

2018 EEB  
Annual  
Conference  
Report

# Getting to the Europe we want

Actions to accelerate the Green Transition



**EEB**  
European  
Environmental  
Bureau

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EUROPE'S LARGEST NETWORK  
OF ENVIRONMENTAL CITIZENS  
ORGANISATIONS



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## CONTENTS

### Welcome

Jouni Nissinen, EEB President .....6

### High-level panel 1

All change at the EU .....7

### Breakout sessions .....8

Towards a non-toxic circular economy .....8

Protecting our life support system .....9

An EU Climate Policy as if our lives depended on it ..... 10

### High-level panel 2

Finding common ground for a sustainable Europe .....11

### Keynote speech

Daniel Calleja Crespo, Director-General, DG Environment  
.....12

### Conclusions

Jeremy Wates, EEB Secretary General .....13

## INTRODUCTION

**With the European elections fast approaching, the EEB seized the moment to hold a high-level discussion on 'how to get to the Europe we want'.**

In early November 2018, around 300 policymakers, politicians and experts from all over Europe met in Brussels to discuss the opportunities and threats facing the environment in the crucial years to come.

Panels included speakers from a wealth of backgrounds and covered a broad range of environmental topics: from climate to nature

and from chemicals to the future of Europe.

In the following pages you will find a summary of each session and links to the EEB's YouTube channel, where you can watch the proceedings in full.

Thank you to all who attended and contributed towards making the day a worthwhile and successful event!







See how the day unfolded on Twitter  
using #EEB18 or by [clicking here](#)





## WELCOME

Jouni Nissinen  
EEB President

Head of the Environmental Policy Unit  
Finnish Association for Nature Conservation

EEB President **Jouni Nissinen** welcomed participants to a “home game” in Brussels after two great annual conferences in Vienna and Edinburgh. He reflected on the celebrations that greet American students upon their ‘homecoming’ and reminded participants that, while it was important to feel comfortable and cosy among friends, there were still great challenges facing the environment and environmental defenders all over the world.

As we approach the next European elections, Nissinen warned that in the battle between sense and sensibility, our emotions are likely to win. He asked whether Europe had the courage to look for an alternative economic model that provides for wellbeing rather than just unending growth. The conference is an opportunity to talk about the building blocks required to transform Europe, Nissinen said. He pointed to the major changes that are required in the years ahead: cutting emissions, reducing meat consumption, delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Nissinen concluded that the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report provides the chance to turn to turn the European elections into a debate about climate change, the environment, and maybe even justice. Together, he said, we can do this.

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## HIGH-LEVEL PANEL 1

All change at the EU: more of the same or a chance to set an ambitious green vision for the ‘20s?

Moderator:

**Claire Doole**

Journalist, Claire Doole Communications

Panellists:

**Günter Liebel**

Director General for Environment and Water Management, Austria

**Veronica Manfredi**

Director for Quality of Life, European Commission

**Benedek Jávör**

MEP, Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance

**Céline Charveriat**

Executive Director, Institute for European Environmental Policy

**Patrick ten Brink**

EU Policy Director, European Environmental Bureau

Panellists discussed how to set an agenda for green ambition after 2020 in light of the insufficient progress during the current legislative cycle and the opportunities and challenges that face the next one.

The panel discussed environmentally-harmful EU spending, in particular the Common Agricultural Policy. **Günter Liebel** said that spending European taxpayers’ money on environmentally-harmful activities sends the wrong signal to citizens and that the solution lies in the European institutions working together more efficiently.

**Benedek Jávör** said there is a need for an EU that truly involves citizens and integrates them into the decision-making process. He highlighted the major issue of the lack of implementation of EU laws, particularly regarding nature protection, chemicals and climate policy. He suggested that solutions involve better funding and a stronger political will from Member State governments.

**Veronica Manfredi** pointed to the successes of EU policies on industrial emissions and drinking water but added that she would like to see more dynamic on-the-ground action aided by digital technology. Manfredi said she hopes that working towards a pollution-free and sustainable society will be a political priority for the next Commission.

**Patrick ten Brink** said we need to have confidence in the rule of law and that we need environmental courts in Europe. He said it is time to move beyond the current economic model to one that focuses on citizens rather than consumers. Ten Brink also highlighted that there is still a lack of compliance on EU chemical legislation.

**Céline Charveriat** hailed the Commission’s move to ban single-use plastic as this is both essential for environmental protection and directly responds to citizens’ expectations. Charveriat highlighted the importance of fully aligning to the SDGs and putting wellbeing at the centre of EU policymaking.

Panellists welcomed the will from Member States to have a meaningful Eighth Environmental Action Programme (EAP).

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# BREAK-OUT SESSION 1

## Towards a non-toxic circular economy

Moderator:  
**Tatiana Santos**  
Policy Manager for Chemicals and Nanotechnology , EEB

Rapporteur:  
**Michael Warhurst**  
Executive Director, CHEM Trust

Speakers:  
**Jane Muncke**  
Managing Director and Chief Scientific Officer, Food Packaging Forum  
**Ward Mosmuller**  
Director EU Affairs, DSM  
**Brenda Koekkoek**  
Programme Officer, Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, UN Environment  
**Urban Boije**  
Policy Officer of the Unit Chemicals, DG Environment, European Commission

Hazardous chemicals are everywhere, said **Tatiana Santos** Potentially dangerous substances have been found in everyday products, from the toys our kids play with to the food we eat. The sheer amount of scientific evidence should be enough to prompt concrete action. But the problem is that we have little information on the chemicals contained in some of the most common materials such as plastic.

**Brenda Koekkoek** argued that policy makers should ensure that consumer products are free of hazardous substances. There is an increasing need for a legally binding information system, so that manufacturers and recyclers are made aware of what is in the products and materials they deal with and place on the market.

The EU has one of the most advanced legal frameworks in the world, but there are still gaps that need to be

addressed, said **Urban Boije** a national expert at the European Commission. Europe will put in place a strategy for a non-toxic environment, but this is unlikely to happen any time soon, he added.

**Jane Muncke** of the Food Packaging Forum Foundation gave her views on food packaging, which is a clear example of how potentially harmful chemicals can get dangerously close to people. Research shows that the current EU food contact regulation allows substances of very high concern to be used in packaging.

**Michael Warhurst** of CHEM Trust added that companies get incentives to keep producing these chemicals, but they don't do anything to clean up the pollution they are creating.

Watch ▶ summary

# BREAK-OUT SESSION 2

## Protecting our life support system

Moderator:  
**Sergiy Moroz**  
Senior Policy Officer for Water and Biodiversity, EEB

Rapporteur:  
**Luc Bas**  
Director of European Union Representative Office, IUCN

Speakers:  
**Humberto Delgado Rosa**  
Director for Natural Capital, DG Environment, European Commission  
**Marta Santamaria**  
Policy Director, Natural Capital Coalition  
**Anna Heslop**  
Lawyer, Wildlife Project Leader, ClientEarth

**Luc Bas** and **Humberto Delgado Rosa** both said that to halt and reverse dangerous levels of habitat and wildlife loss around the globe a ‘global deal for nature’ comparable to the Paris climate agreement will be crucial. They highlighted that when scientists issue red alerts for nature there should be the same level of concern meeting reports from the IPCC.

The panel said that they hoped a global deal to manage the world’s ecosystems and wildlife could be signed off by 2020 when the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) meets in Beijing. Delgado Rosa also said that the new Common Agricultural Policy has the power to protect biodiversity if there is full alignment between the CAP’s objectives and targets with environmental policies. He also said there is a need for better mainstreaming of biodiversity policy, that the restoration agenda will become more important at the

EU level, and that he hoped the next Commission would champion an Eighth Environment Action Programme.

**Anna Heslop** talked about importance of infringement proceedings, and asked when we would see the same groundswell on nature protection as we have done on air quality given the Commission’s recent legal action on the latter topic against several member states. Heslop said it is crucial to protect the principle of access to environmental justice at both the national and the EU level – the only pillar of the Aarhus Convention that has not yet been fully translated into EU law.

**Marta Santamaria** said that when we understand how much we depend on nature then we understand that we need to preserve it. She called for a systems-thinking approach to develop an enabling environment.

Watch ▶ summary







## BREAK-OUT SESSION 3

### An EU climate policy as if our lives depended on it

Moderator:

**Roland Joebstl**

Senior Policy Officer for Energy and Climate, EEB

Rapporteur:

**Clémence Hutin**

Climate Justice and Energy Campaigner, Friends of the Earth Europe

Speakers:

**Wendel Trio**

Director, Climate Action Network Europe

**Levke Caesar**

Researcher, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research

**Martin Porter**

Senior Associate, Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership

**Mikael Karlsson**

Researcher in Philosophy with focus on Environmental Science and Associate Professor In Environmental Sciences, KAU

**Levke Caesar** presented some of her scientific research into the evolution of the AMOC system of ocean currents that carries warm water from the tropics northwards. Modelling has shown how winter storms could become more frequent, especially for the UK and Norway.

She also showed how changes will affect the ocean's ability to absorb CO<sub>2</sub>. Cooling over the north Atlantic could hold the jet stream in place, leading to heatwaves in mainland Europe as was proven during the heatwave of 2018.

Former EEB President **Mikael Karlsson** spoke about how the mantra "what does it cost?" can have an enormous negative affect on decision-making, unless the cost of inaction is also considered.

He also presented a variety of co-benefits of taking further measures to meet the 1.5°C target. For example, reducing air pollution could reduce premature deaths

by 1.8 million lives in Asia every year.

**Wendel Trio** explained the EU's role in delivering on the Paris Agreement. Trio said that the "EU is clearly no longer a leader in climate action. Anyone claiming that the EU is playing a leadership role is speaking against the facts. At this moment, other countries are taking action and the EU is not."

**Martin Porter** said that the arguments about the co-benefit of climate action need to come from a "much bigger church" including health, social and economic voices. He pointed out the while EU and international policy measures were positive, the scale and the urgency of the challenge are enormous and greater cooperation was needed between policy areas – especially climate and the circular economy.

He said there is a chance and a need to tell a story of hope and optimism that can touch people's daily lives.

[Watch ► summary](#)

## HIGH-LEVEL PANEL 2

### Finding common ground for a sustainable Europe

Moderator:

**Claire Doole**

Journalist, Claire Doole Communications

Panellists:

**Laura Martín Murillo**

Advisor on Employment and Just Transition, Ministry for the Ecological Transition of Spain

**Montserrat Mir**

Confederal Secretary, European Trade Union Confederation

**Anna Widegren**

Secretary General, European Youth Forum

**Jan Noterdaeme**

Senior Advisor External Relations and Co-Founder, The European Business Network for Corporate Social Responsibility

**Patrizia Heidegger**

Director of Global Policies and Sustainability, EEB

Panellists discussed the need for social and environmental and social protections to go hand in hand.

**Laura Martín Murillo** said that while social protections are not often considered in environmental discussions it is vital not to leave anyone behind. She said it is time for a more united Europe that puts people's prosperity and respect for the environment at the heart of policies. Martín also mentioned the landmark agreement between the Spanish government and trade unions on closing coal mines which was the result of participatory work with communities to involve them in a just transition.

**Montserrat Mir** agreed that this approach was crucial to promote reskilling the workforce and to avoid rural population drains. As a specific example, she mentioned the Paris Agreement and how this relates to the workforce: in reskilling workers to participate in climate change mitigation and adaptation measures; and that this needs to happen quickly in order for us to meet climate targets.

**Anna Widegren** said that young people have a huge role to play in bringing about a just transition and but that they do not always have access to decision making processes. While Widegren said that if young people were at climate change negotiations the outcomes would be very different, she also warned against perceiving young people as a homogenous group.

**Jan Noterdaeme** talked about corporate social responsibility and said that his member groups are working on ways to combat tax evasion. He said it was problematic and contradictory when companies take supposedly green steps but still avoid tax on a massive scale.

**Patrizia Heidegger** stressed the importance of engagement across civil society. Heidegger said that the next Commission must come up with an implementation plan for the SDGs as for every EU policy that delivers on sustainable development there is another one undermining it.

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# KEYNOTE SPEECH

Daniel Calleja Crespo  
Director-General  
DG Environment, European Commission

**Daniel Calleja Crespo** reflected on his first day in his job and shared a picture of a meeting that day with EEB Secretary General Jeremy Wates. He said it was “all smiles” in the photo, but that serious concerns were raised that the environment was not mentioned by the new Commission, sustainability was not explicit and that there were major concerns about the Commission’s priorities. Calleja thanked Mr Wates for setting a strong agenda from the very first day in his job.

Calleja then reflected on what had been achieved in the last few years. He highlighted the adoption of the Paris Agreement, the Circular Economy Action Plan, the Nature Fitness Check, improvements in the LIFE programme proposed for the new EU budget, progress on air quality and the environmental implementation

review among other examples. He said the work of NGOs in providing checks and balances and driving ambition was essential.

The Director General was also open about the Commission’s shortcomings, reflecting inter alia on the work that still needed to be done to fully implement the Aarhus Convention in order to ensure effective access to justice at the EU level. He said the issue that everyone was talking about was single use plastics and that while the EU was taking a leadership role, there was much work still to be done.

Calleja concluded with a call to NGOs: keep pushing the EU to do more and to do better.



# CONCLUSIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Jeremy Wates  
Secretary General  
European Environmental Bureau

In his closing remarks, **Jeremy Wates** responded to Mr Calleja’s comments. He accepted there had been some significant successes, but pointed out that on the other hand there were still some major issues outstanding: especially on the SDGs and climate change, but also on protecting the EU’s Water Framework Directive and ensuring that chemical protections keep pace with the development of new and potentially harmful substances.

Wates observed that many of the EU’s recent achievements had almost happened despite the Juncker leadership, rather than because of it.

Yet, Wates said, while the Commission is often criticized, it also often puts forward proposals that are later weakened by national governments.

Wates said that most environmentalists have seen what the EU has achieved for the environment and therefore want Europe to do more. While this positive

story should be told ahead of the elections to counter Euroscepticism, the EEB should continue to be critical towards the EU institutions in order to make them better. Just as important as spending a significant part of the EU budget on climate action was ensuring that the rest was not spent in an environmentally destructive way

Looking ahead to the European elections, Wates warned that the ‘Spitzenkandidaten’ system should not become an ‘unhealthy first-past-the-post system’ with the Commission President automatically coming from the biggest party, but rather that the role should be filled by a candidate enjoying the broadest support from the Parliament.

Most importantly, Wates concluded, people from this century understand that a healthy environment is not incompatible with a healthy economy, in fact the very opposite is true. The European elections should, above all, offer young people hope for a better future.







[Click here](#) for a list of participants

[Click here](#) for further information about the day







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