

Proceedings for Joint European Environment Agency and US Environmental Protection Agency Meeting

Held on January 27, 2021



Preface

For a number of years, the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have been sharing insights on various environmental aspects and learning from each other on measuring and assessing progress towards a sustainable and resource efficient economy. The cooperation has involved regular dialogue, exchange visits, and presentations on the latest developments from both sides.

This meeting, co-organized jointly by EEA and EPA, was a continuation of that collaboration to discuss the importance of scientific evidence and information regarding the state of the environment and how knowledge is transferred through a science-policy interface to policy makers. This meeting was timed to follow the EEA's recent release of the European State of the Environment Report (SOER) 2020, developed under the leadership of the EEA Executive Director, Hans Bruyninckx.

We look forward to further cooperation and deeper collaboration, recognizing the value of working together to achieve sustainability and our environmental protection goals.



Jennifer Orme-Zavaleta



Mark Kasman



Hans Bruyninckx

Acknowledgements

EEA-EPA Event Committee: Stefania Ministrini (EEA), Galina Georgieva (EEA), Meredith Fry (EPA), Britta Bierwagen (EPA), Susan Julius (EPA), Katherine Buckley (EPA)

Agenda

Wednesday, 27 January 2021			
Time	Item	Details	Speakers
8:00 – 8:40 - Opening remarks Chairman: Mike Slimak – National Program Director of the Sustainable and Healthy Communities (SHC) Research Program at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)			
8:00-8:10	Importance and commitment to developing the Report on the Environment (ROE) and its role in fulfilling EPA's mission	EPA Office of Research and Development (ORD) Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator for Science	Jennifer Orme-Zavaleta
8:10-8:20	Continuation of collaboration between EPA and EEA on the environment	EPA Office of International and Tribal Affairs (OITA) Acting Assistant Administrator	Mark Kasman
8:20-8:40	Presentation of the State of the Environment Report (SOER) 2020	European Environment Agency (EEA) Executive Director	Hans Bruyninckx
8:40 – 9:45 - Panel discussion - State of the Environment: European and U.S. perspectives Moderator: Per Mickwitz – Lund University, Chair of the EEA Scientific Committee			
EU panelist from Academia		Frank Geels - Manchester University, Member of the EEA Scientific Committee	
EU panelist from Member States		Laura Burke, Chair of the EEA Management Board, Ireland - EPA Director	
US panelist from Academia		Richard Moss, Adjunct Professor, Department of Geographical Sciences, University of Maryland; Non-resident Fellow, Andlinger Center for Energy and Environment, Princeton University	
US panelist from EPA		Katherine Dawes, EPA Evidence Act Acting Evaluation Officer	
9:45 - 10:00 – Closing remarks			
EPA ORD SHC National Program Director			Mike Slimak
EEA Executive Director			Hans Bruyninckx
10:00 – End of the meeting			

Biographies of Speakers



Mike Slimak

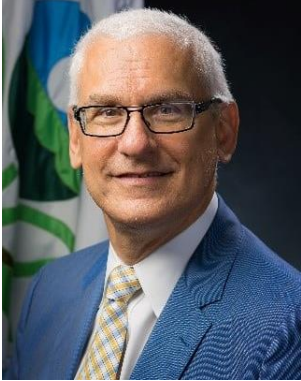
Mike Slimak is the former Director of EPA's Sustainable and Healthy Communities (SHC) Research Program. He is now retired, but completed more than 42 years of service to EPA and worked in the Office of Research and Development for 32 years. During his tenure at EPA, he worked in a variety of EPA programs (water, toxic substances, pesticides), and was involved in many important environmental issues including ecological risk, climate change, invasive species, and biodiversity. He holds a B.S. in Biology, an M.S. in Wildlife Ecology, and a Ph.D. in Environmental Science.



Jennifer Orme-Zavaleta

Jennifer Orme-Zavaleta is the former Acting Assistant Administrator for the Office of Research and Development. Dr. Orme-Zavaleta has been with EPA since 1981, working in the areas of human health and ecological research, risk assessment, policy and regulation development, strategic planning, and program implementation. The focus of her experience includes the evaluation of risks to human and ecosystem health, and the influence of environmental change on human health in response to a variety of stressors including synthetic organic and inorganic chemicals, radionuclides, microorganisms, and vector-borne disease. Dr. Orme-Zavaleta received her B.A. in Zoology from Ohio Wesleyan University, M.S. in Zoology and Toxicology from Miami University, and Ph.D. in Wildlife Science and Public Health from Oregon State University. Jennifer has held a number of positions within EPA in the Offices of Toxic Substances, Water, and Research and Development. In her current role, she not only oversees research to support the Agency's mission, but also EPA's Scientific Integrity program and EPA's Science and Technology Policy Council, including the Risk Assessment Forum which is currently evaluating and updating EPA's Risk Assessment Guidelines.

Mark Kasman



Mr. Kasman is currently Acting Assistant Administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of International and Tribal Affairs, normally serving as Director of EPA's Office of International Affairs. In his current capacity, he leads EPA's international and tribal portfolios, and is responsible for the full range of EPA's environmental policy development and program implementation in tribal lands and in sovereign nations outside of the United States. Mr. Kasman represents EPA within the United States Government and works closely with tribal governments, foreign governments, international organizations, and other key stakeholders on matters relating to the environment. Mr. Kasman has over thirty years of environmental experience working in the federal government and international organizations. On loan from EPA in 2003-2005, Mark served as the Environment Management Specialist for the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS) at the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Manila. Prior to coming to EPA, Mr. Kasman oversaw emerging agricultural programs for the United Nations Development Program in Jakarta, Indonesia, and worked at the Carter Center in Atlanta, Georgia. Mr. Kasman has an M.A. in International Development from Columbia University, a B.A. in International Studies from Emory University, and was a Senior Executive Fellow at Harvard's Kennedy School. He has studied in Cairo as a Fulbright Scholar, in Jerusalem as a Dorot Fellow, and in Vienna with Emory. Mr. Kasman also volunteers as an Emory Ambassador.

Hans Bruyninckx



Hans Bruyninckx has been the Executive Director of the European Environment Agency since 1 June, 2013. In 1996 Dr. Bruyninckx completed his Ph.D. in international environmental politics at Colorado State University. From 2010 until his appointment at the EEA, he was head of the HIVA Research Institute in Leuven, Belgium, a policy-oriented research institute associated with the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, where he was also head of the Political Science department from 2007 to 2010. Over the last 20 years, he has conducted research in more than a dozen countries, in areas including environmental politics, climate change, and sustainable development. He has taught on global environmental politics and global environmental governance in relation to the European Union (EU), publishing extensively on EU environmental policies and its role as an actor in global environmental governance. Throughout his career Dr. Bruyninckx has worked with governmental agencies, civil society and businesses, often in an advisory role.

Per Mickwitz



Professor Per Mickwitz works as pro vice-chancellor for research, sustainability and campus development at Lund University. During 2019-2020 he worked as Director of the International Institute for Industrial Environmental Economics (IIIEE) at Lund University. Prior to working at Lund university Dr. Mickwitz worked and lived in Finland. During 2012-18 he worked as research director at the Finnish Environment Institute. He has a Ph.D. in environmental policy from the University of Tampere. He has studied environmental policy evaluation, reflexive governance, and energy and climate policy issues—in particular, issues related to stability and change in socio-technical systems and the role of policies for these processes. Between 2014 and 2018, he was the chair of the Finnish Strategic Research Council, and since 2019 has been vice chair of the board of the Academy of Finland. Since 2014 he has been a member of the Scientific Committee of the European Environment Agency, and Chair of the Committee since 2018.

Frank W. Geels



Frank W. Geels is Professor of System Innovation and Sustainability at the Manchester Business School at the University of Manchester. He is a world-leading scholar on socio-technical sustainability transitions, combining insights from innovation studies, evolutionary economics, and political science to understand deep transformations in energy, mobility and agri-food systems. Professor Geels published six books and 83 peer-reviewed articles on topics including Science, Nature, Climate Change, and Global Environmental Change. He was selected in the Highly Cited Researchers list (2014, 2019, 2020) and elected as member of the Academia Europaea and Academy of Social Sciences. He is a member of the Scientific Committee of the European Environment Agency (EEA) and lead author of the Sixth IPCC Assessment Report. Mr. Geels has consulted and written reports for the EEA, OECD, European Commission, and U.K. Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

Richard Moss



Richard Moss has 30 years of experience at the science-policy interface. He has held leadership positions at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the U.S. Global Change Research Program, The United Nations Foundation, the World Wildlife Fund, and the Science for Climate Action Network. His research focuses on scenarios, uncertainty characterization, and climate change adaptation. He has served on numerous advisory boards and committees and holds affiliations with Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, the University of Arizona, the University of Maryland, and Princeton University.

Laura Burke



Laura Burke is the Director General of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), appointed in 2011, and served as a Director within EPA since 2004. As Director General she has the responsibility to lead and strategically manage the EPA. Laura is also the Chair of the European Environment Agency (EEA) Management Board. Prior to joining the EPA, she worked in the private sector. Laura is a graduate chemical engineer of University College Dublin (UCD), holds an M.Sc. from Trinity College, Dublin, is a Fellow of the Institute of Engineers of Ireland and the Irish Academy of Engineering, and is a Chartered Director. In 2016 Laura was awarded the UCD Engineering Graduates Association (EGA) Distinguished Graduate Award.



Katherine Dawes

Ms. Katherine Dawes is a Senior Analyst in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO). Ms. Dawes serves as the Acting Evaluation Officer under the EPA's implementation of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018. She is an Adjunct Professor at the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration at The George Washington University. Ms. Dawes holds an M.P.A. and M.A. in Geography from Syracuse University's Maxwell School and a B.A. from Dartmouth College.

Short summary

The virtual event was organized in the context of the existing EEA – EPA cooperation framework and had the following objectives:

- To present the European State of the Environment Report (SOER) 2020, initially planned to take place in 2020 by the Executive Director of the European Environment Agency.
- To discuss the importance of scientific evidence and information regarding the state of the environment and how trusted and actionable knowledge can be transferred through a science-policy interface to policy makers.
- To enhance dialogue between the two Agencies in view of reinforcing existing cooperation.

More than 440 participants joined the virtual event. The expected outcomes were to consider the message of the European SOER 2020 in light of the new political priorities of the European Union, and to get European and U.S. perspectives on how scientific information and knowledge can better inform decision makers.

The SOER 2020 presentation and the panel discussion highlighted several important elements and directions in pursuit of those outcomes. These elements include focusing particularly on consumption and production systems which are driving environmental impacts, bringing social sciences and business strategies into policies, and scaling up innovation into society.

As part of the bilateral cooperation and follow-up actions, Hans Bruyninckx invited EPA colleagues to visit EEA in Copenhagen and expressed his willingness to visit EPA again as soon as circumstances permit.

In his concluding remarks, Hans Bruyninckx reiterated the context and ambition for cooperation and mentioned several fields in which both agencies could join efforts towards innovation—amongst others, the use of Copernicus and satellite data, as well as data intelligence, artificial intelligence, and digitalization.

Plenary Speakers

Mike Slimak (chairperson) introduced the meeting program, which included respective reporting programs from EPA and EEA on the state of the environment and a panel discussion regarding the role of scientific information and knowledge in the policy making process. He acknowledged the existing long-term cooperation with EEA and hoped for having the next meeting in person as soon as the pandemic will allow.

Jennifer Orme-Zavaleta recalled the history of the Report on the Environment (ROE) and stressed the importance of health indicators in the ROE from a public health perspective. She highlighted how health indicators also provide information on social aspects, risks, and trends in the interlinkages between the environment and human health.

Mark Kasman provided an overview of EPA activities on environmental protection from an international perspective. He recalled his mission to Copenhagen when he formalized the cooperation between the EEA and EPA under the Bush Administration and the regular meetings during that time. He stressed science-based policy as a priority. He recognized how both reports (from EEA and EPA) can reinforce each other and provide useful information to policy makers as well as important contributions to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Hans Bruyninckx presented the SOER 2020 in the context of the new EU priorities. In setting the global context, he provided several elements and main messages:

- We face unprecedented challenges;
- Urgent action is needed;
- Climate change, biodiversity, and resource use are interconnected;
- Remaining issues related to COVID-19; and
- The European response to these challenges is the European Green Deal.

He presented the different trends in the European SOER 2020 regarding climate change, biodiversity, resource use, and the circular economy.

He highlighted the economic impacts of climate change in Europe, the interlinkages between the environment and health, the implementation gaps to 2020 European objectives, and the environment and health risks related to pollution. He stressed the need for a new chemical strategy and a revision to how we deal with risks.

He pointed out how, despite legislation and technology, environmental policy integration has been largely unsuccessful for transportation and agriculture due to consumption habits and current production systems.

He stressed how the transition toward sustainability should focus on four systems (food, mobility, energy, and urban systems), investing in sustainability, focusing on social vulnerability, and just transitioning.

He concluded by delivering the key message that bold action is needed: there is a need for a stronger implementation level, not only in doing things better but also in doing them differently; focusing on fundamental transitions at the systemic level including different types of investments, sustainable finance mechanisms, fostering innovation at the societal level, and involving society.

He stated that transatlantic partnerships and cooperation are crucial to scale up the necessary changes needed to achieve SDGs.

Panel Discussion

The moderator of the panel discussion, Per Mickwitz, introduced the panelists (see biographies included).

The panelists discussed key points raised by the moderator, including: building on previous interventions and considering a more ambitious climate and environment policy agenda, what knowledge should be produced in order to support policymaking (e.g., in the form of state of the environment reporting), and how knowledge produced should be presented and shared to ensure that it is transferred and used in policymaking.

The discussion highlighted the need to understand underlying systems and their dynamics which are driving environmental problems, the move toward transformative changes linked to sectoral and economic policies (new financial mechanisms), and the integration of social sciences and business strategies into policies.

In the next SOER 2025, EU panelists advised considering the four production systems (i.e., energy, food, mobility, and housing) more systematically, what innovations are needed in these systems, and how to tie in companies, investments, consumers, and social sciences.

The added value of the European SOER 2020 to Ireland and other European member states was highlighted in terms of providing benchmarks for countries to measure performance, stimulating coordination and synergy in national reporting, building the intrinsic link between the environment and health, and addressing socioeconomic aspects at the more local level.

From the U.S. side, it was highlighted how the recent Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Evidence Act) has charged the U.S. with using data more rigorously and transparently in policy and decision-making. The Evidence Act is driving U.S. policy toward prioritizing actions and goals, developing partnerships that bring together science and governance, and identifying areas for further investment and improvement. To continue advancing toward environmental goals, U.S. panelists mentioned specific interests in applying indicators in a more comprehensive way (from a systems perspective); considering interdependencies, uncertainties, and the potential for cascading failures across systems; integrating social sciences to identify more effective approaches; and learning what innovations should be scaled up. The relevance and importance of the Evidence Act at the local level (e.g., communities) as well at the federal level were also clarified.

Concluding remarks from the panelists were focused on innovation and transformative change; linking evidence to support good policymaking; integrating social sciences, big data, and artificial intelligence; and scaling up environmental innovation into society.

Closing

In the closing remarks, Mike Slimak thanked all speakers and participants and both the EPA and EEA for organizing the virtual event. He announced his retirement by the end of January 2021 and thanked his colleagues over the years. He shared his hopes for a better world to be left for future generations.

Hans Bruyninckx considered this event a new start to exchanges between EEA and EPA. The EU has set a very ambitious policy program, and he recognized the need to match policy ambitions with knowledge ambitions. The EU-proposed transatlantic agenda for global change can be a basis for cooperation.

He highlighted the need for innovation and possible fields of cooperation where EEA and EPA could join efforts: Copernicus and satellite data, data intelligence and artificial intelligence, and digitalization.

He concluded with an invitation to EPA colleagues to visit EEA in Copenhagen and expressed his interest in visiting the EPA again as soon as possible.

Disclaimer

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