

EU ENVIROMENTAL POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

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6th Semester

Panteion University, 10-06-2024

PRESENTATION GOALS

Highlighting and discuss

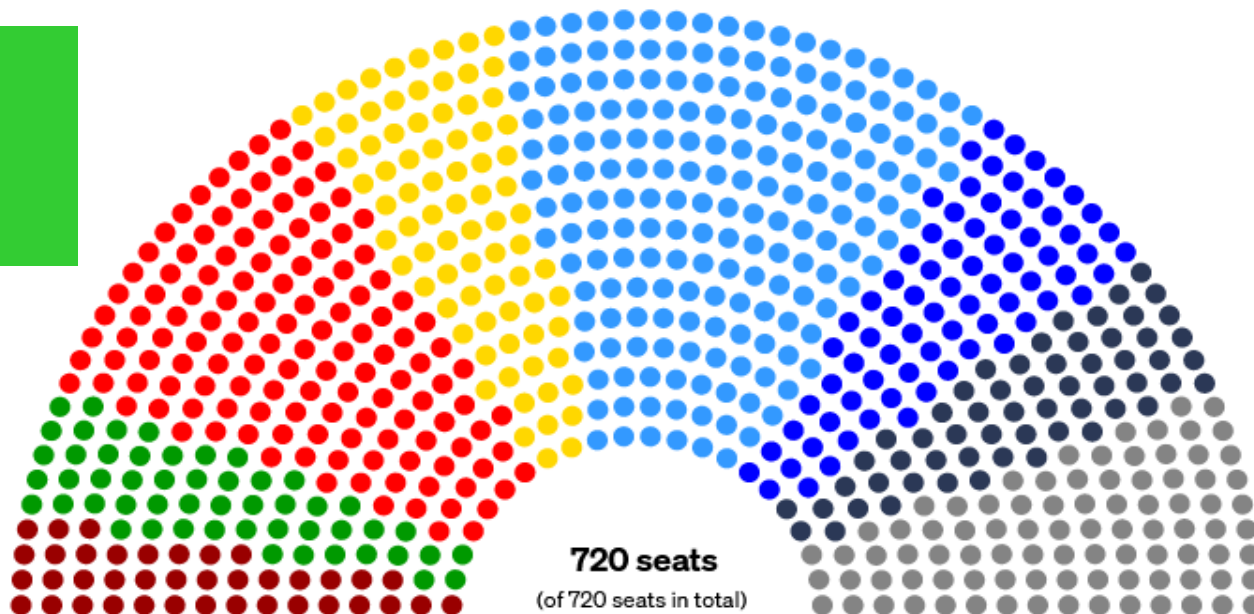
- ❖ state of the environment – problems, threats, challenges, and opportunities
- ❖ policy choices and contents during almost 70 years of European integration and efforts to address environmental issues;
- ❖ sustainable development as the predominant choice after 1992;
- ❖ 3 different stages of environmental policy, as identified by key choices and features of the system;
- ❖ the programmatic dimension of Environment Policy and Action Programmes as a key framework for choices and efforts;
- ❖ 4 Action Programmes after 1992, 4 decades of policy;
- ❖ a new framework for the decade 2020-2030 – The 8th Action Programme;
- ❖ strategic planning: European Green Deal and other initiatives;
- ❖ policy overall evaluation and its outcomes/impacts;
- ❖ policy perspectives.

CONTENT

- I. Introduction
- II. Statistics
- III. Environmental issues
- IV. EU environmental policy stages
- V. A new policy framework
- VI. Conclusions

INTRODUCTION

A NEW LANDSCAPE (June 2024)



Participation: 51.08%
(+0.42%)

Group	Seats	Change	Seats %
● European People's Party	190	+14 ▲	26.4 %
● Socialists and Democrats	136	-3 ▼	18.9 %
● Renew	80	-22 ▼	11.1 %
● Conservatives and Reformists	76	+7 ▲	10.6 %
● Identity and Democracy	58	+9 ▲	8.1 %
● Greens	52	-19 ▼	7.2 %
● Left	39	+2 ▲	5.4 %
● Nonaligned	89	+27 ▲	12.4 %

Source : POLITICO

<https://www.politico.eu/europe-poll-of-polls/european-parliament-election/>

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The case of the proposal for a regulation on nature restoration

- ❖ The **EP is a co-legislator in the EU** within the framework of the Ordinary Legislative Procedure, co-deciding in environmental matters.
- ❖ On 22 June 2022, the Commission tabled a proposal for a regulation on nature restoration.
- ❖ The EP **ENVI committee** voted on amendments to the proposed text on 15 and 27 June 2023. The final vote was a tie (44 votes in favour, 44 votes against, with no abstention), meaning that there was no majority in the committee to support the nature restoration proposal as amended. **ENVI was therefore bound to table to plenary a proposal to reject the Commission's text.**
- ❖ **The proposal for a rejection did not pass in plenary** (312 votes to 324 and 12 abstentions). On **12 July, Parliament adopted its position** with 336 votes in favour, 300 against and 13 abstentions.
- ❖ **A deal was reached on 9 November 2023.** The **co-legislators** backed the ambition to restore at least 20 % of the EU's land and 20 % of sea areas by 2030, and all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050.
- ❖ The **agreement was approved by COREPER on 22 November and by ENVI on 29 November 2023.** On **27 February 2024, Parliament formally adopted it in plenary**, with 329 votes in favour, 275 against and 24 abstentions.

ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL, 17 JUNE 2024

Nature restoration law

The Council formally adopted the – first of its kind – regulation on nature restoration. This law aims to put measures in place to restore at least 20% of the EU's land and sea areas by 2030, and all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050.

It sets specific, legally binding targets and obligations for nature restoration in terrestrial, marine, freshwater, forest, agricultural and urban ecosystems. Specific measures include protecting pollinators and grassland butterflies, protecting urban green spaces and planting at least three billion additional trees by 2030 at the EU level.

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/env/2024/06/17/>

https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/nature-restoration-law_en

**Nature restoration law:
Council gives final green light**

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/pressreleases/2024/06/17/nature-restoration-law-council-gives-final-green-light/>



NATURE RESTORATION LAW

The conflict potential of environmental issues

EURACTIV

The Austrian People's Party (ÖVP/EPP) is seeking to file criminal charges against Environment Minister Leonore Gewessler for abuse of office following her vote in favour of the controversial nature restoration law in the EU Council on Monday (17 June)...seeing the law adopted by a narrow margin – on Monday...

... Abuse of office is a key charge in Austrian corruption law and carries a term of six months to five years, extended to 10 years when the inflicted damage exceeds €50,000...

Nature restoration: Austrian conservatives charge Gewessler for abuse of office, by Nikolaus J. Kurmayer, Euractiv, June 17, 2024, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy-environment/news/nature-restoration-austrian-conservatives-charge-gewessler-for-abuse-of-office/>

POLITICO

The EU on Monday proved it can still pass a green bill. All it took was a rogue Austrian minister willing to throw away her job, get sued by her own government, and potentially tank her entire coalition...

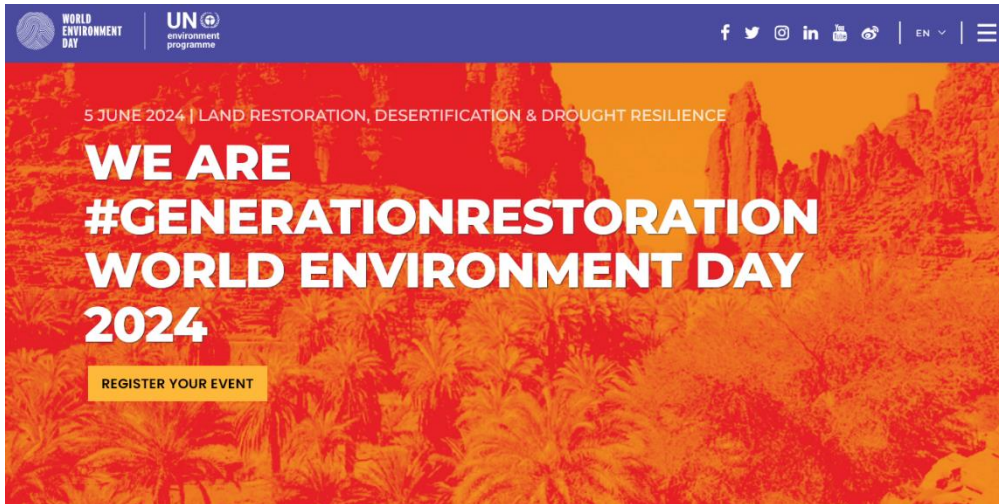
Her decision, which defied a stern letter from Nehammer claiming Gewessler couldn't legally speak for Austria, gave the measure just enough support to pass.

Queue the lawsuits, potential fines, dueling recriminations — and, for Gewessler, a great campaign ad.

*... It was a remarkable moment. For five years, officials and lawmakers have broadly worked together to erect the EU's Green Deal. No longer: **From here on, green files are all likely to see knock-down, drag-out fights ...***

Rogue Austrian minister burns bridges to save EU nature law, by Louise Guillot, Politico, June 17, 2024, <https://www.politico.eu/article/rogue-austria-environment-minister-leonore-gewessler-burns-bridges-save-eu-nature-restoration-law/>

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY



#GenerationRestoration

We cannot turn back time, but we can grow forests, revive water sources, and bring back soils. We are the generation that can make peace with land.

World Environment Day, marked annually on 5 June, was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1972. Over the past five decades, the Day has grown to be one of the largest global platforms for environmental outreach. Tens of millions of people participate online and through in-person activities, events and actions around the world.

<https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/saudi-arabia-host-world-environment-day-2024-focus-land-restoration>

<https://www.worldenvironmentday.global/>

https://commission.europa.eu/news/world-environment-day-2024-2024-06-05_en

EU GREEN WEEK 2024

❖ "Towards a water resilient Europe".

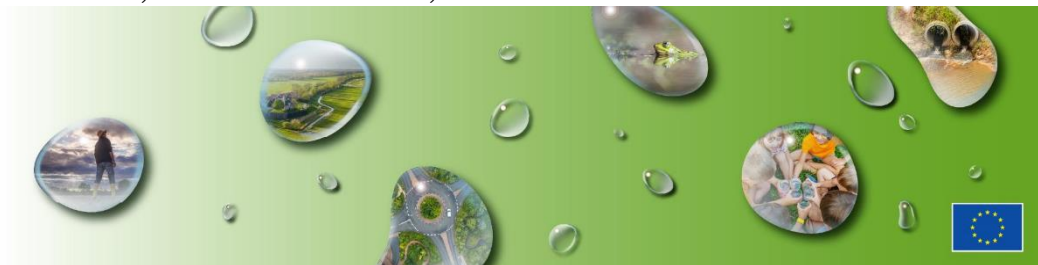
*Citizens across the continent are facing a surge in natural disasters like **droughts and floods**, which have made the **EU's water challenges more severe** and brought a **new awareness of the need for water-resilience**. Pressures on water resources come from **decades of mismanagement** of this precious resource, **pollution**, and **ecosystem degradation**, as well as from **climate change**. Worldwide, **the water cycle is out of balance**, closely intertwined with climate change and biodiversity loss, **with each crisis worsening the other**.*

❖ The Green Week 2024 Conference was held on 29-30 May.

❖ **EU Green Week 2024 conference** (European Commission, DG Environment)

https://green-week.event.europa.eu/brussels-conference-29-30-may-2024_en

❖ **An opportunity** to discuss the issues, raise awareness, search for solutions...



https://green-week.event.europa.eu/index_en

EU GREEN WEEK 2023

- ❖ **"Delivering a Net-Zero World"**.
- ❖ 3-12 June 2023, Brussels.
- ❖ **EU Green Week 2023 conference** (European Commission, DG Environment)
https://green-week.event.europa.eu/eu-green-week-2023-conference_en
- ❖ **An opportunity** to discuss the issues, raise awareness, search for solutions...



<https://wayback.archive-it.org/12090/20231129125521/>
https://green-week.event.europa.eu/index_en

THE POLICY AND ITS CONTEXT

- ❖ A policy that **seeks solutions to real problems, challenges, threats and seizing opportunities**, with an **important historical track record and real results**.
- ❖ A significant **EU acquis** and a **policy momentum**, reinforced by the rhetoric and the **paradigm of sustainable development**.
- ❖ A series of **visionary objectives and initiatives in which the environmental dimension is mainstreamed** (e.g. climate-neutral economy, climate-resilient EU, energy (just) transition, circular economy, development of Trans-European Networks, Blue Growth, etc.).
- ❖ Some **important developments at EU level / for the EU**:
 - ◆ A new European Parliament and a very soon new European Commission.
 - ◆ European Council's Strategic Agenda for 2019-2024 and European Green Deal, setting the European Union priorities. Towards a new Strategic Agenda for 2024-2029.
 - ◆ New financial and regulatory framework for the financial period 2021-2027 and the financing of EU options and policies – NextGenerationEU.
 - ◆ Energy crisis and EU options as consequence of the Russian invasion and the war in Ukraine.
 - ◆ Eighth Environment Action Programme, with a ten-year horizon, i.e. until 2030.

STATISTICS

SOME STATISTICS...

94%
OF THE EUROPEANS SAY THAT
PROTECTING THE
ENVIRONMENT IS
**IMPORTANT TO
THEM PERSONALLY**



53%
SAY IT IS
**VERY
IMPORTANT**
41% SAY IT IS
FAIRLY IMPORTANT

78% agree that environmental issues
**have a direct effect on their
daily life and their health**



CLIMATE CHANGE IS PERCEIVED BY EUROPEANS AS A
**VERY SERIOUS PROBLEM IN
THEIR COUNTRY (76%) AND IN THE EU (77%)**

Respondents consider
the **most important
environmental
issues** to be



53%
Climate
change



46%
Air
pollution



46%
Growing amount
of waste

SOME STATISTICS...

WHAT ARE THE **MOST EFFECTIVE WAYS OF TACKLING ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS** ACCORDING TO EUROPEANS?

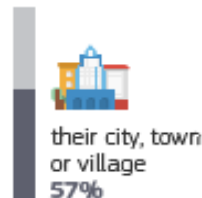
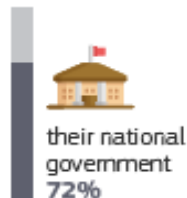


Just over a fifth of the respondents (**21%**) say they **have taken seven or more environmentally friendly actions** in the past six months



EUROPEANS WANT **MORE TO BE DONE** TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

The majority think that **not enough is being done** by:

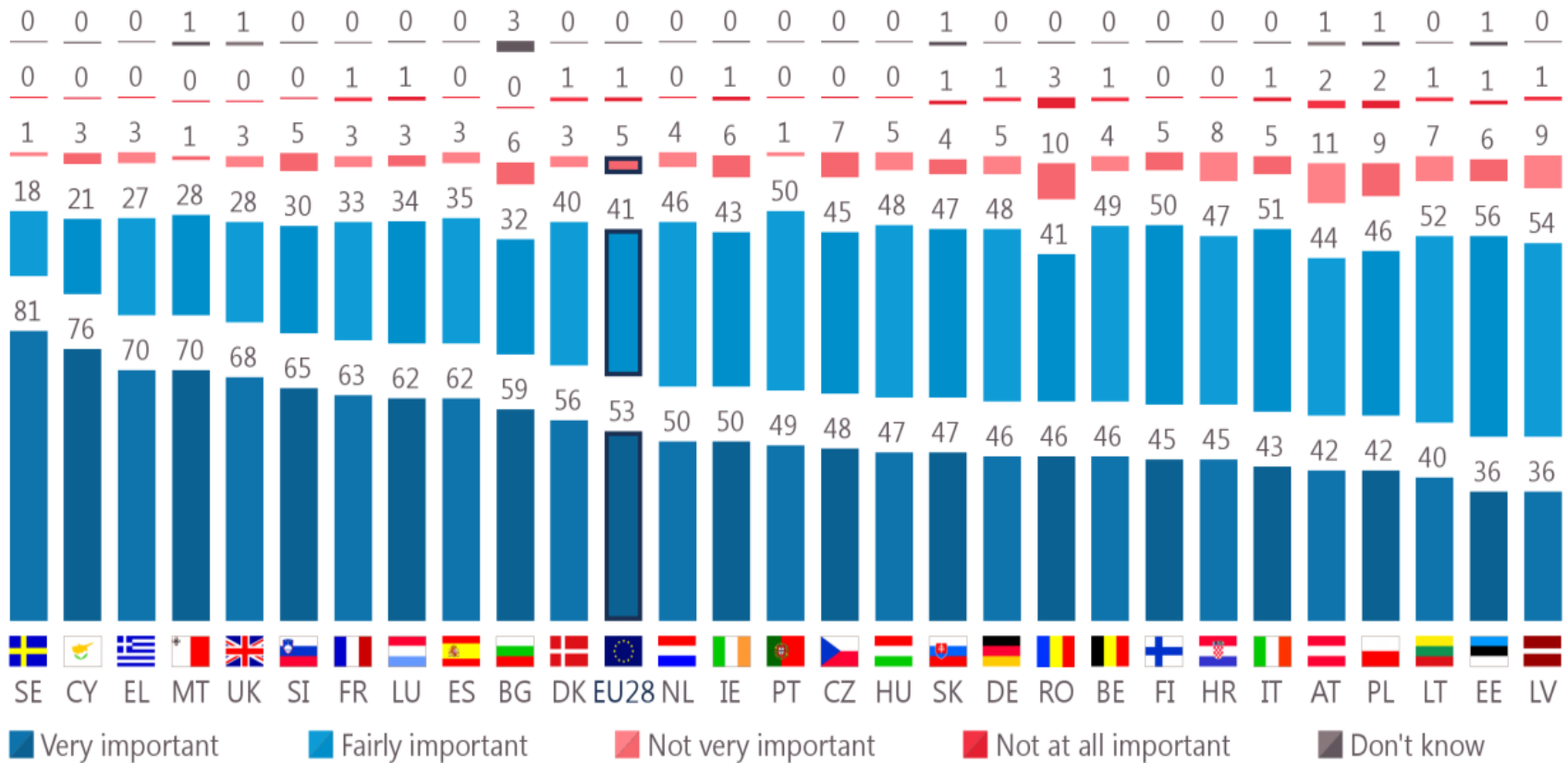


SEVEN IN TEN EUROPEANS THINK THAT ENVIRONMENTAL DECISIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN JOINTLY WITHIN THE EU

European Commission (2020). Attitudes of Europeans towards the Environment - Infographics European Union

SOME STATISTICS...

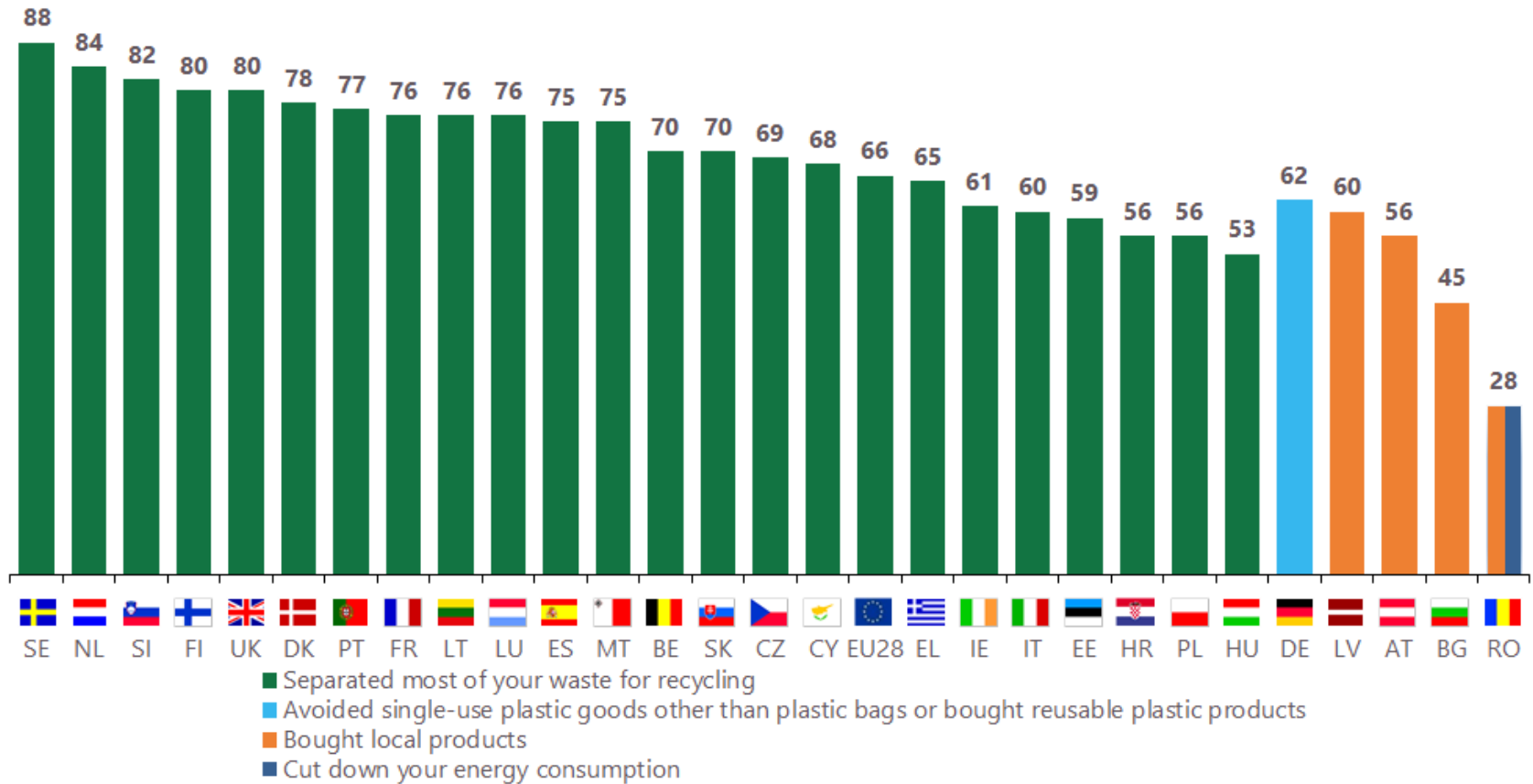
QA1 How important is protecting the environment to you personally?
(%)



European Commission (2020). Attitudes of Europeans towards the Environment – Special Eurobarometer 501

SOME STATISTICS...

QA6 Have you done any of the following in the past six months?
 (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE) (% - **THE MOST MENTIONED ANSWER BY COUNTRY**)



SOME STATISTICS...

QA6

Have you done any of the following in the past six months?
(MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE) (%)

		Separated most of your waste for recycling	Avoided single-use plastic goods other than plastic bags or bought reusable plastic products	Bought local products	Cut down your energy consumption	Spoken to others about environmental issues	Repaired a product instead of replacing it	Avoided buying over-packaged products	Cut down your water consumption	Chosen a more environmentally-friendly way of travelling (walk, bicycle, public transport, electric car)	Bought products marked with an environmental label	Used your car less by avoiding unnecessary trips, working from home (teleworking), etc.	Bought second-hand products instead of new ones	Changed your diet to more sustainable food	Joined a demonstration, attended a workshop, taken part in an activity
EU28		66	45	42	37	32	32	31	29	27	22	21	21	19	7
EU27		65	45	41	37	32	31	30	30	27	22	21	20	19	7
BE		70	42	41	43	33	32	35	35	35	18	26	25	23	7
BG		23	32	45	34	22	27	22	18	25	10	13	22	10	3
CZ		69	29	34	31	18	26	19	32	30	20	13	15	10	2
DK		78	58	44	43	60	37	31	33	35	51	26	44	29	7
DE		61	62	55	36	45	35	50	24	26	28	29	21	24	7
EE		59	47	53	29	29	36	36	13	33	19	22	32	15	4
IE		61	37	43	34	25	29	31	30	18	20	17	20	17	7
EL		65	47	47	40	26	28	19	30	25	14	15	7	12	5
ES		75	40	36	38	28	25	27	44	28	12	19	14	13	6
FR		76	42	52	45	36	42	33	39	30	27	26	32	28	8
HR		56	32	36	21	23	31	21	20	22	20	13	14	10	3
IT		60	37	31	31	20	21	20	25	19	13	12	9	9	9
CY		68	49	52	49	31	27	24	46	18	20	13	4	26	7
LV		49	42	60	34	26	33	26	16	36	20	16	27	14	3
LT		76	42	44	20	23	30	24	10	19	20	9	28	13	2
LU		76	61	53	40	43	37	48	33	31	32	23	22	26	9
HU		53	45	29	38	22	22	23	24	26	12	15	14	9	6
MT		75	46	49	34	24	26	27	27	19	17	15	12	8	6
NL		84	61	35	59	61	47	32	32	54	31	33	37	38	7
AT		46	44	56	31	35	30	43	19	24	32	18	17	26	11
PL		56	35	20	29	19	20	15	26	21	18	13	12	9	6
PT		77	36	26	31	20	18	16	36	12	10	6	6	11	4
RO		26	26	28	28	18	22	17	21	22	13	14	15	10	8
SI		82	51	48	43	31	32	36	30	27	22	20	14	20	6
SK		70	35	43	32	31	32	23	34	31	17	17	23	15	7
FI		80	55	54	41	29	45	34	22	37	35	26	40	29	4
SE		88	64	68	43	65	52	36	24	57	65	34	47	39	11
UK		80	45	48	42	32	39	38	26	29	21	25	30	22	5

Highest percentage per country

Lowest percentage per country

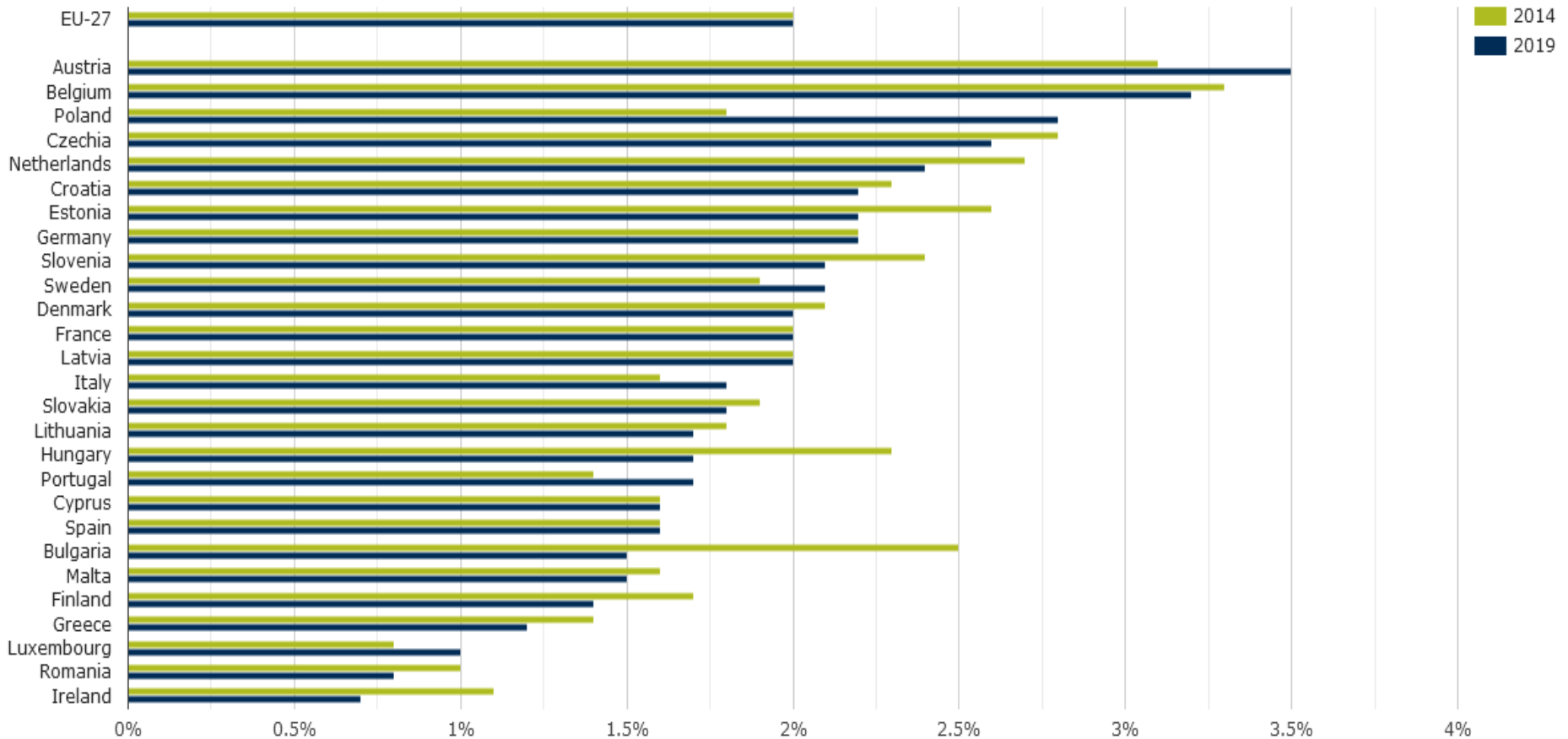
Highest percentage per item

Lowest percentage per item

European Commission (2020).
Attitudes of Europeans towards the
Environment – Special
Eurobarometer 501

SOME STATISTICS...

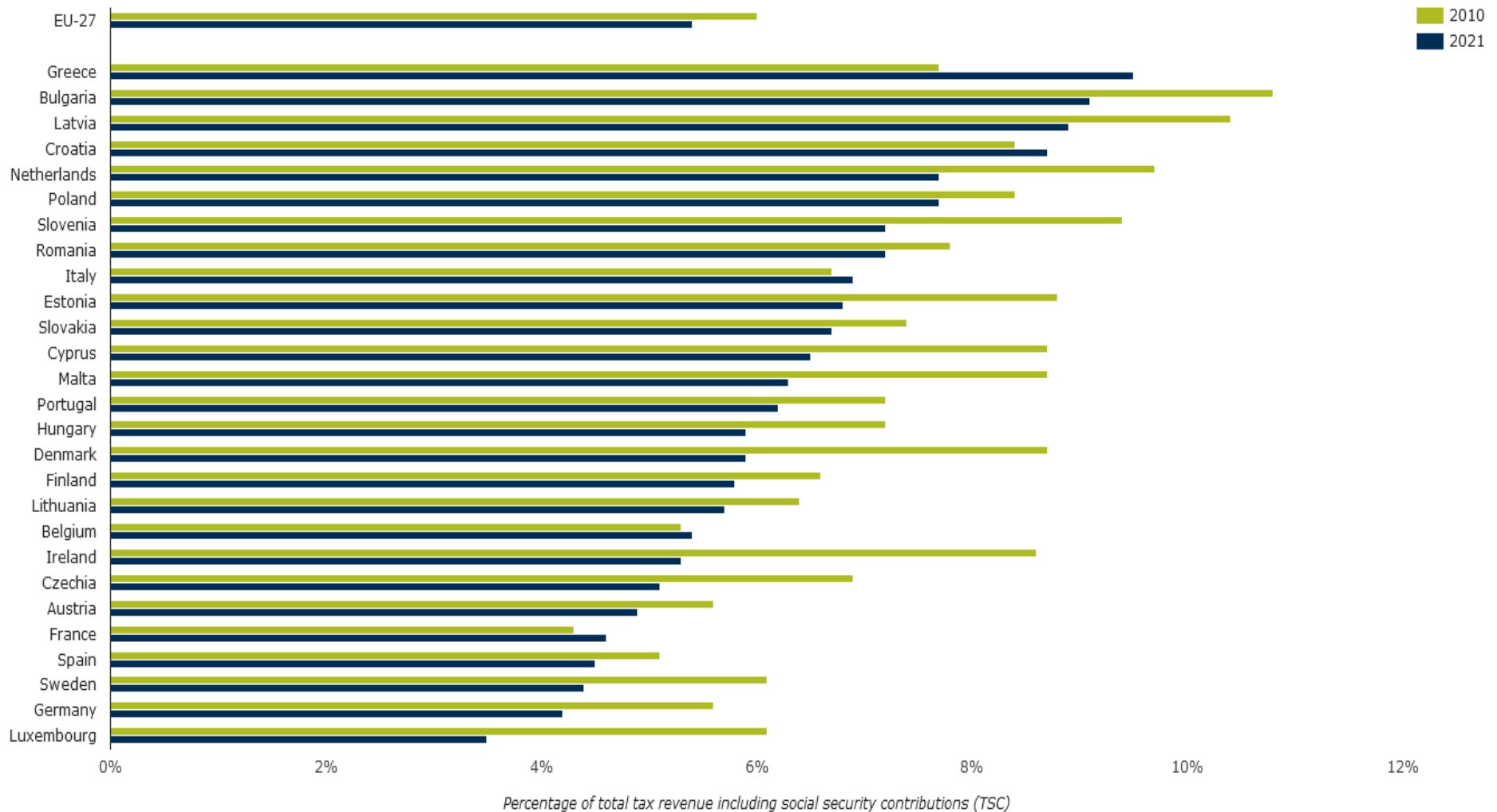
Chart – Environmental protection expenditure, by EU Member State, 2014 and 2019



Percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

SOME STATISTICS...

Chart – Revenue from environmental taxes as a share (%) of total tax revenue, including social security contributions, by EU Member State, 2010 and 2021



ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

ENVIRONMENTAL STATE OF PLAY

Importance of reviewing and analysing the issues

- ❖ They provide an **insight into the issues** themselves, their nature, character and specific characteristics, their interrelationships and interactions, their implications.
- ❖ They allow the **identification of existing and emerging trends** and the **elaboration of scenarios** to forecast the evolution of issues, based on their starting point and path, as well as their presumed dynamics, as a necessary background for policy decisions and choices.
- ❖ They provide a concrete basis and, at the same time, a **framework for evaluating of the efforts taken** and **assessing the progress made** in addressing the issues and achieving the objectives.
- ❖ They show the **distance from goals** and the extent of efforts to be made to meet them.
- ❖ They **activate the interest** of science, society, the economy, and the policy-making elites, and, at the same time, **create an impetus for the development of environmental awareness** in the pursuit of sustainable goals, norms and behaviours.
- ❖ They form an **objective and rational basis for the prioritisation of policy goals**, as well as the **formulation, adoption and implementation of necessary strategies, measures and interventions**.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

GEO 6



Published in time for the Fourth United Nations Environmental Assembly, UN Environment's sixth Global Environment Outlook (2019) calls on decision makers to take immediate action to address pressing environmental issues to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals as well as other Internationally Agreed Environment Goals



ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

5th Assessment Report of the IPCC

ipcc
INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON climate change

CLIMATE CHANGE 2014

Synthesis Report



A REPORT OF THE
INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE

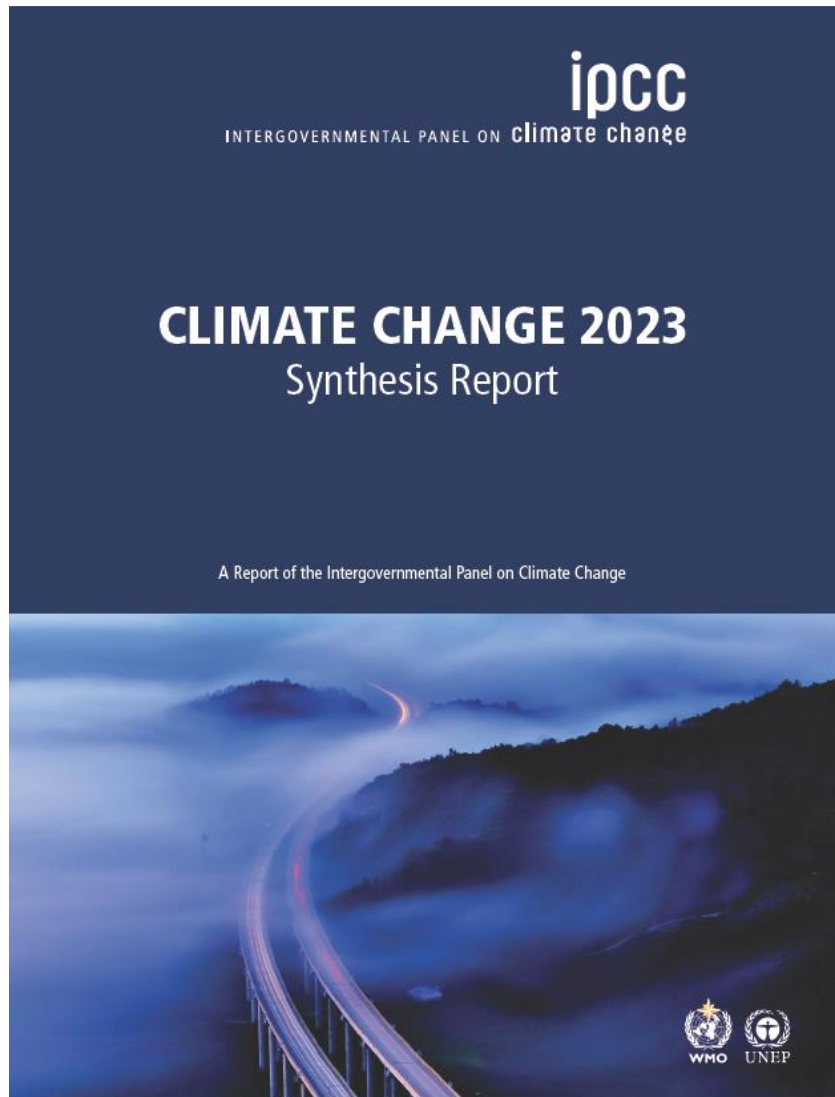


The Synthesis Report distills and integrates the findings of the 5th Assessment Report (AR5) of the IPCC, the most comprehensive assessment of climate change undertaken thus far by the IPCC.

*...The SYR confirms that **human influence** on the climate system is **clear and growing**, with impacts observed across all continents and oceans. Many of the observed **changes** since the 1950s are **unprecedented** over decades to millennia. The IPCC is now 95 percent certain that **humans are the main cause of current global warming**. In addition, the SYR finds that the more human activities disrupt the climate, the greater the **risks of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems, and long-lasting changes** in all components of the climate system. The SYR highlights that **we have the means to limit climate change and its risks**, with many solutions that allow for continued economic and human development. However, stabilizing temperature increase to below 2°C relative to pre-industrial levels will require an **urgent and fundamental departure from business as usual**. Moreover, the longer we wait to take action, the more it will cost and the greater the technological, economic, social and institutional challenges we will face... (IPCC, 2015)*

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

6th Assessment Report of the IPCC



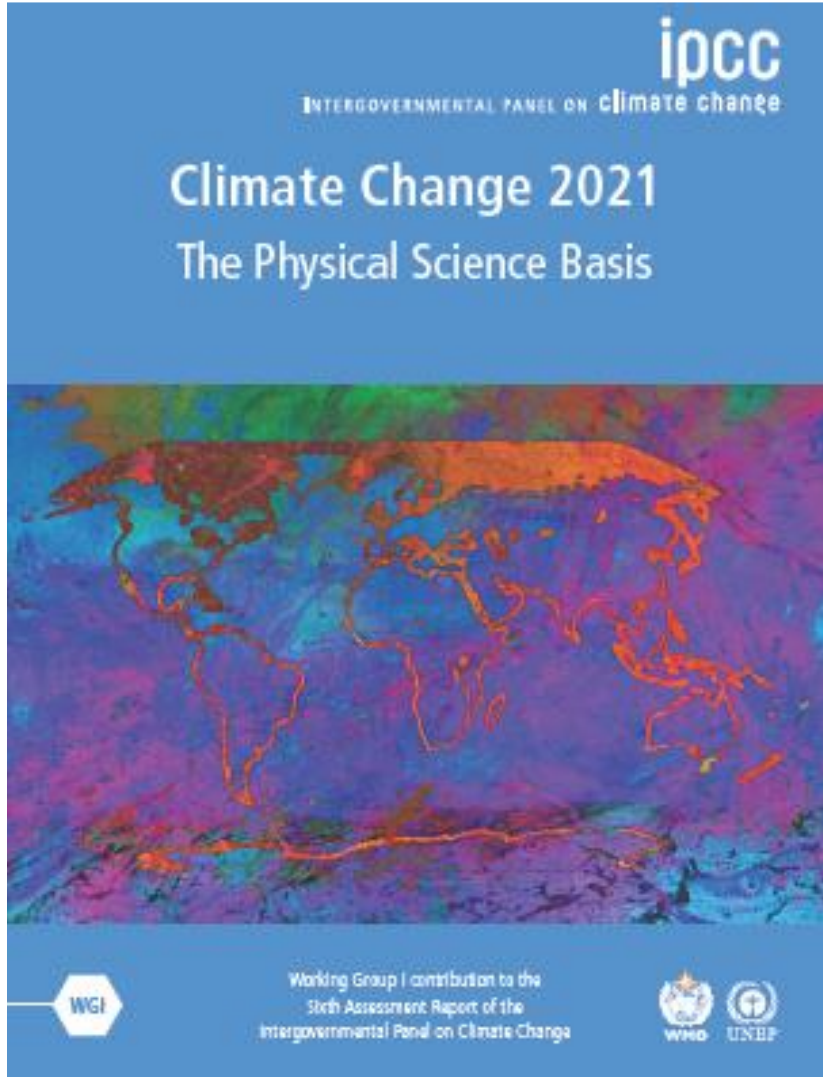
... This Synthesis Report (SYR) constitutes the final product of the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). It summarizes the state of knowledge of climate change, its widespread impacts and risks, and climate change mitigation and adaptation, based on the peer-reviewed scientific, technical, and socio-economic literature since the publication of the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) in 2014...

... Human activities, principally through emissions of greenhouse gases, have unequivocally caused global warming, with global surface temperature reaching 1.1°C above 1850–1900 in 2011–2020. Global greenhouse gas emissions have continued to increase over 2010–2019, with unequal historical and ongoing contributions arising from unsustainable energy use, land use and land-use change, lifestyles and patterns of consumption and production across regions, between and within countries, and between individuals (high confidence). Human-caused climate change is already affecting many weather and climate extremes in every region across the globe. This has led to widespread adverse impacts on food and water security, human health and on economies and society and related losses and damages to nature and people (high confidence). Vulnerable communities who have historically contributed the least to current climate change are disproportionately affected (high confidence)...

(IPCC, 2023)

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

6th Assessment Report of the IPCC



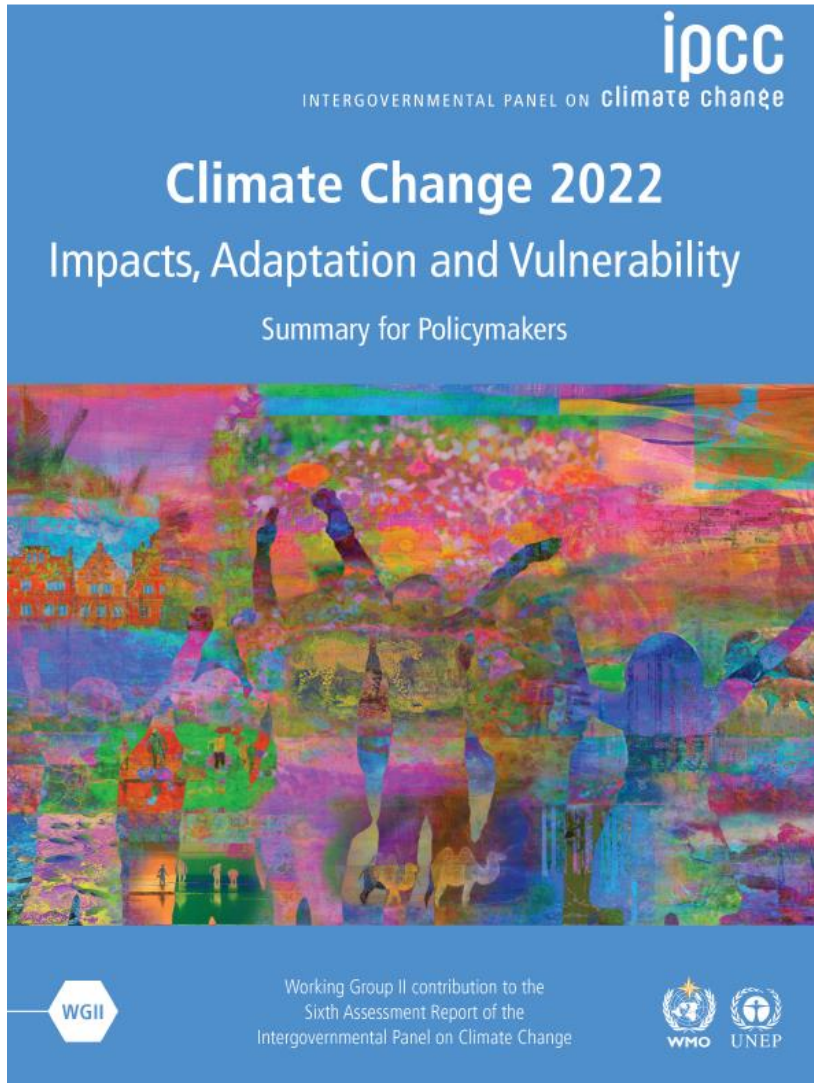
This Summary for Policymakers (SPM) presents key findings of the Working Group I (WGI) contribution to the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report (AR6)1 on the physical science basis of climate change.

...Global surface temperature will continue to increase until at least the mid-century under all emissions scenarios considered. Global warming of 1.5°C and 2°C will be exceeded during the 21st century unless deep reductions in CO2 and other greenhouse gas emissions occur in the coming decades.... (IPCC, 2021)

*...This report reflects extraordinary efforts under exceptional circumstances...The innovations in this report, and advances in climate science that it reflects, provide **an invaluable input into climate negotiations and decision-making**... (Hoesung Lee, Chair of the IPCC)*

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

6th Assessment Report of the IPCC



This Summary for Policymakers (SPM) presents key findings of the Working Group II (WGII) contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) of the IPCC.

The Working Group II contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report assesses the impacts of climate change, looking at ecosystems, biodiversity, and human communities at global and regional levels. It also reviews vulnerabilities and the capacities and limits of the natural world and human societies to adapt to climate change.

*...Global warming, reaching 1.5°C in the near-term, would cause unavoidable increases in multiple climate hazards and present multiple risks to ecosystems and humans (very high confidence). The level of risk will depend on concurrent near-term trends in vulnerability, exposure, level of socioeconomic development and adaptation (high confidence). **Near-term actions that limit global warming to close to 1.5°C would substantially reduce projected losses and damages related to climate change in human systems and ecosystems, compared to higher warming levels, but cannot eliminate them all** (very high confidence). ... (IPCC, 2022, finalized on 27 February 2022 during the 12th Session of Working Group II and 55th Session of the IPCC)*

ΠΕΡΙΒΑΛΛΟΝΤΙΚΑ ΖΗΤΗΜΑΤΑ

Global Warming of 1,5° C



*The Special Report confirms that **climate change is already affecting people, ecosystems and livelihoods** all around the world. It shows that limiting warming to 1.5°C is possible within the laws of chemistry and physics but would **require unprecedented transitions** in all aspects of society. It finds that there are clear benefits to keeping warming to 1.5°C rather than 2°C or higher. **Every bit of warming matters.** And it shows that limiting warming to 1.5°C can go **hand in hand with** achieving other global goals such as the Sustainable Development Agenda. **Every year matters and every choice matters.***

This Special Report also shows that recent trends in emissions and the level of international ambition indicated by nationally determined contributions, within the Paris Agreement, deviate from a track consistent with limiting warming to well below 2°C. Without increased and urgent mitigation ambition in the coming years, leading to a sharp decline in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, global warming will surpass 1.5°C in the following decades, leading to irreversible loss of the most fragile ecosystems, and crisis after crisis for the most vulnerable people and societies. (IPCC, 2018)

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

SOER 2020 (1)



This is the 6th SOER published by the European Environment Agency (EEA), and this 2020 edition identifies serious gaps between the state of the environment and existing EU near- and long-term policy targets.

The message of urgency cannot be overstated. In the last 18 months alone, major global scientific reports from the IPCC, IPBES, IRP and UN Environment have been published, all carrying similar messages: current trajectories are fundamentally unsustainable; these trajectories are interconnected and linked to our main systems of production and consumption; and time is running out to come up with credible responses to bend the trend.

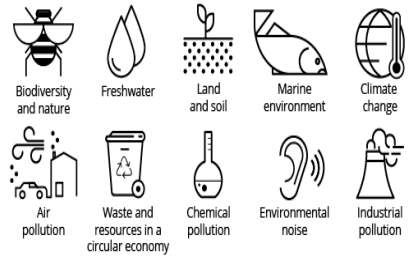
(EEA, The European environment – state and outlook 2020. Executive summary, Luxemburg, 2019)

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

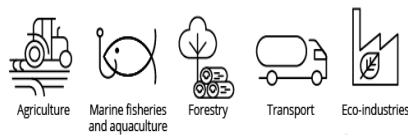
SOER 2020 (2)

State of the environment building tools and building blocks

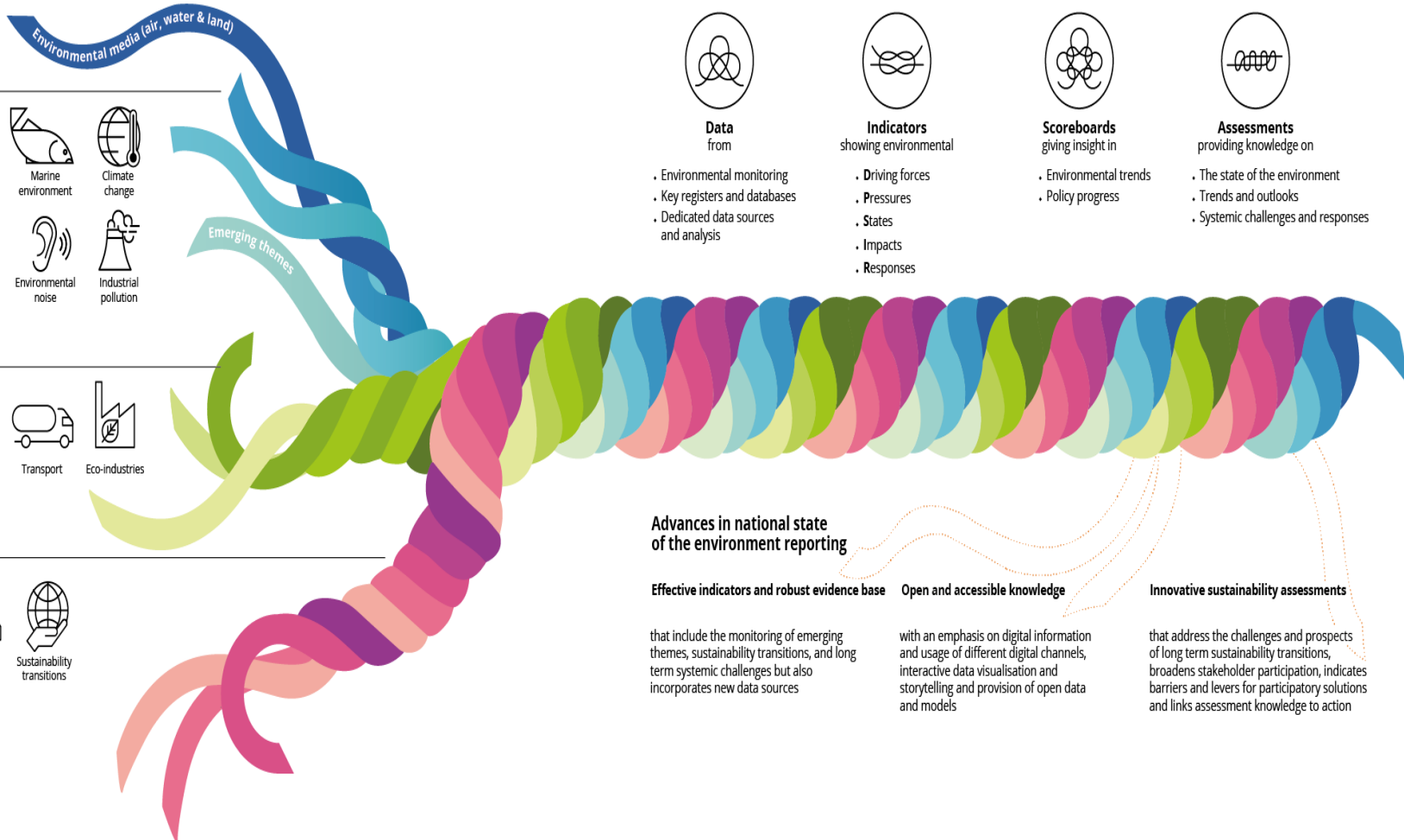
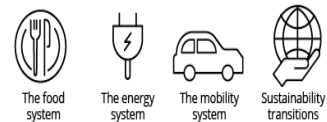
Themes



Sectors



Systems and sustainability transitions



Data from

- Environmental monitoring
- Key registers and databases
- Dedicated data sources and analysis



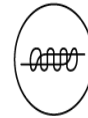
Indicators showing environmental

- Driving forces
- Pressures
- States
- Impacts
- Responses



Scoreboards giving insight in

- Environmental trends
- Policy progress



Assessments providing knowledge on

- The state of the environment
- Trends and outlooks
- Systemic challenges and responses

Advances in national state of the environment reporting

Effective indicators and robust evidence base

that include the monitoring of emerging themes, sustainability transitions, and long term systemic challenges but also incorporates new data sources

Open and accessible knowledge

with an emphasis on digital information and usage of different digital channels, interactive data visualisation and storytelling and provision of open data and models

Innovative sustainability assessments

that address the challenges and prospects of long term sustainability transitions, broadens stakeholder participation, indicates barriers and levers for participatory solutions and links assessment knowledge to action

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

SOER 2020 (3)

*In 2020, Europe faces environmental challenges of unprecedented scale and urgency. Although EU environment and climate policies have delivered substantial benefits over recent decades, **Europe faces persistent problems** in areas such as biodiversity loss, resource use, climate change impacts and environmental risks to health and well-being. Global megatrends such as demographic change are intensifying many environmental challenges, while rapid technological change brings new risks and uncertainties.*

*Recognising these challenges, **the EU has committed to a range of long-term sustainability goals** with the overall aim of 'living well, within the limits of our planet'. **Achieving these goals will not be possible without a rapid and fundamental shift** in the character and ambition of Europe's responses. Europe needs to find ways to transform the key societal systems that drive environment and climate pressures and health impacts — rethinking not just technologies and production processes but also consumption patterns and ways of living. This will require immediate and concerted action, engaging diverse policy areas and actors across society in enabling systemic change.*

*Europe stands **at a critical juncture** in 2020. Its leaders have opportunities to shape future developments that will not be available to their successors. **The coming decade will therefore be of decisive importance in determining Europe's opportunities in the 21st century.***

(EEA, The European environment – state and outlook 2020. Executive summary, 2019)

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Trends and projections in Europe 2022



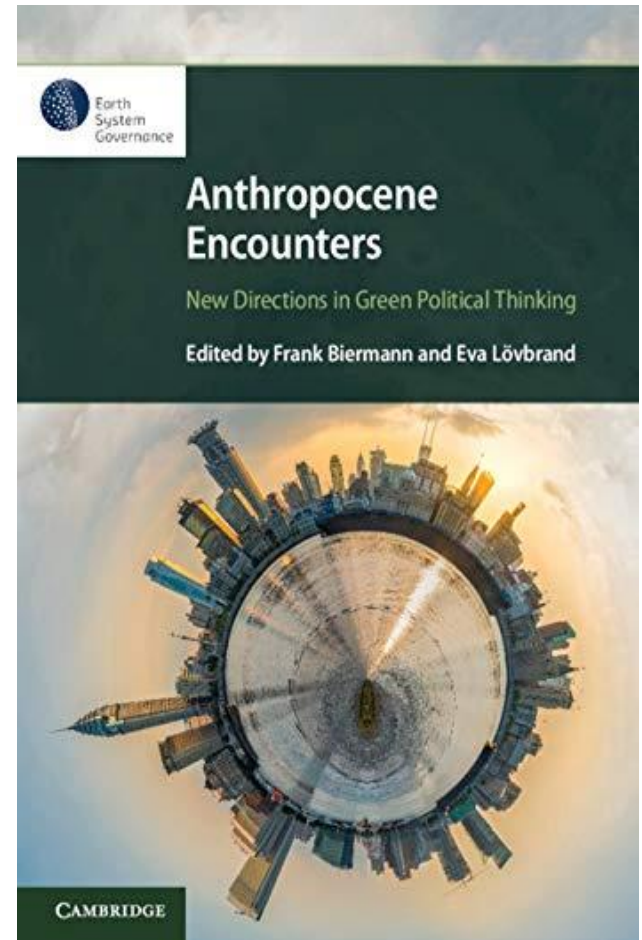
The annual 'Trends and projections' report provides an assessment of the progress of the EU and European countries towards their climate mitigation and energy targets. It is based on national data for greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energy and energy consumption.

*Parallel unfolding crises underline the urgency of climate action... Greenhouse gas emissions rebounded in 2021, but remained below pre-COVID level... Energy consumption increased in 2021 but was still lower than the 2020 target, while the renewable energy share remained at 2020 levels...Most Member States expected to achieve their 2020 targets...**Doubling of annual progress needed considering the 2030 climate target and energy supply crisis...Crucial times in the transition towards climate neutrality...The current unprecedented energy supply crisis and the 55% climate target for 2030 require an exceptional response. The...Meanwhile, the current situation as regards energy and climate is precarious.** (EEA, 2022)*

ANTHROPOCENE: THE HUMAN EPOCH

A framework for analysis and policy

*In contrast to the past 12,000 years of relative climate stability – known to geologists as the Holocene – **the Anthropocene symbolizes the profound and accelerating human transformations of the earth’s climate and environment.** Demonstrated changes in atmospheric composition, stratospheric ozone, the climate system, water and nitrogen cycles, marine ecosystems, land systems, tropical forests, and terrestrial biosphere are all taken as indications that modern civilization is altering the functioning of the earth system at a rapid speed. In the Anthropocene, we are told, humans are no longer spectators of a natural drama to which we have to adapt. **The fundamental and irreversible human imprint on natural systems and processes has turned us into a geological agent and master of a world increasingly of our own making** (Biermann, F. and Lövbrand, E., *Anthropocene Encounters: New Directions in Green Political Thinking*, Cambridge University Press, 2019)*



ANTHROPOCENE: THE HUMAN EPOCH

A framework for analysis and policy

*... Considering these and many other major and still growing impacts of human activities on earth and atmosphere, and at all, including global, scales, it seems to us **more than appropriate to emphasize the central role of mankind in geology and ecology by proposing to use the term “anthropocene” for the current geological epoch. The impacts of current human activities will continue over long periods...***

To develop a world-wide accepted strategy leading to sustainability of ecosystems against human induced stresses will be one of the great future tasks of mankind, requiring intensive research efforts and wise application of the knowledge thus acquired in the noösphere, better known as knowledge or information society... (Crutzen P. J. & Stoermer E. F., The Anthropocene, *IGBP Global Change Newsletter*, No 41, 2000, pp. 17 <www.igbp.net/download/18.316f18321323470177580001401/1376383088452/NL41.pdf>)

*...in February 2000 during a meeting of the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP) in Cuernavaca, Mexico. On that occasion, Paul J. Crutzen, the Dutch, Nobel Prize-winning atmospheric chemist, and then Vice-Chair of the IGPB, had become increasingly impatient with his colleagues’ repetitive use of the word ‘Holocene’ and exclaimed, ‘Stop using the word Holocene. We’re not in the Holocene any more. We’re in the...the...the...[searching for the right word]...the Anthropocene!’¹ Later that year, Crutzen (b.1933) and Eugene F. Stoermer (1934–2012), limnologist at the University of Michigan who had originally coined the term in the 1980s (in a different context), coauthored the initial scientific publication on the topic in the *IGBP Newsletter*. (Carruthers, J., The Anthropocene, *South African Journal of Science*, 115(7/8), 2019, <https://doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2019/6428>*

EU ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY STAGES

STAGE I: 1957-1972

- ❖ Early stage.
- ❖ **No explicit or clear legal basis for a policy**, but general provisions or provisions relating to, for example, the Common Market are used
- ❖ **No coherent policy**, based on specific objectives, values, strategic choices, guidelines, contents, etc., aimed at regulating environmental issues or a defined programmatic framework.
- ❖ Environmental legislation and measures at the European level focus mainly on **setting of pollution ceilings** and **environmental protection**, as well as on **technical standards for products** moving between Member States.
- ❖ The **logic of taking action at European level**:
 - ◆ **address the environmental problems**, which became more acute in the 1960s, mainly as a result of the rapid growth of highly polluting industrial production and consumption patterns, to **limit the risks associated with the use of atomic energy**, and to **satisfy the ecological movement**, which had begun to exert strong pressure on politics.
 - ◆ decisive observations:
 1. **Measures and policies at the national level are not sufficient to deal effectively with environmental problems** and, in particular, pollution, the **effects of which are not confined within national borders**.
 2. Different national environmental regulations are an **obstacle** to the realisation and smooth functioning of the European single market and **could lead to a market distortions**.

STAGE II: 1972-1986 and 1986-1992

- ❖ First steps, institutional consolidation and gradual development of the policy.
- ❖ Until 1986 still no explicit legal basis for a policy. **Established by the Single European Act.**
- ❖ From 1972 onwards until 1992, **4-year Action Programmes** for the Environment **shaped gradually a coherent policy** with specific objectives, values, strategic choices, guidelines, contents, etc. The policy aimed at regulating environmental issues through a defined programmatic framework, linking objectives and means.
- ❖ A **'defensive' approach** aimed at dealing with the negative effects of economic growth.
- ❖ Tools used: **command and control**, EU legislation - mainly on the basis of directives - and enforcement.
- ❖ Legislation at the European level and measures with an environmental focus still mainly concern the setting of pollution ceilings and environmental protection, as well as technical standards for products moving between Member States.
- ❖ The rationale for strengthening action in this field at the European level:
 - ◆ **Environmental pressures and awareness.**
 - ◆ **Developments in the international community** – Results of the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm and the catalytic, revolutionary changes that were set in motion.

STAGE III: 1992 ONWARDS (1)

- ❖ A new policy paradigm - Policy-“maturing” and consolidation.
- ❖ An explicit legal basis for the policy.
- ❖ Progressively gaining a **prominent status in the EU system.**
- ❖ The **principle of sustainable development** runs through the entire EU system and defines the EU's choices.
- ❖ Constituted on the basis of **specific objectives, principles, strategic choices, visionary initiatives, smart tools**, etc.
- ❖ **A strong programmatic dimension.** Action Programmes for the Environment define in detail a 10-year framework, objectives of each period, means, and ways to achieve these objectives.

STAGE III: 1992 ONWARDS (2)

- ❖ Intended to **regulate environmental issues, enhance environmental protection and the rational and integrated management of environmental resources**, but also to **change production and consumption patterns and economic and social behaviours** towards sustainable choices.
- ❖ Creates a **dense EU acquis**, seeking **forward-looking solutions, synergies, and multiplying effects** in each individual field and for each individual element of the system.
- ❖ The rationale of the policy at European level:
 - ◆ **Addressing problems, risks, threats, and seizing opportunities within the EU and in the world.**
 - ◆ Seeking to **shape developments in the international community and promote EU environmental standards and sustainable development in the world**, e.g. Rio Conference 1992, Millennium Development Goals, Sustainable Development Goals, Paris Agreement.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE EU ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

- ❖ **Not originally foreseen.**

- ❖ **Evolved and gradually strengthened, mainly through:**
 - ◆ a framework of principles and objectives established in Action Programmes,
 - ◆ the formulation of policy content in a wide range of fields relating to the EU's environment and all human activity,
 - ◆ the adoption of legal rules, supplementing the Treaties
 - ◆ a body of international regulation and cooperation on a wide range of issues.

- ❖ At the same time, at European level were developed:
 - ◆ an **institutional-organisational framework** for environmental policy,
 - ◆ a dense **system of environmental governance**,
 - ◆ a set of **established procedures** (both formal and informal), involving various actors.

LEGAL BASIS

❖ TREATY ON EUROPEAN UNION

- ◆ The Preamble states that the Member States are determined “...to promote economic and social progress for their peoples, taking into account the principle of sustainable development and within the context of the accomplishment of the internal market and of reinforced cohesion and environmental protection, and to implement policies ensuring that advances in economic integration are accompanied by parallel progress in other fields...”.
- ◆ According to Article 3 the Union “...*shall work for the sustainable development of Europe based on...[among others] a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment...*”.
- ◆ Adding the external policy dimension, “...*In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests and contribute to the protection of its citizens*”. It shall contribute to “...*the sustainable development of the Earth...*”.

❖ TREATY ON THE FUNCTIONING OF THE EU

- ◆ The Member States affirm in the Preamble as an “*essential objective of their efforts the constant improvements of the living and working conditions of their peoples*”, and state their desire “*to ensure the development of their prosperity*”.
- ◆ To this end, Article 4 defines the environment as one of the ‘principal areas’ falling under the shared competence between the Union and the Member States .
- ◆ Article 11 states that “*Environmental protection requirements must be integrated into the definition and implementation of the Union's policies and activities, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.*”.
- ◆ The specific issues of environmental protection and policy development are, however, specified in Title XX "Environment" of the Treaty, Articles 191-193.



TOPICS

energy, climate and environmental issues

https://commission.europa.eu/energy-climate-change-environment/topics_en

Agriculture

EU policies and action on promoting sustainable agriculture, including reducing emissions, biofuels and land use change.

Circular economy

The EU aims to transition to a circular economy to make Europe cleaner and more competitive.

Energy

Overview of EU policy, legislation and action for energy.

Nature and biodiversity

Overview of EU policy, legislation and action for environmental conservation and protection.

Research and innovation

Using scientific research to inform the EU's environmental policy-making.

Urban environment

EU action to promote the sustainability of European cities.

Air

EU action to improve air quality and reduce air pollution.

Cities

EU action to promote sustainable urban environments through climate change adaptation, energy-efficient buildings and green city initiatives.

Industrial emissions

EU policies to ensure European industrial activities minimise environmental impact, lower risk of industrial accidents, and provide data on pollutant emissions.

Noise

Causes, health effects and levels of noise pollution in the EU and EU noise policy.

Soil and land

Overview of EU policy and action for sustainable use of soil and land.

Waste and recycling

EU legislation, policy and action on waste management, recycling, streams and treatment.

Chemicals

EU action to ensure chemicals are safe, for health and the environment.

Climate change

Through EU policy, legislation and strategies the EU has set itself the goal of becoming a climate-resilient society by 2050, fully adapted to the unavoidable impacts of climate change.

Marine and coastal environment

EU policy on coastal and marine waters, and environmental threats to Europe's seas.

Plastics

EU action on plastic production and pollution to contribute to a circular economy.

Transport

EU policy and legislation on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants from road transport, ships, planes and fuels.

Water

Overview of EU policy, legislation and action for water issues.

ENVIRONMENT ACTION PROGRAMMES

EU ENVIRONMENT ACTION PROGRAMMES

In general

- ❖ 8 Action Programmes since 1972.
- ❖ **4 Action Programmes after 1992, 4 decades of EU environmental policy and sustainable development efforts.**
- ❖ **Soft law texts.** While not binding, the Programmes commit the Union and the Member States on the main policy choices and define the general framework of the actions required for their implementation and the realisation of the objectives.
- ❖ They set the agenda for European and Member State policy in the field, define policy contents, prioritise goals, provide a comprehensive and coherent framework for action with a specific duration.
- ❖ Approach:
 - ◆ **top down** (logic, principals, objectives).
 - ◆ **bottom up** (participation and involvement).

5th EC ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PROGRAMME (1)

The challenge of the 1990s

The attainment of sustainable development calls for a far-sighted, cohesive and effective approach. It will demand considerable political and practical commitment over an extended time-frame. The Community, as the largest economic/trading partner in a world where it is increasingly seen that growth has to be environmentally sustainable, must exercise its responsibility to both present and future generations. To this end it must put its own house in order and provide an example to developed and developing countries alike in relation to the protection of public health and the environment and the sustainable use of natural resources.

The Dublin Declaration states that 'the environment is dependent on our collective actions; tomorrow's environment depends on how we act today'. There is now a perceptible feeling throughout the Community and further afield that many of the great environmental struggles will be won or lost during this decade; and that by the next century it could be too late.

We cannot afford to wait ... and be wrong!

39. This Programme itself constitutes a turning point for the Community. Just as the challenge of the 1980s was completion of the Internal Market, the reconciliation of environment and development is one of the principal challenges facing the Community and the world at large in the 1990s. 'Towards Sustainability' is not a programme for the Commission alone, nor one geared towards environmentalists alone. It provides a framework for a new approach to the environment and to economic and social activity and development, and requires positive will at all levels of the political and corporate spectrums, and the involvement of all members of the public active as citizens and consumers in order to make it work.
40. The Programme does not purport to 'get everything right'. It will take a long time to change patterns of behaviour and consumption and to attain a sustainable development path. The Programme, accordingly, is intended primarily to *break the current trends*. The bottom line is that the present generation must pass the environment on to the next generation in a fit state to maintain public health and social and economic welfare at a high level. As an intermediate goal, the state of the environment, the level and quality of natural resources and the potential for further development at the end of this decade should reflect a marked improvement on the situation which obtains today. The road to sustainability may be long and difficult ... but the first steps must be taken now!

6th ENVIRONMENT ACTION PROGRAMME (1)

Environment 2010:

Our Future, Our Choice



6th EU **Environment** Action Programme

2001-2010

The Programme sets out the key environmental objectives and priorities to be attained.

It shall also form a basis for the environmental dimension of the European Sustainable Development Strategy and contribute to the integration of environmental concerns into all Community policies

6th ENVIRONMENT ACTION PROGRAMME (2)

❖ **Key environmental priorities:**

- ◆ climate change,
- ◆ nature and biodiversity,
- ◆ environment and health and quality of life,
- ◆ natural resources and wastes.

❖ **Strategic measures** (indicatively):

- ◆ development of new Community legislation and amendment of existing legislation;
- ◆ effective implementation and enforcement of Community legislation on the environment;
- ◆ integration of environmental protection requirements into the preparation, definition and implementation of Community policies and activities;
- ◆ Promotion of sustainable production and consumption patterns;
- ◆ Improving collaboration and partnership with enterprises and involving the social Partners and consumers;
- ◆ support environmental integration in the financial sector;
- ◆ encourage and promote effective and sustainable use and management of land and sea taking account of environmental concerns;
- ◆ integrating environmental considerations into all areas of the EU's external relations.

❖ Development of **thematic strategies** in priority fields of action.

7th ENVIRONMENT ACTION PROGRAMME TO 2020 (2)

2050 Vision – Main goals

❖ *‘LIVING WELL, WITHIN THE LIMITS OF OUR PLANET*

- ❖ *In 2050, we live well, within the planet’s ecological limits. Our prosperity and healthy environment stem from an innovative, circular economy where nothing is wasted and where natural resources are managed sustainably, and biodiversity is protected, valued and restored in ways that enhance our society’s resilience. Our low-carbon growth has long been decoupled from resource use, setting the pace for a safe and sustainable global society.*
- ❖ *...10. To live well in the future, urgent, **concerted action should be taken now to improve ecological resilience and maximise the benefits environment policy can deliver for the economy and society, while respecting the planet’s ecological limits.** The 7th EAP reflects the **Union’s commitment to transforming itself into an inclusive green economy that secures growth and development, safeguards human health and well-being, provides decent jobs, reduces inequalities and invests in, and preserves biodiversity, including the ecosystem services it provides (natural capital), for its intrinsic value and for its essential contribution to human well-being and economic prosperity.***
- ❖ *11. The transformation into an inclusive green economy requires the **integration of environment issues into other policies**, such as energy, transport, agriculture, fisheries, trade, economy and industry, research and innovation, employment, development, foreign affairs, security, education and training, as well as social and tourism policy, so as to create **a coherent, joined-up approach**. Action within the Union should also be **complemented by enhanced global action and cooperation** with neighbouring countries to tackle common challenges...*

7th ENVIRONMENT ACTION PROGRAMME TO 2020 (3) Priorities

Thematic objectives

1. Natural capital
2. Resource efficient, low-carbon economy
3. Health and well-being

Enabling Framework

4. Implementation
5. Knowledge
6. Investment
7. Integration

Spatial dimension

8. Urban
9. International

A NEW POLICY FRAMEWORK

EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL (1)

- ❖ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions “The European Green Deal”, COM (2019) 640 final.

https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:b828d165-1c22-11ea-8c1f-01aa75ed71a1.0002.02/DOC_1&format=PDF and
https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en.

“...It is a new growth strategy that aims to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use.

It also aims to protect, conserve and enhance the EU's natural capital, and protect the health and well-being of citizens from environment-related risks and impacts. At the same time, this transition must be just and inclusive....

A new pact is needed to bring together citizens in all their diversity, with national, regional, local authorities, civil society and industry working closely with the EU's institutions and consultative bodies....”.

EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL (2)



8th ENVIRONMENT ACTION PROGRAMME (1)

- ❖ The Council adopted on 4 October **2019 Conclusions providing political guidance for EU environment and climate policy for the period 2021-2030**. It calls on the Commission to present, by early 2020 at the latest, an ambitious and focused proposal for the 8th Environment Action Programme

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/40927/st12795-2019.pdf>.

- ❖ The conclusions are based on the assessment of the state of the environment, the results achieved so far, the accumulated knowledge and experience, the objectives already set, the EU Strategic Agenda 2019-2024 and the European Green Deal.
- ❖ The Programme will **continue the efforts** undertaken so far, **setting its own priorities, introducing or reinforcing strategies, guidelines and visionary initiatives** and making use of existing and new instruments and tools.

8th ENVIRONMENT ACTION PROGRAMME (2)

- ❖ Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2030, COM (2020) 652 final, 14-10-2020)

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020PC0652>

*...The 8th EAP has the long-term priority objective for 2050 that citizens live well, within the planetary boundaries in a regenerative economy where nothing is wasted, no net emissions of greenhouse gases are produced and economic growth is decoupled from resource use and environmental degradation. A healthy environment underpins the well-being of citizens, biodiversity thrives and natural capital is protected, restored and valued in ways that enhance resilience to climate change and other environmental risks. **The Union sets the pace for ensuring the prosperity of present and future generations globally...***

- ❖ **Decision (EU) 2022/591 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 April 2022 on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2030, OJ L 114, 12.4.2022, p. 22.**

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022D0591>

8th ENVIRONMENT ACTION PROGRAMME (3)

The 8th EAP has the following six thematic priority objectives:

- ❖ *irreversible and gradual reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and enhancement of removals by natural and other sinks in the Union to attain the 2030 greenhouse gas emission reduction target and achieve climate neutrality by 2050;*
- ❖ *continuous progress in enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change;*
- ❖ *advancing towards a regenerative growth model that gives back to the planet more than it takes, decoupling economic growth from resource use and environmental degradation, and accelerating the transition to a circular economy;*
- ❖ *pursuing a zero-pollution ambition for a toxic free-environment, including for air, water and soil, and protecting the health and well-being of citizens from environment-related risks and impacts;*
- ❖ *protecting, preserving and restoring biodiversity and enhancing natural capital, notably air, water, soil, and forest, freshwater, wetland and marine ecosystems;*
- ❖ *promoting environmental sustainability and reducing key environmental and climate pressures related to production and consumption, in particular in the areas of energy, industrial development, buildings and infrastructure, mobility and the food system.*

8th ENVIRONMENT ACTION PROGRAMME (4)

Enabling factors (indicatively):

- ❖ *effective and efficient implementation of EU legislation and striving for excellence in environmental performance;*
- ❖ *strengthening the integrated approach to policy development and implementation;*
- ❖ *effectively integrating environmental and climate sustainability in the European Semester/economic governance;*
- ❖ *mobilising sustainable investments from public and private sources;*
- ❖ *ensuring that environmental policies and action are based on the best available scientific knowledge and strengthening the environmental knowledge base and its uptake;*
- ❖ *supporting the global uptake of the priority objectives and ensuring coherence between internal and external approaches and coordinated action.*

EU OVERALL TARGETS AND REPORTING

Energy, Climate change, Environment

2030 targets

2030 climate targets

Energy efficiency targets

Renewable energy targets

Environment action programme vision to 2030

Zero pollution action plan

EU biodiversity strategy

The circular economy action plan

Global targets for renewables and energy efficiency

2040 targets

2040 climate target

Carbon capture, storage and utilisation

2050 targets

Climate neutral economy by 2050

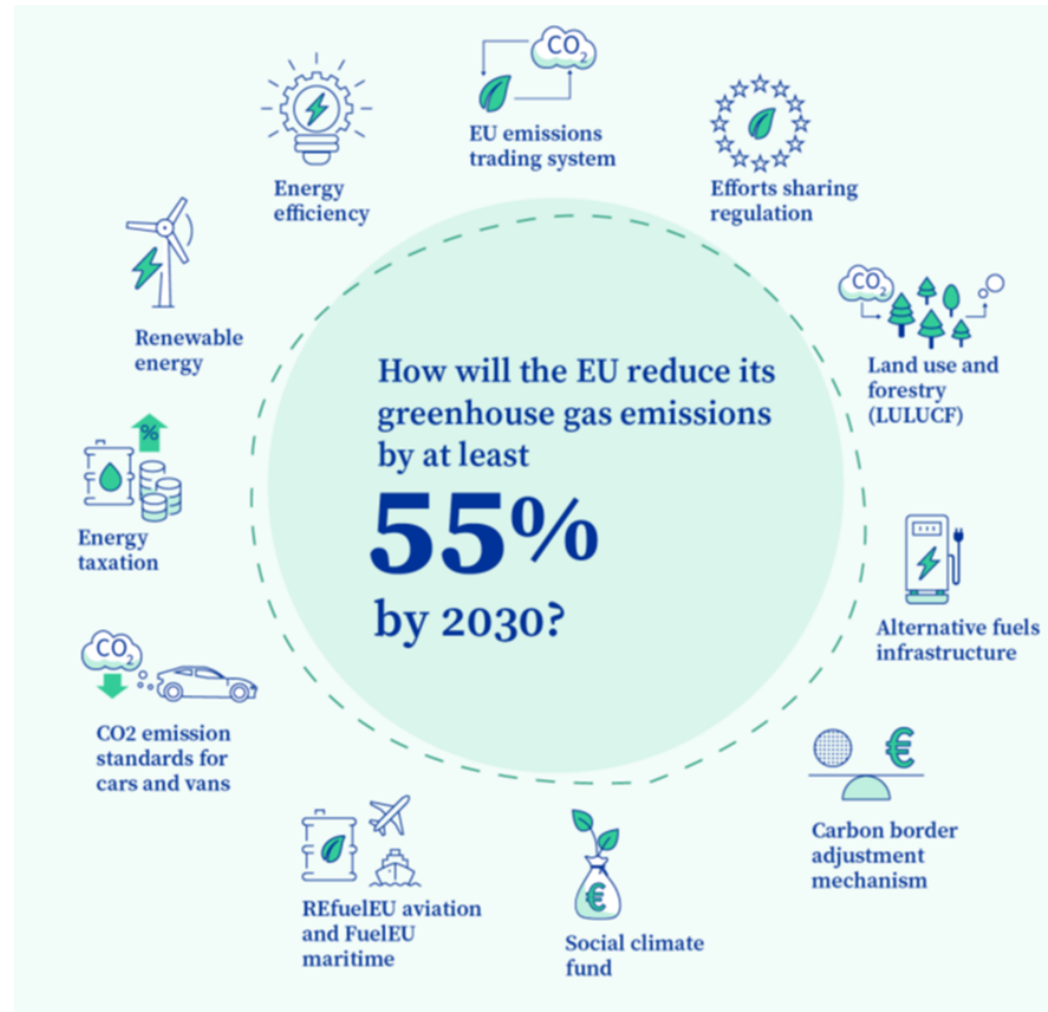
https://commission.europa.eu/energy-climate-change-environment/overall-targets-and-reporting_en

European Climate Law

- ❖ **Regulation (EU) 2021/1119** of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 June 2021 **establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality** and amending Regulations (EC) No 401/2009 and (EU) 2018/1999.
- ❖ The Regulation establishes a framework for the irreversible and gradual **reduction of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions** by sources and **enhancement of removals by sinks**.
- ❖ It sets out a **binding objective of climate neutrality in the Union by 2050** in pursuit of the long-term temperature goal set out in Article 2 of the Paris Agreement, and provides a **framework for achieving progress in pursuit of the global adaptation goal** established in Article 7 of the Agreement.
- ❖ A binding Union 2030 climate target shall be a **domestic reduction** of net greenhouse gas emissions (emissions after deduction of removals) **by at least 55 %** compared to 1990 levels by 2030.
- ❖ Furthermore, a **Union-wide climate target for 2040 shall be set** after the first global stocktake referred to in Article 14 of the Paris Agreement.

FIT FOR 55 PACKAGE

- ❖ The Fit for 55 package was **a set of proposals** to revise and update EU legislation and to put in place new initiatives with the aim of **ensuring that EU policies are into line with the climate goals** agreed.
- ❖ The Fit for 55 package was presented to the Council in July 2021. In total, the package **strengthened eight existing legislative acts and presented five new initiatives**, in different policy and economic areas: climate, energy and fuels, transport, buildings, land use and forestry. *COM (2021) 550 final, 14.7.2021.*



<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/fit-for-55-how-the-eu-will-turn-climate-goals-into-law>

REPowerEU

Affordable, secure and sustainable energy for Europe

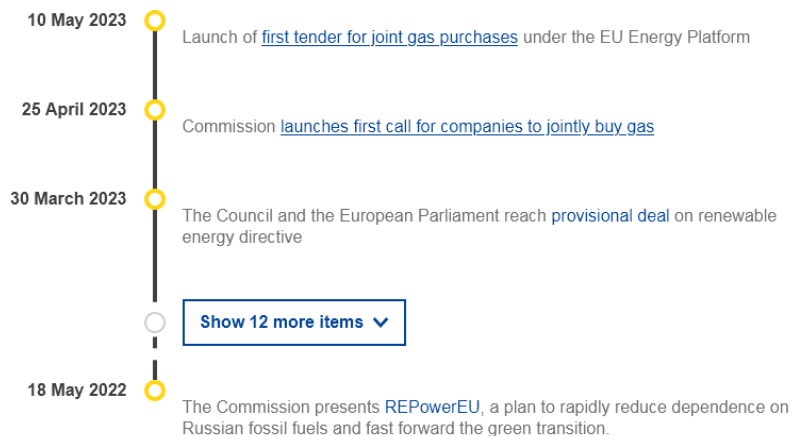
- ❖ On 18-05-2022 the European Commission presented the REPowerEU plan **to rapidly reduce dependence on Russian fossil fuels and accelerate the green transition.**
- ❖ **The REPowerEU is helping the EU**
 - ◆ save energy
 - ◆ produce clean energy
 - ◆ diversify its energy supplies

It is supported by economic and legislative measures to build the new energy infrastructure and system that Europe needs.

- ❖ Communication COM(2022) 230 final “REPowerEU Plan”

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EL/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022DC0230&from=EN>.

Timeline



https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/repower-eu-affordable-secure-and-sustainable-energy-europe_el

Key documents: REPowerEU

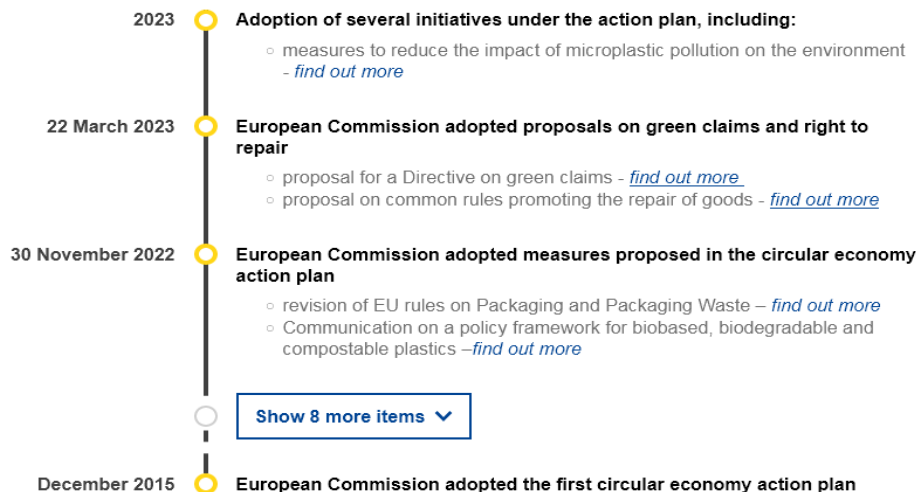
https://commission.europa.eu/publications/key-documents-repower-eu_en

ACTION PLAN FOR THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

- ❖ In March 2020 the European Commission presented the new EU **Action Plan for the Circular Economy**, which is one of the main pillars of the European Green Deal.
- ❖ Communication **COM(2020) 98 final** “A new Circular Economy Action Plan For a cleaner and more competitive Europe”
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0098>
- ❖ The new European Action Plan **focuses on sectors with increased resource use and high recycling potential**, such as, among others, electronics, batteries, vehicles, packaging, plastics, textiles, textiles, construction, food, water and nutrients.

Timeline

Previous and upcoming actions and initiatives



Show 8 more items ▾

https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/circular-economy-action-plan_en

All 54 actions under [this plan](#) have been delivered or are being implemented - [find out more](#).

CONCLUSIONS

SOME LAST REMARKS...

- ❖ **Policy evolves and matures** over time.
- ❖ The introduction of the **sustainable development paradigm** into EU policy and politics marked a **qualitative leap** in every respect, which has defined and continues to define the content, directions, choices and main features of the system.
- ❖ A dense and extensive **EU acquis**.
- ❖ It is expected that **efforts will continue and further strengthen** in the future.
- ❖ Plans such as the European Green Deal indicate **the importance and momentum of environmental and sustainable development issues**, while strengthening the framework for efforts.
- ❖ **Policy has not an easy fix**. Choices and their outcomes depend on a multitude of factors and the future of policy is by no means predetermined.
- ❖ **Time is crucial**.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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Thank you!