



ALBANIA: **ALBANIA: From 1 January 2020 ...**

...all used vehicles that do not meet the Euro4 environmental criteria **WILL BE BANNED** from registering / licensing in Albania!

Ministry of Environment and Infrastructure guidance approved in March 2019 based on DCM No. 633, date 26.10.2018 on measures to prevent air pollution from vehicle emissions and to reduce air emissions of gaseous and solid contaminants from positive-ignition and compression-ignition engines that burn natural or liquid gas for use in vehicles is available since 1st of January.

According to the official data of the General Directorate of Road Transport Service, in the past 11 months 5986 vehicles of Euro 4 or higher have entered our country or 43% newer vehicles, which brings about reduction of environmental pollution. Meanwhile, as for zero-mileage cars they must meet the environmental category EURO 5 and EURO 6.



Figure 1- Source: balkanweb



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INTERNATIONAL WATERBIRD CENSUS – IWC *

During the second weekend of January (10-12th of January), like every year, the Albanian Ornithological Society (AOS) became **part of the “International Waterbirds Census” (IWC) 2020**. This international monitoring program is implemented in more than 143 countries and has been implemented in Albania since 1993. It has become a tradition for IWC to be joined by interested persons, volunteers, experts, local people, and every year their presence is increasing. Albanian Ornithological Society is responsible for the coordination of IWC at the national level, and during IWC 2020 in Albania, AOS played a pivotal role in standardizing counts and coordinating the whole process.

More than 120 participants were involved in counting, monitoring and assessing. The entire process and each team were led and supervised by seven experts of AOS, PPNEA, RAPA Kukës, Tirana University, The Agricultural University of Tirana. These were supported by the National Agency of Protected Areas and the 12 Regional Agencies of Protected Areas which provided both human and logistic capacities.

* All Rights Reserved Albania Ornithological Society (AOS):

<https://aos-alb.org/completed-international-waterbirds-census-2020-in-albania%E2%9C%94%E2%8F/>



Figure 2-Sites covered by IWC 2020 in Albania Source: AOS,Albania



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Figure 3- Source: AOS, Albania

What do the results of IWC 2020 show?* 151 thousand waterbirds and 65 waterbird species were registered in the visited wetland sites. The number of waterbirds in 2020 is higher than in 2018 and 2019. But it is lower than in 2017 when circa 165 thousand birds were reported. The above shows that during the last years (2013-2020) the overall figure of waterbirds is showing fluctuations but not a clear increasing or decreasing trend. Meanwhile, the long-term trend, starting in 1996, shows that the number of waterbirds is decreasing.

Which wetland site has the highest number of waterbirds observed?*

Divjaka-Karavasta, with circa 42 thousand waterbirds and 55 waterbird species was confirmed this year as the most important wetland site for waterbirds. The second most important wetland based on the number of waterbirds is Shkodra lake with circa 41 thousand specimens and 22 waterbird species. Those two sites are followed by Vjosë-Narta, Macro Prespa, and Ohrid. Divjaka-Karavasta records again the highest number of waterbird species. Other important sites are Vjose-Narta, Butrinti, Kune-Vaini, and Orikumi.



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BELGIUM: EUROPEAN REGIONS AND INDUSTRY MOVE BEYOND FOSSIL FUELS?

The European Commission has announced a €100 billion investment plan to help European regions and industry move beyond fossil fuels.

A new EU funding scheme promises to **allocate up to €100 billion to regions and sectors across Europe that rely heavily on fossil fuels, particularly coal, peat and shale oil. Announced January as part of the European Commission's Sustainable Investment Plan, the so-called Just Transition Mechanism (JTM) was set up to help Europe reach carbon neutrality by 2050. Over the next 10 years, the Sustainable Investment Plan aims to raise a total €1 trillion to support the energy transition across Europe. In the short and medium term, the €100 billion would be used to provide support to areas and industries that face socio-economic challenges. The plan aims to boost public and private investments in low and zero carbon sectors and create new jobs in regions potentially affected by job losses.** The JTM **comprises three different funding streams, which together are meant to raise €100 billion:**

- **The Just Transition Fund (JTF). In a move that has already divided EU countries, the Commission has announced €7.5 billion in new money coming from national contributions. The additional money will be part of a €30-50 billion to be agreed in the upcoming EU budget for 2021-2027, which is currently still being discussed.**
- **InvestEU. Private investments under a European Investment Bank (EIB) scheme should raise €30 billion and €40 billion.**
- **A new public loan facility of up to €10 billion, also managed by the EIB.**

Funding will be conditional on the level of climate ambition detailed by governments, the institutions warned. Before granting the money, the Commission will review national and regional just transition plans set out to help coal-heavy territories reduce emissions gradually and eventually phase out fossil fuels. Support must be consistent **with National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) and the EU's plans for carbon neutrality, the EU executive said. Both the European Parliament and the Council, made up of the 27 member states, will discuss and vote on the detail of the plan in the coming months.**



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According to a study carried out in 2018 by the European Commission, the overall amount of money needed in Europe for a full **climate transition is over €1.1 trillion per year. Should these numbers add up, this means Europe would still be far short of what's required for a complete transition.**

As part of separate negotiations, EU governments are also currently discussing whether to continue financing fossil fuel projects under the next EU budget. Funded mostly by member state contributions and import duties, the budget allocates funds to specific areas such as agriculture, transport, and industry for a seven-year period. A lot will also depend on whether environmentally harmful subsidies are reformed – e.g. from reforming on-budget fuel subsidies to removing excise tax exemptions for aviation and maritime fuels.

Circular economy: Clothing production

More clothing is being produced, consumed, and thrown away than ever **before, putting immense pressure on our planet and the industry's 60 million-strong global workforce.** A new campaign launched in January by the European Environmental Bureau and 24 civil society groups from across the EU is calling for EU leaders to take urgent action to rein in the sector.

"The textile industry is one of the biggest polluters and is rife with exploitation. Our new Wardrobe Change campaign is calling for a radical transformation to how clothes are made, sold, worn – and reworn," explained Patrizia Heidegger, Director of Global Policies and Sustainability at the EEB.

Heidegger continued: **"This year, EU leaders have a chance to back an ambitious Textile Strategy based on fairness and sustainability. It's time to move fashion away from the pursuit of ever-more economic growth which is incompatible with stopping further environmental and climate breakdown and reducing global inequalities."**

Ever shorter turnaround times mean that, globally, clothing production has doubled from 2000 to 2014, with more than 150 billion garments now produced annually, and 73% of all textiles ending up in landfill or incineration.



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In December, new research from the European Environment Agency highlighted that after food, housing and transport, textiles are the fourth largest cause of environmental pressure. Textiles also cause the second highest pressure on land use and are the fifth largest contributor to carbon emissions from household consumption. Time for EU action: EU environment ministers have called on the European Commission to come up with a strategy to move the sector away from unsustainable production and consumption patterns, and the sector was flagged as a priority in Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's flagship European Green Deal.

The Commission is also expected to put forward proposals for textiles in its New Circular Economy Action Plan, expected to be published on 4 March.

Stephane Arditi, Policy Manager for the Circular Economy at the EEB, said: "Today's fashion system makes overconsumption far too easy which is generating huge levels of waste. But we can't recycle our way out of the problem – products need to be used for longer and waste prevented in the first place. Just as they took action on single-use plastics, governments need to urgently take action to make options such as repairing, renting, sharing, and swapping more accessible. It's essential to ensure better information is available about what our clothes are made of and develop design requirements for toxic-free materials that can be used again and again."

Climate impact: The UN states that the textile sector is responsible for between 8 and 10% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions and it estimates that, by 2050, fashion could be responsible for a quarter of all carbon emissions.

Arditi added: "Climate action is not just about decarbonising the energy we use, it's also about changing how we produce and consume in the first place by rethinking how we make, use, and reuse products – and that includes textiles."

Textile transformation crucial for SDGs: In 2019, Sweden made headlines by cancelling fashion week, and from Buy Nothing Day, Second Hand September, to Extinction Rebellion people all over the world stood up for slower fashion. But the year tragically ended with a fire in a New Delhi garment factory killing 40 workers. In 2020, the



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organisations behind the Wardrobe Change campaign will carry out a host of awareness raising and advocacy activities across the EU. Information about the Wardrobe Change campaign activities will be updated here.

New gas projects call the European Commission's climate ambitions into question

New gas projects call the European Commission's climate ambitions into question as the financing of fossil fuels takes the central stage of discussions in Brussels. "Call it 'a first test for the EU Green Deal'," said Jonathan Bonadio, an energy expert with the European Environmental Bureau (EEB). "We're not going to reach carbon neutrality if we continue to fund new fossil fuel infrastructure," he paused.

Bonadio has good reasons to ring the alarm bells. Earlier January, the European Parliament's industry committee approved a list of 151 energy infrastructure projects, including 32 new gas pipelines and LNG terminals in Greece, Cyprus, Poland, Croatia and in Ireland. The projects may soon be eligible for EU funding, depending on the outcome of a plenary vote in the European Parliament in mid-February.

Already, the discussions have raised a few eyebrows. News has spread of a study finding that the 32 gas projects on the Commission's list are "unnecessary" in view of decreasing gas demand and plans for climate neutrality.

According to the study, Europe has enough infrastructure to meet future gas demand, which is expected to drop by almost 30% in 2030 compared to 2015. The approval of EU funding for these gas projects would waste €29 billion of taxpayers' money, data analysts at Artelys concluded.

Known as Projects of Common Interest, the list was originally put forward by the former European Commission last year, before the announcement of the EU Green Deal. Many projects on the list are deemed necessary to boost electricity connection across Europe, which could in turn facilitate the uptake of renewable energy. However, the European Parliament will only be able to accept or reject the list as a whole, without the possibility of scrapping the gas projects.

The Parliament may now ask the European Commission to re-examine the list, Pascal Canfin, the chair of the Parliament's environment committee, was quoted as saying in Euractiv.



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Methane, the main component of fossil gas, is believed to be responsible for a quarter of all global warming – **though it is difficult to assess the gas industry's exact contribution to climate change because leaks in the pipelines often go undetected.**

However, fossil fuel companies have been promoting gas as a 'clean' alternative to coal and partner for renewable energy. In 2016, Brussels-based lobby groups have reportedly spent over €100 million to push for more investments in gas infrastructure.

"The more gas infrastructure we build, the further away we get from our decarbonisation goals," Bonadio said, pointing out that gas pipelines are expensive and, once built, will lock us in for decades. "It's like gambling with taxpayers' money hoping that some fictitious solution will save us."

"Whether Europe can overcome the climate crisis efficiently will depend very much on the investments we'll make in the next few years," he concluded.

The EU budget: Planning the next cycle of investments

Crucially, the revision of the EU budget should soon clear things out. EU institutions and governments are entering the final stage of negotiations to define the next EU funding cycle, which will run from 2021 to 2027 and may or may not include more support for gas projects. The new European Parliament and Commission have already voiced their support for the exclusion of fossil fuels from the budget. But national governments are yet to reach a common position.

Any agreement between governments and institutions will have to clearly spell out what percentage of the overall budget will be allocated to the climate crisis; **how much money each government should put in the pot; and guidelines as to what the money are going to be spent on and what shouldn't be spent on.** Last year, the Commission president Ursula von der Leyen promised she will deliver the most ambitious budget to date, with the aim of boosting climate action across Europe. To prove her case, only **two weeks ago she put forward a plan to raise €100 billion to help coal-heavy regions transition to clean energy.**

Campaigners now hope that this money will not be used to finance more gas infrastructure, a decision that rests in the hands of governments.



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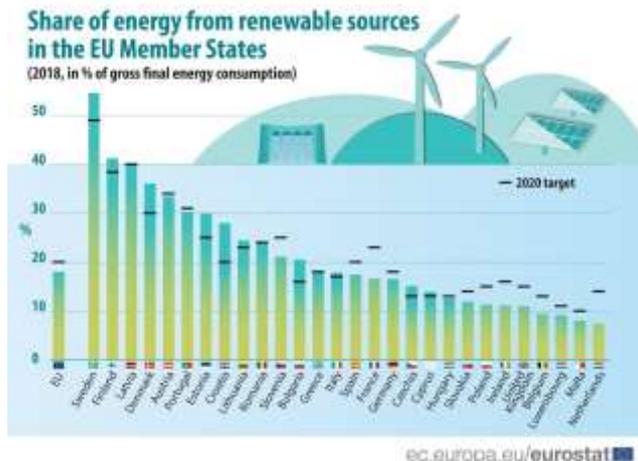
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BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA:

In 2018, the share of energy from renewable sources in gross final energy consumption reached 18.0% in the European Union (EU), up from 17.5% in 2017 and more than double the share in 2004 (8.5%), the first year for which the data are available. These figures are published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union.

According to UNECE Environmental Performance Reviews, a common challenge in reviewed countries of South-Eastern Europe, where SEA is already operational (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia), is the lack of staff in environmental authorities to ensure the operation of SEA. Sectoral authorities still need to be convinced of the benefits of SEA and there are cases in which sectoral policy documents, plans and programmes by SEA requirements. As for transboundary SEA procedures, most countries have very limited experience and there are examples of both overuse and underuse of notification procedures to initiate transboundary consultations. In the same Review, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia have reformed their waste management legislation as part of their efforts to transpose the European Union acquis. These countries started introducing separation and recycling, and North



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Macedonia progressed with the introduction of extended producer responsibility schemes for several waste streams. But there are almost no landfills compliant with the basic requirements for safe waste disposal, and municipal solid waste is still dumped near human settlements. Cooperation between municipalities in the construction of regional landfills has been uneasy. In Bulgaria and Montenegro, the overall number of landfills decreased thanks to regional cooperation, rehabilitation of non-compliant landfills and the closure of illegal dumpsites, all supported by European Union funding. In Serbia, modern sanitary landfills are growing in number as a result of international projects and private investments.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, an innovative consultation tool (Zamisliti2030) has been developed to raise awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals. Bosnia and Herzegovina has gained useful experience in aligning efforts to attain the Sustainable Development Goals with the European Union accession process.

LIR Evolution extended duration of sub-grant projects of Geopa and CZZS sub-grantees (in October and December respectively). The last month of the sub-grantee projects is foreseen to be February, 2020. The extension is jointly agreed with each sub-grantee in order to finalize activities in best suitable manner, and to achieve greater project results.

The page of the Republic Institute for Standardization and Metrology, at jurisdiction of the RS Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship, on which updates of all legal acts and by-laws for the RS can be found: <https://rzsm.org/tehprop>.



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ITALY: SAVE THE DATE

2020 is the International Year of Plant Health: the year is a once in a lifetime opportunity to raise global awareness on how protecting plant health can help end hunger, reduce poverty, protect the environment, and boost economic development. Read more: <http://www.fao.org/plant-health-2020/home/en/>

2nd February – World Wetlands Day to raise global awareness about the vital role of wetlands for people and our planet. Wetlands and Biodiversity is the theme for 2020. Wetlands are rich with biodiversity and are a habitat for a dense variety of plant and animal species. Latest estimates show a global decline of biodiversity, while wetlands are disappearing three times faster than forests. Read more: <https://www.worldwetlandsday.org/>

Funding opportunities for grass-root CSOs, media and individuals (activists)

Call for Letters of Inquiry for Small Grants: The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) and The Prespa Ohrid Nature Trust (PONT) are combining resources and issuing a joint call for proposals for wider Prespa area.

Eligible Countries: Albania and North Macedonia

Closing Date: 21st February 2020

Budget: Maximum budget per project is € 50,000

Theme: Sustainable management of water catchments and Conservation of plants

<https://www.cepf.net/grants/open-calls-for-proposals/2020-mediterranean-basin-small-grants-pont>



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Call for Proposals for Small Size Grants, The Balkan Forum: to support regional youth initiatives in the Western Balkans with the aim of accelerating progress in the areas of education, energy, tourism, human capital and labour market.

Eligible Countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia

Closing Date: 31th January 2020

Budget: Maximum budget per project is € 2,500

Theme: Education, Energy, Tourism, Human Capital & Labour Market

<https://thebalkanforum.org/en/grants>

Spotlight on a particular grass-root initiative different for every issue

Last April North Macedonian activist Ana Colovic.Lesoska wins Goldman Environmental Prize for halting international lending for two hydropower plants, thereby protecting the habitat of the Balkan lynx. Read more: <https://balkangreenenergynews.com/macedonian-activist-wins-goldman-environmental-prize/>

Grassroots campaign saves major wetland in Montenegro. For nearly two decades, a partnership including EuroNatur, the Martin Schneider Jacoby Association (MSJA) and the Centre for Protection and Research of Birds (CZIP) has been working to protect the lagoon of Ulcinj Salina (a diverse saltwater wetland in southern Montenegro) from development, with a campaign that has mixed traditional lobbying with the power of the internet and the world of diplomatic relations. Read more: <https://news.mongabay.com/2019/11/campaigns-help-save-the-ulcinj-salina-montenegro/>



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MONTENEGRO: NATURA 2000 HABITAT MAPPING OF THE SKADAR LAKE NATIONAL PARK

The activity 'Natura 2000 Habitat Mapping of the Skadar Lake National Park' was a part of technical support by the CSBL project 'Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity at Lakes Prespa, Ohrid and Shkodra/ Skadar', implemented by GIZ and funded by German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), aiming to improve the transboundary management of Lakes Prespa, Ohrid and Shkodra/ Skadar in compliance with environmental and biodiversity targets of the EU. This activity has been requested by the Nature and Environmental Protection Agency of Montenegro in compliance with the environmental and biodiversity targets of the EU.

Third Annual Report on the Implementation of the National Strategy for Transposition, Implementation and Enforcement of the EU Legal Framework in the Field of Environment and Climate Change (NEAS)

Action Plan of the NEAS for the period 2018-2020. (Strategy Action Plan 2018 - 2020) was adopted at the Government Session on June 21, 2018 and it provides semi-annual implementation reporting.

For 2019, realization of 64 obligation are planned (31 in the transposition part and 33 in the implementation part).

According to this report in five segments of the environment – Horizontal Legislation, Waste management, Noise, Civil Protection and Climate Change, implementation rate was 0 %, for the period July - December 2019.

According to the report, approximately EUR 46 million has been invested for harmonization with EU standards and implementation of commitments from the European agenda in the previous period for Chapter 27. According to the Law on Budget for 2019 the amount of € 1.33 mil. Or 0.08% of total expenditures of the current budget funds were allocated for the Program "Environmental Protection and Communal Development", for 2018 the amount of € 1.43 mil. Or 0.09%, in 2017 the amount of € 1.8 mil. Or 0.09% were allocated which is more than insufficient for carrying out the strategic and legislative activities in this area.

Save the date: 5th January, International day of birds



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NORTH MACEDONIA: PARLIAMENT APPROVED THE AMENDING OF THE LAW ON WASTE MANAGEMENT TO PROHIBIT IMPORT OF WASTE THAT CAN BE USED AS ENERGY

When information and data creates more confusion than confidence...

Public pressure to amend the Law on Waste Management and ban import of waste to be used as energy source has increased following the announcement of a Bulgarian affair for an investigation opened by the state prosecutor for the unregulated import of 25 Italian containers with waste at the port of Burgas transposed by boat on September 5 last year, which was to be burnt at the Bobov Dol thermal power plant.

Additional confusion was made after different data from the State Statistical Office and the Ministry of Environment on the quantities of imported waste in the country in the past ten years have been presented in public.

In the recent period there have also been accusations from citizens and eco-activists who have shared photos on social networks, saying they show that cement plant USJE is poisoning the citizens of Skopje by burning imported hazardous waste.

But it was denied by the plant's general manager. He acknowledged that the images on the internet are from USJE, but stated that it was an alternative waste fuel imported from Italy that was burned in the kilns in the cement manufacturing process.

The Parliament of North Macedonia, after nearly two months of receiving the proposal, last week finally passed the amendments to the Law on Waste Management that prohibits the import of waste to be used as an energy source.

Although the current law is generally in line with the Basel Convention on Waste, practice has shown that we lack an effective system of waste control and management. These problems must be seriously addressed by the Department of the Environment, which issues A-integrated permits, as well as the State Environmental Inspectorate,



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which controls industrial plants. Both A-integrated permits and how industry controls are handled should be revised to eliminate system failures, be it a result of incompetence or corruption.

In the new Law,

- the ban on the import of waste for storage for the purpose of disposal, and for the disposal and import of hazardous waste mixed with non-hazardous waste or other components that reduce the harmfulness and hazardous characteristics of the waste remains;
- the permission for import of waste that can be safely recycled, without the risk of endangering the environment, human life and health, as well as being used as raw material remains.

Flash news!

Eco-quiz for primary school students from Kavadarci, Negotino and Rosoman

On January 14, more than 150 primary schools students from the municipalities of Kavadarci, Negotino and Rosoman participated in an eco-quiz organised by the environmental CSO, Eco Life from Kavadarci.

The even took place at the premises of the Mihajlovo resort on Kozuf Mountain. The quiz was organised as part of the project "Produce, use, recycle, reuse" funded by the European Union under the ENV.net sub-granting scheme, and implemented by Eco Life.

The purpose of this eco-quiz was to raise environmental awareness among school students, but also to contribute to upgrading their knowledge of environmental issues and the role of each individual, including the youngest, in preserving a healthy and clean environment.

Prior to the start of the eco quiz, participants had the opportunity to attend an ecology lecture.



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From March 2020 Reverse Vending Machines for plastic and glass bottles in the Municipality of Centar



The Public Parking Enterprise of Centar Municipality and the Centar Municipality (one of the ten municipalities in Skopje), will introduce Reverse Vending Machines (RVM) for plastic and glass bottles this year in order to motivate the residents to get involved in the process of selective waste disposal. Citizens will receive 1.5 denars for each bottle they put in the RVM.

Nine such machines have already been purchased, and by the end of the year 18 more will be purchased. Their installation will start in early March this year.

The Municipality of Centar has provided subsidies for this project in its budget for 2020. The municipal authorities hope that this positive example will be the beginning for further engagement of other municipalities, institutions, and private companies in order to reduce waste, but also to increase the percentage of collected packaging waste that can be recycled into raw materials.

All residents who will be involved in this process of selective waste disposal will receive subsidies from the municipality in exchange for plastic and glass bottles, ie for each bottle they will receive a certain amount of money on the new Green Pay Card, allowing them to buy with discounting in certain markets, shops, bars, etc., or to pay for the services provided by the parking company.

Good examples are welcome. Long-term shift in the mindsets of all involved in the waste management system in our country is even more.



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SERBIA:

End of 2019 and beginning of 2020 was marked by two key events related to environmental protection issues in Serbia. One is adoption of the Report on the environmental situation in the Republic of Serbia for 2018, and another is submission of the Negotiation position for the Chapter 27 in Serbia, to EC.

At the session of the Committee on Environment of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia on 25 December 2019, Report on the environmental situation in the Republic of Serbia for 2018 submitted by the Government and prepared by the Serbian Agency for Environmental Protection, was presented and adopted. Director of the Serbian Agency for Environmental Protection, presented the report, but also informed the Committee members on developments and progress made.

The report on the environmental situation in the Republic of Serbia for 2018 contains relevant data and information based on official information from state institutions, scientific and professional organizations and other actors responsible for monitoring the status of individual environmental media. The expected effects of the measures adopted by the national authorities will be monitored based on monitoring of environmental factors in subsequent reports. Among other important data, we want to emphasize the estimated expenditure of the budget in 2018, regarding the environmental protection. The estimated expenditure amounted to about 0.3% of gross domestic product (GDP). Total income from fees amounted to 14,186.50 million (0.28% of GDP), and investment sectors of the economy 3,352 million (0.07% of GDP).

However, it is evident delay of the report in relation to the expected, making presented data out-of-date of the current situation in Serbia, especially from the standpoint of air pollution. The methodology has been taken by the European Agency for the Environment, employees of SEPA finalized work on time, but harmonization with other sectors and collecting opinions from them seems to be very long process. Why consultations consumed time almost more than it was needed for preparation of the Report?, is one of the questions that president of Environmental Ambassadors asked in the capacity of a member of the Green chair, during the Environment Committee session.

Negotiating position for Chapter 27 – **“Environment and climate change”** was submitted to the European Commission in Brussels. The negotiating position is very complex document, whose preparation was attended by 150 representatives from 28 institutions and state bodies of the Republic of Serbia. In addition to text, the negotiating



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position contains a total of 14 items or 1,650 pages of text and explains the financial framework for activities in the future. Adoption of the negotiating position was preceded by a positive opinion from the Committee for Environmental Protection and held a consultative meeting with the National Convention on the EU in which there were no substantive objections to the Draft Negotiating position for Chapter 27. The positive opinion are also provided by the Committee for European Integration to the proposal of the Negotiating position of the Republic of Serbia, in order to references to the Intergovernmental conference on the accession of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union for Chapter 27 - "Environment and climate change".



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TURKEY: A NEW CIRCULAR CITY FUNDING GUIDE HAS BECOME AVAILABLE

On the occasion of the upcoming CITIES Forum “Together we shape a sustainable urban future” which takes place on 30-31 January 2020 in Porto (Portugal), jointly organised by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, and the City of Porto, a new Circular City Funding Guide has become available online: [https:// www. circularcityfundingguide.eu/](https://www.circularcityfundingguide.eu/) The Guide was initiated as one of the actions under the EU Urban Agenda Partnership for Circular Economy. The Guide was developed by external service providers and EIB experts mobilised and funded by the European Investment Advisory Hub. (Ref: EEB)

Hayrettin Karaca, the Founder of TEMA Foundation has passed away on 20th January

Karaca, who is widely considered as the grandfather of the Turkish environmental movement has passed away on 20th January. Karaca was born on April 4, 1922, and built a **successful textile business in the first part of his life. However, in the 1970's, he became increasingly concerned with the environmental degradation** he witnessed during his travels around Turkey, especially soil erosion. Karaca decided to document the situation with the aim of warning the authorities and the public about the threats facing **Turkey's nature and founded TEMA Foundation in 1992 with his fellow peers. Since its foundation,** TEMA has grown into a large-scale movement currently numbering over 850,000 volunteer members. Due to his environmental activism, Karaca became a well-known and beloved public figure in Turkey, often taking the opportunity to educate children and young people about the importance of protecting nature.

İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) held a Water Workshop

Water is the most important problem of İstanbul. The city has always suffered from scarcity of water, all settlers of the city throughout the history such as Byzantines and Ottomans worked hard to guarantee the water supply to the city with large infrastructures. Increasing impact of climate change make the water issue more critical than ever. IMM conducted the Water Workshop to evaluate the risks related to the city's water resources, to create climate scenarios for the city, to identify opportunities and



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threats and to raise awareness on this issue for the dates of 8-9th January. TEMA representative followed the workshop where TEMA Scientific Committee members such as **Prof. Dr. Murat Türkeş** was one of the speakers.

Following the President's veto, the coal plants without environmental investments stopped operating for the first time in Turkey

Following the campaign of the Right to Clean Air Platform, the article had been vetoed by the President of Turkish Republic and sent back to the Parliament where the proposal had been canceled. The president justified the veto by referring to the violation of Turkish Constitution about the right to live in a healthy environment. 5 coal plants which lack environmental investments stopped operating as of 1st January 2020. It is the first time that such a development occurs in Turkey where coal has a major share in electricity generation. It is obvious that coal has lost its social license.

Kanal İstanbul Project's EIA decision has been approved

The Ministry of Environment and Urbanization approved the EIA decision of Kanal İstanbul Project on 17th January despite the objections of the CSOs, İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality and thousands of citizens. TEMA which had presented its objections in late December, is working on the court case demanding the cancelation of the EIA decision. On the other, TEMA is starting a scientific study covering the revision of its expert report on the impacts of 3 mega projects on the city launched in 2014.

As a leading Turkish NGO focusing on land and soil since 1992, TEMA Foundation states that desertification is often misunderstood. Desertification does not mean the transformation of the land to deserts. It means the loss of fertility and the decrease in the vital services of the soil by destroying vegetation instead. The loss of fertility of the land leads to an increase in rural poverty and the migration of people whose income depends on the land.

The causes of land degradation as well as erosion include agricultural land destroyed by non-agricultural usages (industry, urbanisation, tourism, mining, and transportation investments), wrong tillage and irrigation, stubble burning, unsustainable agricultural practices and mining projects affecting the environment.



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Save the date: upcoming month highlights from the region
Important calendar dates (national/international marked days)

1. World Wetlands Day, 2 February
2. Activities expected to take place
 - New Searches in Civil Society and Media: Civil Society **Media Visibility Screening Conference, 18 February, İstanbul**
 - Water Dialogue Meeting: CSO experience in river basins, 21 February, Ankara



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