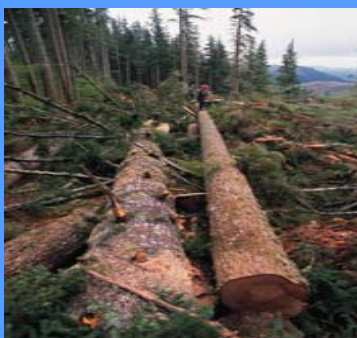
[Frequently asked questions on REACH](#)

Sixteen substances closer to tighter control

The REACH committee, made up of representatives from Member States, agreed unanimously on the identification of eight Substances of Very High Concern (SVHCs) that will be added to the Candidate List and may become subject to authorisation. The Committee also accepted a draft recommendation from the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) to add eight new substances to the Authorisation List. Substances on the Authorisation List cannot be produced or used unless authorisation has been granted for a specific use. The 16 chemicals include chromium trioxide, four types of cobalt and solvents methyl and ethyl cellosolve, lead chromate and diarsenic trioxide.

[Press release](#)

FORESTS



New rules on illegal timber come into force across EU

New rules to prevent illegal timber being sold on the European market came into force across the EU this month. The legislation will strengthen efforts to halt illegal logging which causes serious environmental damage and biodiversity loss and undermines the efforts of those trying to manage forests responsibly. EU operators selling timber and timber products for the first time on the EU market – whether they come from the EU or are imported – will need to know where their timber is from. They will have to take steps to make sure that it has been harvested according to the relevant laws of the country of harvest. Traders along the supply chain within the EU will need to keep records of who their timber or timber product was bought from and to whom it was sold. Member States will be responsible for applying sanctions to operators who break the rules. The Regulation, which was first proposed by the Commission in 2008, was adopted by the EU in November and will apply in all Member States from March 2013.

[Press release](#)

MARINE WATERS

Commissioner disappointed at new quota for bluefin tuna catch

EU Environment Commissioner Janez Potočnik has expressed his disappointment at the decision by the International Committee for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) on quotas for catches in 2011. The ICCAT agreed to set the 2011 quota at 12,900 tonnes – only 600 tonnes less than the 2010 quota. Commissioner Potočnik said the probability of bluefin tuna recovery following the ICCAT decision is far too low to be sufficient "if we are serious about sustainable fishing and the recovery of stocks". He also expressed regret that the Commission's recommendations to prevent sharks being caught accidentally as by-catch were not adopted, in particular the ban on Porbeagle and thresher sharks for target and/or incidental catches.

[Commissioner's statement](#)

SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION & PRODUCTION



Life cycle thinking essential for considering environmental performance of products, says Retail Forum report

Incorporating the concept of life cycle thinking in decision-making is a first step towards environmental sustainability, according to the latest paper by the Retail Forum. Life cycle analysis is the basis for any assessment of the environmental impact of products and provides key input for important labelling information for consumers. This involves considering the impacts and resources used across the full life cycle of a product – the supply chain, the product's use phase and even what happens to it once it has been thrown away. The paper sets out to identify what is needed to support further uptake of a life cycle approach to every day household products ranging from cleaning products to washing machines and televisions and their packaging. The paper makes recommendations on actions for retailers, producers and policymakers. The latest report is the fifth in a series of papers which set out proposals for action in important environmental areas for the retail sector. The Retail Forum is one of the initiatives under the EU's Action Plan on sustainable consumption and production and sustainable industrial policy.

[Further details](#)

ENVIRONMENTAL CAMPAIGNS

European Green Capital title passes to Hamburg

The title of European Green Capital officially passed to Hamburg this month at an event marking the end of the first year of the Commission's new award scheme. EU Environment Commissioner Janez Potočnik congratulated Stockholm, the first title holders, for showing other European cities how to successfully combine ambition with concern for the environment. The handover of the title was marked by the presentation from Stockholm to Hamburg of a commemorative Green Book, which will pass from one winner to the next. Hamburg's programme of events for 2011 includes a Train of Ideas, a rolling exhibition that will showcase good practices in green urban development on a whistle-stop tour of 18 cities around the continent. The train will be in Brussels from 6-13 September 2011. The annual European Green Capital award encourages cities to improve the quality of urban life by systematically taking the environment into account in urban planning.

[European Green Capitals website](#)

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

Commission launches consultation on future funding instrument for the environment

The European Commission has launched an online consultation on the next financial instrument for the environment, which will succeed LIFE+ after its expiry at the end of 2013. The LIFE Programme has contributed more than €2 billion to the protection of the environment since 1992. The Commission welcomes views from national, regional and local administrations, environmental stakeholders, the private sector and the general public by 15 February 2011.

[Public consultation](#)

Public views sought on financing of Natura 2000 network of protected areas

Public views are being sought on the financing of Natura 2000, the EU's network of protected areas. The results will feed into a communication expected in the summer of 2011, assessing the current approach to financing the network. The views of public authorities, the private sector, environmental stakeholders and interested citizens are sought. Natura 2000, the cornerstone of EU biodiversity policy, is the biggest interconnected network of protected areas in the world. It now covers nearly 18% of the EU's terrestrial area. The consultation, which is available in six languages, closes on 17 February 2011.

[Public consultation](#)

Commission asks for views on early auction of ETS allowances

The revised EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) significantly increases the share of allowances to be auctioned rather than allocated free of charge. For a smooth transition, a certain volume of allowances may be auctioned prior to 2013. The Commission recently adopted legislation which allows so-called early auctions. Experts, stakeholders and the general public are invited to submit their views on what volume they think would be appropriate. The public consultation is open until 7 February 2011.

[Public consultation](#)

CLIMATE CHANGE



EU welcomes Cancún Agreement as important step towards global framework for climate action

The European Union has welcomed the positive results of the Cancún climate conference. The balanced and substantive package of decisions adopted, known as the Cancún Agreement, represents an important further step on the road to building a comprehensive and legally binding framework for climate action for the period after 2012. The Cancún Agreement builds on the decisions taken a year ago in Copenhagen and also sets out processes for making further progress in the future. It represents a well balanced compromise between different interests within the United Nations system.

[Press release](#)

[Statements by President Barroso and Commissioner Hedegaard on the Cancún Agreement](#)

Mobilisation of €2.35 billion fast start funding to support developing countries

During the UN Climate Conference in Cancún the EU gave a full and transparent report on its delivery of 'fast start' funding to support developing countries. In 2010 the EU, the world's leading aid donor, has mobilised fast start funds of €2.35 billion to support efforts to adapt to and mitigate climate change. This is part of the EU's overall commitment to provide €7.2 billion for the period 2010-2012. All 27 Member states are contributing to this funding, despite the difficult economic situation and strong budgetary constraints. Most EU fast start funding is provided through Member State budgets and allocated on the basis of national decisions.

[More details on fast start finance](#)

Commission welcomes agreement to cut emissions from vans

The EU has taken new steps this month towards limiting pollution from vans. The European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission reached an informal agreement on the Commission's proposal setting CO₂ emission standards for light commercial vehicles (vans). The European Parliament and the Council agreed to introduce the short-term target of limiting CO₂ emissions to 175 grams per kilometre in 2017 and to reduce this to 147 grams per kilometre from 2020. The agreement still requires formal approval. The Commission's proposal is a follow-up to the regulation setting CO₂ emission standards for passenger cars and is one of the last outstanding measures announced in the EU Strategy to reduce CO₂ emissions from light-duty vehicles.

[Press release](#)

Member States agree benchmark rules on free allocation of ETS allowances

Member States have agreed rules for determining how many free emission allowances individual operators will be entitled to receive during the third trading period of the EU Emissions Trading System (2013-2020). While auctioning will become the main principle for allocating allowances as of 2013, transitional free allocations will be given, notably to compensate installations deemed to be exposed to competition from outside the scope of the EU ETS. Climate Action Commissioner Connie Hedegaard said the vote by the Climate Change Committee represented a major milestone in the reform of the European carbon market and gives industries more regulatory certainty up to 2020.

[Draft decision](#)

Commissioner holds video conference with remote island community in Peru

Climate Action Commissioner Connie Hedegaard and the Ambassador of Peru to the European Union, His Excellency Jorge Valdez, held a video conference with a remote island community in Peru on 1 December. The link up was possible thanks to EURO-SOLAR, a regional cooperation programme financed by the European Commission and eight countries in Latin America. The programme provides six hundred isolated rural communities that have no access to the electricity grid with clean energy (solar panels and wind generators). Representatives of the Sancayuni community took part in a question and answer session and talked about their expectations for improvements in their lives as a result of the programme.

[Press release](#)

BOOKSHOP

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3. Brochure: making our cities attractive and sustainable, available in English in print and [online](#)

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Responsible editor: [Robert Konrad](#)

Editor: [Jenny Avery](#)

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