# Umwelt im Unterricht

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Arbeitsmaterial (Sekundarstufe)

**Die Umweltpolitk der EU: Quellentexte (in englischer Sprache)**

Welche Rolle spielt die Europäische Union für die Umweltpolitik in ihren Mitgliedstaaten? Wie ist die Umweltsituation in den einzelnen Ländern, und wie lassen sich die Länder vergleichen? Ein Blick auf die Regelungskompetenzen der EU sowie statistische Daten.

## Hinweise für Lehrkräfte

### Was gehört noch zu diesen Arbeitsmaterialien?

Die folgenden Seiten enthalten Arbeitsmaterialien zum Thema der Woche „Europäische Union: Umweltschutz geht nur gemeinsam“ von Umwelt im Unterricht. Zu den Materialien gehören Hintergrundinformationen, ein didaktischer Kommentar sowie ein Unterrichtsvorschlag. Sie sind abrufbar unter:

<http://www.umwelt-im-unterricht.de/wochenthemen/europaeische-union-umweltschutz-geht-nur-gemeinsam/>

### Inhalt und Verwendung der Arbeitsmaterialien

Die nachfolgenden Texte sind Auszüge aus Informationsmaterialien verschiedener Institutionen der Europäischen Union. Sie beschreiben in knapper Form,

* wie die Gesetzgebung in der EU funktioniert,
* welche umweltpolitischen Ziele die EU anstrebt und
* wie die Umweltsituation in der EU insgesamt zu bewerten ist.

Die Texte können als Hintergrundinformationen dienen, um konkrete umweltpolitische Fragen mit Bezug zur EU zu bearbeiten.

Je nach Lerngruppe und konkretem Thema kann es sich anbieten, die Texte zu bearbeiten – zu kürzen, zu vereinfachen oder zu ergänzen. Die jeweiligen Quellen werden unter den Textabschnitten genannt.

Die EU-Institutionen gestatten die Verwendung und Bearbeitung dieser Inhalte. Bei Wiederveröffentlichung muss die Quelle genannt werden.

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# The EU environmental policy

*The following passages are taken from EU publications. Sources for each excerpt are listed below the text.*

## How the European Union works

The unique feature of the EU is that, although these are all sovereign, independent states, they have pooled some of their ‘sovereignty’ in order to gain strength and the benefits of size. Pooling sovereignty means, in practice, that the Member States delegate some of their decision-making powers to the shared institutions they have created, so that decisions on specific matters of joint interest can be made democratically at European level. (...)

The European Union is based on the rule of law. This means that every action taken by the EU is founded on treaties that have been approved voluntarily and democratically by all EU countries. The treaties are negotiated and agreed by all the EU Member States and then ratified by their parliaments or by referendum. (...)

**Who takes the decisions?**

Decision-making at EU level involves various European institutions, in particular:

* the European Parliament, which represents the EU’s citizens and is directly elected by them;
* the European Council, which consists of the Heads of State or Government of the EU Member States;
* the Council, which represents the governments of the EU Member States;
* the European Commission, which represents the interests of the EU as a whole.

The European Council defines the general political direction and priorities of the EU but it does not exercise legislative functions. Generally, it is the European Commission that proposes new laws and it is the European Parliament and Council that adopt them. The Member States and the Commission then implement them. (...)

**What types of legislation are there?**

There are several types of legal acts which are applied in different ways. The most important types of legislation are regulations and directives:

* A regulation is a law that is applicable and binding in all Member States directly. It does not need to be passed into national law by the Member States although national laws may need to be changed to avoid conflicting with the regulation.
* A directive is a law that binds the Member States, or a group of Member States, to achieve a particular objective. Usually, directives must be transposed into national law to become effective. Significantly, a directive specifies the result to be achieved: it is up to the Member States individually to decide how this is done.

**What decisions are taken**

The treaties list the policy areas in which the EU can take decisions. In some policy areas, the EU has exclusive competence, which means that decisions are taken at EU level by the Member States meeting in the Council and the European Parliament. These policy areas cover trade, customs, competition rules, monetary policy for the euro area, and the conservation of fish.

In other policy areas, the decision-making competences are shared between the Union and the Member States. This means that if legislation is passed at EU level, then these laws have priority. However, if no legislation is adopted at EU level, then the individual Member States may legislate at national level. Shared competence applies in many policy areas, such as the internal market, agriculture, the environment, consumer protection and transport. In all other policy areas the decisions remain with the Member States.

Source: European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication: How the European Union Works (2014), p. 3-8

<http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/how-the-european-union-works-pbNA0414810/>

## Environment Action Programme to 2020

The 7th Environment Action Programme (EAP) will be guiding European environment policy until 2020. In order to give more long-term direction it sets out a vision beyond that, of where it wants the Union to be by 2050:

"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."

Source: European Commission: Environment Action Programme to 2020

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/action-programme/>

## Decision No 1386/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 November 2013 on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2020

The Union has set itself the objective of becoming a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy by 2020 with a set of policies and actions aimed at making it a low-carbon and resource-efficient economy. (...)

10. The Union has agreed to achieve a reduction of at least 20 % of its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2020 (30 %, provided that other developed countries commit themselves to comparable emissions reductions and that developing countries contribute adequately according to their responsibilities and respective capabilities); to ensure that 20 % of energy consumption comes from renewable energy by 2020; and to achieve a 20 % cut in primary energy use compared with projected levels, by improving energy efficiency.

11. The Union has agreed to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the Union by 2020, and restore them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the Union contribution to averting global biodiversity loss. (...)

13. The Union has agreed to achieve good status for all Union waters, including freshwater (rivers and lakes, groundwater), transitional waters (estuaries/deltas) and coastal waters within one nautical mile of the coast by 2015.

14. The Union has agreed to achieve good environmental status in all marine waters of the Union by 2020.

15. The Union has agreed to achieve levels of air quality that do not give rise to significant negative impacts on, and risks to, human health and the environment. (...)

Source: EUR-Lex

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32013D1386>

## The European environment — state and outlook

Looking back on the last 40 years, implementation of environment and climate policies has delivered substantial benefits for the functioning of Europe's ecosystems and for the health and living standards of its citizens. In many parts of Europe, the local environment is arguably in as good a state today as it has been since the start of industrialisation. Reduced pollution, nature protection and better waste management have all contributed. (...)

Despite the environmental improvements of recent decades, the challenges that Europe faces today are considerable. European natural capital is being degraded by socio-economic activities such as agriculture, fisheries, transport, industry, tourism and urban sprawl. And global pressures on the environment have grown at an unprecedented rate since the 1990s, driven not least by economic and population growth, and changing consumption patterns. (...)

Europe's natural capital is not yet being protected, conserved and enhanced in line with the ambitions of the 7th Environment Action Programme. Reduced pollution has significantly improved the quality of Europe's air and water. But loss of soil functions, land degradation and climate change remain major concerns, threatening the flows of environmental goods and services that underpin Europe's economic output and well-being.

Source: The European Environment Agency (EEA): SOER 2015 — The European environment — state and outlook 2015

<http://www.eea.europa.eu/soer-2015/synthesis/report/0c-executivesummary#notesES>