



News release

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Protecting the environment important for 94% of Europeans

Two-thirds say EU should do more

Air pollution and the growing amount of waste are the most pressing environmental concerns of Europeans after climate change. More and more take individual action to help reduce our environmental footprint, but a growing number also wants the EU to address their environmental concerns, a new Eurobarometer survey finds.

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries said: The ever-increasing environmental awareness of Europeans makes me proud. *This opinion poll confirms that people want us to deliver on green policies for a Europe that [protects and empowers](#). That a growing number of citizens see a role for themselves shows that they are also walking the talk. Separating waste, buying local products, and cutting down their consumption of single-use plastic bags – all are examples of EU policies giving Europeans a platform to take individual action.*"

High concern: Three years on from the most recent similar Eurobarometer survey, Europeans' concern about the environment remains invariably high, with 4 out of 5 saying that environmental issues affect their daily health and life. 90 % say they are worried about the impact of chemicals present in everyday products.

Individual responsibility for tackling pollution is on the increase: 87% see a role for themselves in protecting the environment – and 2/3 think they, as citizens, can do more. This does not mean that big polluters should be off the hook: almost all Europeans (94%) think that big polluters have the prime responsibility for repairing the damage they cause.

Individual actions: Separating waste for recycling (65 %), buying local products (43%), saving energy (35%) are the three most frequent actions taken by Europeans to protect the environment. A promising 72% of Europeans have cut down on their use of plastic bags, 38 % of them in the last year.

The role of the EU: the survey reveals trust and high expectations when it comes to the role of the EU in protecting environment and citizen's health. More than 2/3 says that decisions about protecting the environment should be made jointly within the EU – an increase of 7 % since the last survey in 2014, with Finland topping the list of above average increase with a plus of 17 %. But there are big variations across the EU: 4 in 5 in the Netherlands and Germany support a joint decision making, whereas only every

second in Croatia and the Czech Republic. A growing number want the EU to assist non-EU countries to improve their environmental standards (+ 8%).

Policy mix: Europeans show more or less equal support for a broad range of measures: investment in R&D for new solutions, heavier fines for environmental offenders, stricter enforcement and rules, financial incentives and better information and training to help people adopt greener habits.

To improve **air quality** stricter pollution controls for industry and energy production and for new vehicles are seen as most effective. Around half of Europeans think that air quality deteriorated in the last ten years.

Background

The latest Special Eurobarometer survey on "Attitudes of European citizens towards the environment" was carried out in the 28 Member States between 23 September and 2 October 2017. A total of 27,881 EU citizens from different social and demographic groups were interviewed face-to-face in their mother tongue.

Further information

The Eurobarometer survey, and national factsheets in all languages can be found: [here](#)