

EU Environment Policy Brief



Issue 54. November 2011

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

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NATURE

Alarming decline in plants, molluscs and freshwater fishes

According to a new study funded by the European Commission, 44 % of all freshwater molluscs, 37 % of all freshwater fishes and at least 467 species of vascular plants are now under threat of extinction in Europe. The study draws up the so-called "European Red Lists" for these three groups of species. These Red lists catalogue endangered species in Europe, as part of an extensive effort to evaluate the risk of extinction of species in Europe. The new Red Lists complement previous assessments on mammals, amphibians, reptiles, butterflies, dragonflies and on a selection of saproxylic beetles. Additional categories to be assessed in the near future include birds, marine fishes, pollinator insects and medicinal plants. The European Red Lists help policy-makers to take appropriate action to protect species under threat. They are developed by the Global Species Programme of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and aim to complete the wider IUCN Global Red List of Threatened Species™.

[Press Release](#)

[More information on Red Lists](#)



Major expansion of Europe's network of protected natural areas – Natura 2000

Natura 2000, the EU's network of protected areas, has undergone a significant expansion. 166 Sites of Community Interest (SCIs) covering an area of nearly 18 800 square kilometres have been added, including a major addition of marine areas covering 17 000 square kilometres which will increase protection for many endangered marine habitats and species. The new marine sites will provide a vital refuge for many of Europe's rarest and most endangered species, including the loggerhead sea turtle *Caretta caretta* and the Mediterranean monk seal *Monachus monachus*. The network of sites under the EU Nature Directives now covers almost 18 % of the EU's landmass and more than 145 000 km² of its seas. The main countries involved in this latest expansion are the UK, France, Belgium, Greece, Cyprus, Hungary, Lithuania and Italy. Natura 2000 is the centrepiece of Europe's efforts to halt biodiversity loss and safeguard ecosystem services.

[Press release](#)

[MEMO](#)

[More information on Natura 2000](#)

WATER

European Commission gathers views on water efficiency in buildings

European regions are increasingly under threat of water scarcity and droughts. This issue is expected to amplify under the effects of climate change and intensifying demand due to population growth. However, at least 20 % of water resources could be saved if they were used more efficiently. The European Commission is therefore seeking stakeholder's views on policy options to reduce and optimise water use in buildings, such as smart metering, water pricing, labelling, certification and minimum efficiency requirements, to name a few. The views will feed into possible EU wide measures related to water efficiency in buildings. The chosen policy orientations will be presented in the Blueprint to safeguard Europe's waters that the Commission will issue at the end of 2012. The consultation will run until 8 February 2012.

[Online consultation](#)

[More information on water scarcity](#)



SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

European Commission publishes evaluation study of Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan

The evaluation study of the 2008 Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Action Plan assesses the way in which the Action Plan has been implemented in the last 4 years and proposes a set of recommendations for the future. According to the report, the Action Plan has prompted a positive change in the Commission's policy making in the area of SCP, but more efforts are needed to achieve an effective decoupling of economic growth from environmental impacts. This requires more ambitious and effective policy tools. The breadth of issues involved in SCP make the Action Plan a true cross-cutting policy but consistency between the different SCP instruments has proven to be difficult to achieve in practice. An improved coverage of social issues and additional actions on consumer behaviour and awareness are also needed. The report and the recommendations support an overall evaluation and review of the SCP Action Plan, which is planned to be finalised in 2012. They will also serve to implement the SCP component of the Roadmap for a Resource Efficient Europe presented by the Commission in September 2011.

[The evaluation report](#)

[More information on the SCP Action Plan](#)

[More information on the Resource Efficiency Roadmap](#)

2011 EMAS Awards pay tribute to companies improving their environmental performance



The European Commission has announced this year's winners of the European Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) Awards. In line with this year's theme, "stakeholder involvement", the six winning organisations showed excellence in engaging the actors that influence or are affected by their business in improving their environmental performance and to respecting the environment. These include for example employees, partners along the supply chain, local authorities and neighbours of production sites.

This year's winners, selected from among 36 entries, are: Belvas Organic Chocolate (Belgium), ebswien hauptkläranlage (Austria), Eurobank EFG Bank (Greece), Fritz-Erler-Schule Pforzheim (Germany), Kneissler Brüniertechnik (Germany) and the Municipality of Ravenna (Italy). The Awards were handed out on 17 November in Krakow, Poland.

[Press release](#)

[More information about the European Eco-Management and Audit Scheme \(EMAS\)](#)

CLIMATE CHANGE

EU's goal for Durban is a roadmap for climate action endorsed by all major economies



The United Nations climate change conference taking place from 28 November to 9 December in Durban, South Africa, must agree on a roadmap and deadline for finalising an ambitious, comprehensive and legally binding global framework for climate action by all major economies, affirms EU Commissioner for Climate Action, Connie Hedegaard. Agreement on this roadmap is one of the reassurances the EU requires for entering into a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol.

Durban also needs to make operational the decisions taken last year in Cancún, Mexico, and tackle major issues not resolved there. It should result in a balanced package of decisions acceptable to all parties. *"The EU supports the Kyoto Protocol",* said Connie Hedegaard. *"But a second Kyoto period with only the EU, representing 11 % of global emissions, is clearly not enough for the climate. The key question is: when will others follow?"*

[Press release](#)

[MEMO](#)

[More information the UNFCCC Conference in Durban](#)

Commission proposes to enhance EU rules for monitoring greenhouse gas emissions



The European Commission, on 23 November, proposed legislation to significantly enhance the monitoring and reporting of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG).

Member States produce annual GHG inventories which are used to assess progress towards meeting Kyoto Protocol emission targets. They also gather and publish information on GHG projections and on their policies and measures to reduce emissions.

The current rules are largely based on the requirements arising from the Kyoto Protocol. The proposed new regulation goes a step beyond Kyoto in offering greater transparency in the data and information provided and ensuring compliance with the EU's climate change commitments. Timely and accurate data on GHG emissions is vital for knowing whether the EU and its Member States are on track to meet their emission targets and for developing robust new policies to address the climate challenge.

[Press release](#)

[MEMO](#)

EU ETS: Commission presents two proposals on monitoring, reporting and verification

The European Commission has submitted two draft regulations, one for monitoring and reporting and one for accreditation and verification in phase three of the EU Emissions Trading System to the Climate Change Committee. These regulations form part of a series of implementing provisions (auctioning regulation, benchmarking decision etc.) that need to be put in place ahead of the start of the third trading period in 2013. The third trading period will introduce among other things a stricter cap on allowances, more auctioning and fewer free allowances. The submission of the draft regulations has been preceded by an extensive stakeholder consultation.

[More information](#)

EU ETS: New registry rules to enter into force

On 18 November the European Commission adopted the new ETS registry rules. These rules enable the roll-out of substantially improved security features in the single registry in two steps next year. At the same time the amended regulation opens the way for the creation of the NER300 allowances. The delivery of allowances to the European Investment Bank (EIB) will take place swiftly after entry into force and will be announced at the ETS regulatory updates as well as the EIB's NER300 webpages. In the meantime preparatory work with the EIB continues with regard to account opening.

[More information](#)

Follow the latest developments on EU ETS on the [website](#) dedicated to all ETS regulatory updates.

BOOKSHOP

Available from the DG ENV Bookshop:

1. Leaflet - 2012 Blueprint to safeguard Europe's water resources – available in English in print and [online](#)
2. Brochure - Seas for Life: Protected, Sustainable, Shared European Seas by 2020 - available in English in print and [online](#)
3. Brochure - Conservation and Recovery of Threatened Birds in the European Union - available in English in print and [online](#)
4. Brochure - European Red List of Vascular Plants - available in English in print and [online](#)
5. Brochure - European Red List of Non-marine Molluscs - available in English in print and [online](#)
6. Brochure - European Red List of Freshwater Fishes - available in English in print and [online](#)

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EU Environment Policy Brief is produced by DG ENV F.3 (Communication) and E.1 (International Relations and Enlargement).

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