

EU MATTERS

NIEL's Monthly European Environmental News



Agriculture

[Commission registers 'Ban Glyphosate' European Citizens' Initiative](#)

The European Commission has decided today to register a European Citizens Initiative (ECI) inviting the Commission "to propose to Member States a ban on glyphosate, to reform the pesticide approval procedure, and to set EU-wide mandatory reduction targets for pesticide use". The initiative will start a one-year process of collection of signatures in support of the proposed ECI by its organisers.

[Diverse plant communities improve soil structure and, therefore, ecosystem services](#)

Plant diversity improves soil stability, the results of a greenhouse experiment and a long-term field study show. This study, which covered a range of different soil types, is one of the first to investigate the effects of plant diversity on soil structure, which is important for provision of ecosystem services, such as carbon storage and the mitigation of excessive run-off. The findings could help tackle the problem of soil degradation, the researchers suggest.

Air Quality

[Understanding uncertainty in air-quality modelling with new framework](#)

Researchers have run an uncertainty and sensitivity analysis with an environmental model, specifically with an Integrated Assessment Model (IAM) for air quality, demonstrating how model components are sources of uncertainty in the output of an integrated assessment. Policy responses should therefore consider uncertainty and sensitivity when developing measures to improve air quality.

Biodiversity

[Species diversity throughout the food chain maintains multiple ecosystem services more effectively](#)

Biodiversity's contribution to ecosystem services in grasslands has been assessed in a new study. Higher species diversity across trophic levels, particularly for plants, insects and soil microbial decomposers is important for the provision of multiple ecosystem services related to food production, recreational benefits, or climate regulation. Species diversity across different trophic groups was also found to be just as important in controlling ecosystem functioning as the management intensity of grasslands and environmental factors, such as climate or soil type.

Climate Change

[New EEA report on climate change in Europe](#)

Europe's regions are facing rising sea levels and more extreme weather, such as more frequent and more intense heatwaves, flooding, droughts, and storms, due to climate change. This is the conclusion of Climate change, impacts and vulnerability in Europe 2016, a report published by the European Environment Agency. The observed changes in climate are already having wide-ranging impacts on ecosystems, the economy, and human health and well-being in Europe, according to the report.

[Commission proposes EU Solidarity Fund assistance following the floods in the United Kingdom](#)

The Commission has proposed aid to the UK worth €60 million from the EU Solidarity Fund following the floods in 2015. The flooding affected essential infrastructure as well as public buildings, private homes, businesses and farmland in several regions of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The proposed aid of €60 million now has to be approved by the European Parliament and Council.



Brexit: Updates on NIEL's EU Policy work after the UK Referendum decision can be found [here](#).

Energy

[Commission delivers on its promises, offers guidance on recovery of energy from waste](#)

One year after adopting its Circular Economy Package, the Commission today reports on the delivery and progress of key initiatives of its 2015 Action Plan.

Freshwater

[Banned pesticides continue to affect toxicity in streams](#)

Many toxic pesticides have been banned by the EU however some can remain in the environment for many decades. Aquatic invertebrates are particularly vulnerable to pesticides, which can alter their feeding behaviour, growth and mobility. Persistent pesticides can increase toxicity in streams by up to 10 000 times compared to the residues of currently used pesticides. The researchers recommend these be taken into account when calculating overall toxicity.

Marine

[PISCO/UNS publication on the science of marine protected areas \(MPAs\)](#)

The oceans and seas provide important benefits to people, including food, oxygen, economic opportunities, recreation, and cultural value. However, heavy uses of the ocean are eroding these benefits. MPAs can be a powerful tool to protect, and possibly restore, the ability of ecosystems to provide these benefits. Globally, there are thousands of MPAs, though their collective area is small. What have we learned from these protected places? Researchers have produced a booklet summarizing the latest science about MPAs.

Planning

[Half the land area in Europe is within 1.5 km of transport infrastructure, with huge impact on wildlife](#)

Transport infrastructure is so widespread in Europe that half of the land area is within 1.5 kilometres (km) of paved roads and railway lines, researchers have calculated. The researchers found that in Spain, transport infrastructure has an impact on the abundance of birds in almost half of the country and is affecting the abundance of mammals across almost all of the land area.

Sustainable Development

[European Sustainable Development Week 2017](#)

The registration for the European Sustainable Development Week (ESDW) 2017 is open! The ESDW is an annual European-wide initiative to stimulate and make visible activities, projects and events that promote sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Activities will be able to be registered and viewed on this website.

Waste

[Environment Committee votes for better waste policy](#)

In a move that could unlock over 800,000 green jobs, Members of the European Parliament's (MEPs) Environment Committee voted this week for higher recycling targets within the EU. MEPs also set a target for Member States to halve the amount of food by 2030, but this target was only voluntary rather than binding. The European Council will have to decide later in 2017 whether or not to approve the targets.

[European Commission Plastics Roadmap not leading anywhere](#)

The European Commission's newly released Roadmap for the EU Strategy on Plastics in a Circular Economy fails to get to the root of the problem of plastics, according to the Break Free From Plastic Movement.

Other

[QUICKScan: a quick, participatory method for exploring environmental policy problems](#)

Policymakers have to make decisions under great complexity, uncertainty and time pressure. A new study presents a support tool for the first stage of policymaking: identifying and exploring alternatives to solve problems. The software tool, increases the speed of this process and combines the input of many stakeholders in participatory workshops. It has been applied 70 times in 20 different countries, for a wide range of environmental policy issues.



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