

Different shades of green at Green Week

Around 80 organisations, from diverse backgrounds and serving different interests, have set up shop in Green Week's exhibition areas. And it is more than green groups out in force!

The Green Week exhibition space on the first and second floor is where the serious networking takes place. The many thousands of delegates mingle and exchange ideas and best practices to help with current and future projects aimed at mainstreaming biodiversity matters.

Due to overwhelming interest in exhibiting and limited space, the Commission had to whittle down the applications and find a balance between different stakeholders and regions. Furthermore, it looked at the relevance of the application to the biodiversity theme, as well as the originality and interactivity of the stand concept.

Groups such as the World Conservation Union, whose mission is to help societies preserve the integrity and diversity of nature, can be found alongside the International Fund for Animal Welfare, which protects wild and domestic animals around the world.

From boron to biodiversity

Further along, you will find the EUROSITE and GreenFacts stands. The former is the largest network of organisations devoted to nature conservation management across Europe, while GreenFacts makes complex health and environment subjects comprehensible for non-specialists. It has a wide range of

fact sheets available on-line, from fisheries and fluoride to boron and biodiversity.

Other green groups at the Charlemagne building include BirdLife International, whose partnership of organisations extends to over 100 countries and strives not only to protect birds and their habitats, but also global biodiversity as a whole. "Working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources" sums up BirdLife's mission.

To the business

Also manning stands are groups like Green 10 – the 'G8' of environmental NGOs – organic farming



Habitat loss is a major problem for species like this European white-tailed eagle.

movements, regional and national environmental programmes, businesses, universities, federations, associations, and more.

Multinationals such as BASF, Toyota, Unilever and Honda are a stone's throw from regional stakeholders like the Swedish Forest

Agency, the Spanish Cetacean Society and the Italian region of Abruzzo. Other regional actors attending include the Young Farmers Association of Andalusia, the Latvian Country Tourism Association, Croatia's State Institute for Nature Protection, and universities from Sweden and Greece.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

Cocktails at the Institute

Tonight's Welcome Cocktail takes place in a most appropriate place: the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Science. The institute and its impressive museum are dedicated to investigating our planet and the life upon it. Its activities include climate monitoring, nature conservancy, zoological and geological research. And, of course, the museum holds a leading position in the field of anthropology and prehistory.

The Cocktail is hosted by the Environment DG after first day's sessions end (starting at 18:15) and the venue is at rue Vautier 29, very close to the European Parliament building in Brussels.

Green Talk

Wednesday's evening activity is 'Green Talk'. This has become an annual part of Green Week and is dedicated to getting to the heart of (controversial) issues relating to the environment and sustainable development.

This year, the subject for discussion is the provocative question: Is the EU good for biodiversity? Speakers include Chris Davies, MEP from the European Liberals, Green MEP Bart Staes, Prof Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker, chairman of the Bundestag Committee on Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, and from the Ethiopian Environmental Protection Authority Tewolde Berhan Gebre Egziabher.

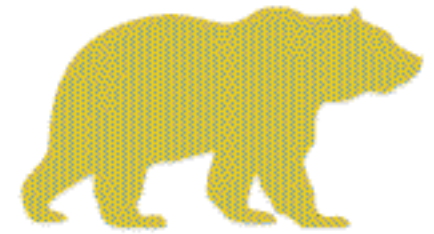
Greening our cities

This all-day, high-level summit is being organised by Friends of Europe, the leading Brussels-based think-tank, on Wednesday in the Résidence Palace. It will examine environmental priorities for urban communities.

In three sessions, the summit brings together a wide spectrum of stakeholders to look at the realities of the urban environment and the implications for existing and future transport policy, waste management and the role of consumer behaviour. Do cleaner cities hold the key to EU air pollution goals? How can the challenge of urban waste be tackled? How can consumers be turned into environmentalists?

The many speakers include Jacqueline McGlade of the European Environment Agency, and Bruno Tobback, the Belgian Environment Minister. The summit is co-organised by the consumer goods company Unilever with the support of vehicle-maker Volvo.

Changing behaviour – a necessary step



It is clear that individual behaviour patterns need to change if we are to protect our environmental heritage for future generations. We already know how some of the choices we make in our daily lives affect climate change and pollution – and thus, indirectly, biodiversity. There are, however, some perhaps unexpected ways we can help...



Demand for wood products and grazing land for meat production leads to forest clearing and biodiversity loss.

We urgently need to re-evaluate how we live and the choices we make, from moderating water and energy consumption, to buying eco-approved products and participating actively in recycling initiatives. In small ways, every day, we can help reduce our impact on the environment.

There are many factors influencing biodiversity loss. In Europe, the loss and fragmentation of natural habitats through intense development is a major threat. Invasive transport networks and intensive agricultural practices are but two examples of a growing list of biodiversity challenges.

How can we help? Apart from the more obvious suggestions mentioned above, how about becoming involved in a local nature conservation movement? By getting better informed on the biodiversity challenges in your area, you will be better able to help. Choosing what

to plant in your garden to make it more attractive to birds and wildlife, making your own compost or reducing your use of pesticides and other chemicals by choosing eco-friendly solutions all help as well.

A meaty issue

In this context, a recent Dutch study¹ points to one – perhaps unexpected – way in which change could lighten the environmental burden: meat consumption. The study reports that the world's meat consumption has increased exponentially in the past 50 years, from an estimated 45 to 233 billion kilos per year. Whilst part of this is due to population growth, most of the increase can be put down to changing eating habits.

This has led to increasingly intensive forms of agriculture, taking over larger and larger areas of land for grazing and the cultivation of crops needed for animal feed – some 50%

of global cereal production and 75% of soya production goes just to feeding livestock! Land clearing for agriculture or livestock is continuing to wipe out previously natural habitats – and with them species of both plants and animals. This is particularly true in the developing world where deforestation is causing a whole range of environmental problems.

The Dutch study is backed up by an EU Joint Research Centre study which considers meat production as one of the three human activities with the greatest environmental impact, along with construction and road building.

¹ Sustainable Protein Production and Consumption: Pigs or Peas?; Aiking, Harry; de Boer, Joop; Vereijken, Johan (Eds.). 2006, XVI, 226 p., Hardcover, Series: Environment & Policy, Vol. 45, ISBN: 1-4020-4062-8

Editorial information

Green Week Daily is published by the Communication Unit of the Environment DG.

Notice

Neither the European Commission nor any person acting on its behalf may be held responsible for the use to which information contained in this publication may be put, or for any errors which, despite careful preparation and checking, may appear.

Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2006

© European Communities, 2006

Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

Printed in Belgium