

# Environment statistics introduced

Statistics Explained

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[Eurostat](#), in close partnership with the [European Environment Agency](#) and the [Joint Research Centre](#), provides environmental statistics, accounts and indicators supporting the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the [European Union's](#) environmental policies, strategies and initiatives. Eurostat produces statistics and accounts on environmental pressures, impacts on the state and change of environmental quality and on the measures to avoid or mitigate impacts on the environment. This article provides an overview of Eurostat's products and the policies they inform.

## The European Green Deal

The [European Green Deal](#) is one of the priorities of the European Commission. The European Green Deal is a new growth strategy to make the EU's economy sustainable by turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities across all policy areas and making the transition just and inclusive for all. The European Green Deal announces a set of new transformative policies across the economy and increased efforts to follow-up on current legislation and policies relevant to it. All sectors of the economy are concerned; notably transport, energy, agriculture, buildings, and industries such as steel, cement, ICT, textiles and chemicals. A [Commission Communication](#) presented the European Green Deal and an [action plan](#) to achieve it.

Some of Eurostat's environmental statistics and their relation to European Green Deal are:

- Climate ambition: environmental accounts (air emissions accounts, energy accounts, environmental taxes), forest statistics;
- Circular economy: environmental accounts (material flow accounts, industry breakdowns of air emissions and energy use), waste statistics;
- Greening the Common Agricultural Policy / "Farm to Fork" Strategy: forest accounts data on the forested area of the EU;
- Preserving and protecting biodiversity: environmental accounts (air emission accounts and environmental protection expenditure accounts), production and consumption of chemical substances hazardous for the environment or human health, forestry statistics;
- Towards a zero-pollution ambition for a toxic free environment: waste statistics, data on production and consumption of chemical substances hazardous for the environment or human health,
- Mainstreaming sustainability in all EU policies: environmental accounts (environmental protection expenditure account, environmental taxes, environmental goods and services sector accounts)

Given the cross-cutting and overarching nature of the European Green Deal, it is not only environmental statistics that inform its policies but also other Eurostat statistics such as energy statistics, transport statistics, agricultural statistics, trade and production statistics, population, land use and land cover (LUCAS), etc.

## Sustainable development

Sustainable development has since long been at the heart of the European project and the EU Treaties give recognition to its economic, social and environmental dimensions that should be tackled together. The [2030 agenda for sustainable development](#) , adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015, provides an opportunity for the EU's own strategic orientation to be firmly anchored in the global effort to build a sustainable future. At the core of the 2030 agenda are [17 sustainable development goals \(SDGs\)](#) and 169 targets. The SDGs provide a useful framework for the EU's work on sustainable development and are closely linked to many of the EU's internal and external policies, as shown by the European Commission Communication on 'Next steps for a sustainable European future: European action for sustainability' ([COM \(2016\) 739](#)) and the [political guidelines](#) for the von der Leyen Commission.

The Communication also announces a detailed regular monitoring of the SDGs in an EU context from 2017 onwards. An EU SDG indicator set has been developed for this purpose, and a monitoring report is published annually. Eurostat maintains a [dedicated section on EU SDGs](#) where users can find the latest monitoring report, the list of indicators and other information.

The measures taken by the EU in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals are reviewed in the Commission [reflection paper 'Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030'](#) . This paper launches a debate on further developing the EU's sustainable development vision and the focus of sectoral policies after 2020, whilst preparing for the long term implementation of the SDGs.

## Climate strategies

The EU has set a series of emission reduction targets in the fight against climate change. The EU is on track to meet its greenhouse gas emission target for [2020](#) . As part of the European Green Deal, the European Commission has proposed to raise the [2030](#) reduction target to at least 55% compared to 1990 emissions. By [2050](#) , the EU aims to be climate neutral. The EU tracks its [progress on cutting emissions](#) through regular monitoring and reporting. The EU efforts contribute to the aim of the [Paris Agreement](#) of limiting global warming to well below 2°C and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C. The EU is actively working with other countries and regions to achieve these goals.

Eurostat contributes by improving the visibility and relevance of existing official statistics to support climate change analysis and reporting on greenhouse gas emissions. The dedicated section on [climate change statistics](#) brings together statistics from various domains in an easily accessible and structured way to help users better understand, analyse and monitor climate change. The Statistics Explained article '[Climate change - driving forces](#)' explores what is behind the changes in greenhouse gas emissions over time by analysing trends in official statistics on the underlying activities. In addition, [greenhouse gas emission inventories](#) are republished in Eurostat's database and related indicators are presented in various publications, for example [SDG monitoring reports](#) . Eurostat is a member of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) steering group and task force supporting the implementation of the [CES Recommendations on climate change-related statistics](#) .

## Circular economy

As part of the European Green Deal, the European Commission adopted in 2020 a new [Circular Economy Action Plan](#) , updating the previous one from 2015. The 2020 Circular Economy Action Plan calls to update by the end of 2021 the monitoring framework that was established in the 2018 [circular economy package](#)

Eurostat maintains the [circular economy monitoring framework](#) , showing progress in 10 indicators organised in four areas of the circular economy: production and consumption, waste management, secondary raw materials and competitiveness and innovation. Material flows can be visualised in this [Sankey diagram](#) .

## The seventh EU environment action programme (7th EAP)

Environment action programmes have guided the development of the EU's environment policy since the early 1970s. The current [EU environment action programme](#) — referred to as the 7th EAP — was adopted by Decision No 1386/2013/EU of the [European Parliament](#) and [Council](#) in November 2013 under the title ' [Living well, within the limits of our planet](#) '; it guides the EU's environment policy up to 2020. The programme draws on a number of recent strategic initiatives, including the [resource efficiency roadmap](#) , the [biodiversity strategy](#) and the [low carbon economy roadmap](#) . The programme is focused on nine priority objectives in three groups: key objectives, enabling objectives and horizontal (cross-cutting) objectives.

Responsibility for achieving the programme's goals will be shared by the EU and the Member States. Practical steps to be taken include phasing out environmentally harmful subsidies, shifting [taxation](#) from labour to pollution, drawing up partnership implementation agreements between Member States and the European Commission on the implementation of environmental laws, and developing a system for reporting and tracking environment-related expenditure in the EU budget.

The Commission's evaluation of the 7th EAP covers achievements from 2014-2018 and focuses on progress made in environmental areas. The evaluation of this programme provides an analysis of the added value of a central framework with recommendations for more resources, dedicated monitoring and improved integration.

Eurostat's statistics, accounts and indicators contribute to the implementation of the 7th EAP, playing a particularly important role under the enabling objectives.

## European environmental accounts

Environmental accounts analyse the links between the environment and the economy by organising the environmental information in a way that is consistent with the accounting principles of national accounts. Environmental accounts can be used, for example, to identify: efficiency and productivity in use of natural resources and energy (carbon, materials, water, etc.); how circular is our economy; estimate environmental footprints; which are the most polluting activities or the ones that most deplete natural resources; what is the role of government and households; how expensive it is to protect the environment and who pays for it; growth and jobs in the environmental economy, etc.

The environmental accounts methodology is based on the system of integrated environmental and economic accounting (SEEA 2012), published by the [United Nations](#) , the [European Commission](#) , the [International Monetary Fund](#) , the [OECD](#) and the [World Bank](#) .

The legal basis for European environmental accounts is [Regulation \(EU\) No 691/2011](#) on European environmental economic accounts and its amendment in [Regulation \(EU\) No 538/2014](#) . There are six modules, namely air emissions accounts, environmental taxes, material flow accounts, energy accounts, environmental protection expenditure and the environmental goods and services sector. In addition to those six mandatory modules, there are two voluntary environmental accounts on forests and environmental subsidies and similar transfers.

This legislation strengthens the [coherence](#) and availability of environmental accounts on an EU-wide basis by providing a legal framework for their compilation, including methodology, common standards, definitions, classifications and accounting rules.

Indicators derived from the environmental accounts are used to monitor EU progress towards a more resource-efficient and circular economy, to assess progress towards sustainable growth as defined by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and to follow the implementation of the 7th Environment Action Programme, as well as for analyses of Members States' performance in the frame of the European Semester (e.g. indicators on resource productivity, Domestic Material Consumption, environmental taxes, etc.).

## Initiatives for water and waste

Eurostat's [statistics on water quantities](#) , together with data on water quality reported to the European Environment Agency, will help measure the success of this initiative.

The EU's approach to waste management is based on the 'waste hierarchy' which sets the following priority order when shaping waste policy and managing waste at the operational level: prevention, (preparing for) [reuse](#) , [recycling](#) , [recovery](#) and, as the least preferred option, [disposal](#) (which includes [landfilling](#) and [incineration](#) without energy recovery). The objectives and targets set in EU legislation have been key drivers to improve waste management, stimulate innovation in recycling, limit the use of landfilling, and create incentives to change consumer behaviour. Turning waste into a resource is one key to a circular economy.

Eurostat produces basic statistics and indicators for the EU's waste policy. Since the [Regulation \(EU\) No 849/2010](#) entered into force in 2010, the usability and policy relevance of waste statistics have increased. The revised legislative framework on waste has entered into force in July 2018. It sets clear targets for reduction of waste and establishes an ambitious and credible long-term path for waste management and recycling.

Eurostat's [website on waste](#) is the main source of data and background information on waste generation and management in the EU, presenting statistics for key waste streams by waste category and by economic activity and treatment method, such as recycling and disposal.

## See also

- [All articles on environment](#)
- [All articles on sustainable development goals](#)
- [All articles on Europe 2020](#)

## Main tables

- [Environment \(t\\_env\)](#)

## Database

- [Environment \(env\)](#)

## Dedicated section

- [Environment](#)
- [Sustainable development indicators](#)
- [Circular economy](#)
- [Waste](#)
- [Environmental data centre on waste](#)

## Methodology

- [Environment statistics methodology](#)

## External links

- [European Commission — Environment](#)
- [European Environment Agency](#)
- [Joint Research Centre](#)
- [Seventh environment action programme](#)

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