

[Press release – Biodiversity: MEPs call for legally binding targets, as for climate change](#)



The Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee on Tuesday approved a resolution setting out their proposals for Parliament's position for the UN biodiversity conference to be held in autumn next year.

Legally binding global targets

The Environment Committee believes the upcoming COP15 conference on biodiversity should be the biodiversity equivalent of the Paris agreement on climate change and they want the EU to lead the way. In this context, they call for legally binding targets at global and EU level to increase ambition and ensure that post-2020 action on global biodiversity will be effective. Specifically, they want 30 % of natural areas to be conserved by 2030 and 30 % of degraded ecosystems to be restored.

Protecting biodiversity through EU policies

MEPs urge the Commission and member states to commit to "immediate, substantial and additional" efforts in the form of legally binding targets on biodiversity conservation and restoration, to meet EU targets and stop the current trajectory of biodiversity loss.

They want biodiversity objectives to be taken into account in all EU policies and call for biodiversity to be sufficiently financed under the next EU 2021-2027 long-term budget (MFF), in order to achieve the objectives of the UN 2050 Vision of Biodiversity Conservation. They say that minimum 10 % of the EU long-term budget should support efforts to improve biodiversity.

MEPs also underline the need for more sustainable agricultural and forestry

practices. The role of urban areas and cities in the preservation of biodiversity should be more thoroughly assessed and an in-depth analysis of all EU protected areas is needed, they say.

The resolution was adopted with 60 votes for, none against and 9 abstentions.

Next steps

The resolution is expected to be put to a vote during the January plenary in 2020 in Strasbourg.

Background

The UN Biodiversity Convention entered into force on 29 December 1993. The 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD (COP 15) is to be held in Kunming, China, from 19 October to 1 November 2020. The aim of COP15 will be to update the Convention's strategic plan and adopt a post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

[Press release – Sakharov Prize 2019: book your interview slot](#)



The ceremony will take place at noon in the European Parliament's hemicycle in Strasbourg.

As Mr Tohti is in prison in China, you can book an interview slot with his representative – his daughter Jewher Ilham – by sending an email to viktor.almqvist@europarl.europa.eu and eliana.dritsas@europarl.europa.eu by Monday 9 December at 12.00 CET at the latest.

Please note that requests cannot be guaranteed and will be confirmed only on Friday 13 December, not earlier.

Information on the language combination

Interpretation in French will be available for interviews with Ms Ilham, who will speak in English. Journalists who wish to have interpretation from English to French must inform the EP Press Service in advance if they need such assistance, so that slots can be assigned with French interpretation.

Ilham Tohti, 2019 Sakharov Prize laureate

Imprisoned Uyghur economist and human rights activist Ilham Tohti is this year's Sakharov Prize laureate, following a decision by European Parliament President David Sassoli and the political groups' leaders [on 24 October](#). Mr Tohti is currently serving a life sentence in China on separatism-related charges.

[The other finalists this year were:](#)

- Murdered Brazilian political activist and human rights defender **Marielle Franco**, Native Brazilian leader and environmentalist **Chief Raoni** and Brazilian environmentalist and human rights defender **Claudelize Silva dos Santos**,
- **The Restorers**, a group of five students from Kenya – Stacy Owino, Cynthia Otieno, Purity Achieng, Mascrine Atieno and Ivy Akinyi – who have developed i-Cut, an app to help those affected by female genital mutilation.

[Netherlands: EUR 350m European support to improve traffic flows around Amsterdam](#)

- EIB to provide a ca. EUR 350 million EFSI-backed loan to increase capacity of the A9 highway between Badhoevedorp and Holendrecht (“A9 *BaHo*”) in the Netherlands.
- Improved connection set to alleviate traffic around the Dutch capital, as well as reduce the impact on residents through sound barriers and a 1.3 km sunken section.
- Project supported under European Fund for Strategic Investments, main pillar of the “Juncker Plan”.

The European Investment Bank has agreed to provide ca. EUR 350 million to

support the improvement of a section of the A9 highway near Amsterdam in the Netherlands. The EIB loan to the project benefits from the [European Fund for Strategic Investments \(EFSI\)](#), a key element of the [Investment Plan for Europe](#), also known as the Juncker Plan. The project is part of the core TEN-T network, on the North Sea – Baltic corridor.

The project is set to unlock traffic on the Schiphol-Amsterdam-Almere (SAA) corridor, designed to improve connections between Schiphol airport, the city of Amsterdam and the city of Almere, a major residential area for commuters working in Amsterdam. The SAA-programme includes the upgrade of a total of 65km of motorways with sections of the A9, “A1/A6” and A6 motorways, all previously supported by the EIB. Works on the A9 *BaHo* section are expected to commence in early 2020.

On a technical level, the project entails the widening (from 3 to 4 lanes) of an 11km stretch of motorway, including the upgrading of bridges on ten river crossings. To reduce the impact of the road traffic on residents in the area, sound barriers will be placed and a 1.3 km stretch will be “submerged” as seen from ground level. This will reduce the visual impact, the noise and also improve the connectivity of the communities on both sides of the highway. The project is designed as a 14-year Design-Build-Finance-Maintain (DBFM), availability-based, PPP concession.

Enhanced front office for Slovenia

December 03, 2019 [General](#)

Enhanced front office for Slovenia



The Slovenian Intellectual Property Office ([SIPO](#)), with the support of the EUIPO's European Cooperation Projects, has upgraded its front office system.

The new software version, which went live on 29 November 2019, notably **improves the efficiency, operational effectiveness, security and maintenance** of SIPO's front office system.

The improvements were carried out within the framework of the EUIPO's [European Cooperation](#) Projects. The projects aim to benefit users across the EU by providing modern, state-of-the-art tools and services for intellectual property offices.

Further cooperation with SIPO on projects such as the implementation of the Software Package Back Office and the transposition of the Trade Mark Directive are expected to be completed during 2020.

[The European Economic and Social Committee reveals five front-runners for its Civil Society Prize 2019](#)



This year, the EESC honors outstanding citizens' initiatives that champion equal opportunities for women and men and contribute to empowering women in society and the economy

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) has announced that it has chosen five finalists from among the 177 projects it received for its Civil Society Prize 2019, dedicated to the empowerment of women and the fight for gender equality. The shortlisted entries are from Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Italy and Poland.

The award ceremony will be held on **12 December** during the **EESC plenary session** in Brussels, when the final ranking will be revealed. The total prize money of **EUR 50 000** will be shared among the five nominees. The winner of the first prize will go home with EUR 14 000 and the four runners-up will each receive EUR 9 000.

This year's theme, *More women in Europe's society and economy*, attracted the second highest number of entries in over a decade-long history of the prize, just behind the 2016 theme of migration. The candidates are from no fewer than 27 Member States, demonstrating the widespread interest of citizens and civil society organisations in taking action to tackle gender inequalities, which still loom large in Europe.

The EESC Vice-President for Communication, **Isabel Caño Aguilar**, said: *The many award applications we received show that gender equality is at the heart of civil society's aspirations. They highlight women's work and their*

innovative role in society. They promote dynamic, visionary, courageous, bold and strong women. They address the specific needs of vulnerable or disadvantaged women and tackle gender discrimination and stereotypes in all areas of life.

The five nominees, listed here in alphabetical order, are:

[Fairy Tales project](#), by the Bulgarian NAIA Association, engages pre-school children and their parents in reading classical fairy tales from a different perspective and adopting a critical approach to the stereotyped gender roles instilled into boys and girls from the earliest age. The project wishes to encourage children to look beyond traditional gender roles to express their personal potential and to see that many different opportunities are out there for both girls and boys.

[#mimmitkooda \(Women Code\)](#), a programme by the Finnish Software and eBusiness Association (Ohjelmisto- ja e-business ry) combats the stereotype that software developers should be male by default. The programme is successfully bringing in more talented women to the software industry and helps them move towards better paid jobs and careers.

[Polish Women's Strike](#) is the largest women's movement in Poland and now seeks to empower invisible and ignored women activists in small and middle-sized cities as they represent the major force for social change. The movement made world headlines with its Black Monday strike in October 2016, when it organised over 1 500 protests and marches in 150 Polish cities to call for women's and civic rights and condemned the government clampdown on the independent judiciary.

[The Brussels Binder](#) is a database of female policy experts which helps ensure better representation of women in European policy debates. Compiled and run by a group of dedicated volunteers in Belgium, its purpose is to put an end to male privilege in the "EU bubble" and to become a go-to resource for finding female policy experts. This will improve the gender balance of panels and the media in Brussels and make sure that laws and policies take into account the specific needs and opinions of women.

[Women's Toponymy](#), an association from Italy, believes that toponymy – the study of place names – reveals the way society sees its members. Its research has shown that in Italy, only 7.8 streets were named after women for every 100 named after men, and that the majority of female place names are of religious origin. Women's Toponymy aims to increase the number of places bearing the name of notable women and to teach younger generations about their important contribution to society and history, so as to give women the public recognition they deserve.

Commenting on the choice of the theme for this year's prize, **Ms Caño Aguilar** said: *Time goes by. Inequality of opportunity between men and women remains. In this day and age, it is unacceptable that women, who make up over half of the EU's population, still suffer from discrimination and gender violence.*

Despite the progress made in the last decades and the fact that it is one of

the founding principles of the EU, gender equality is still a dream in the EU, with women continuing to earn less than men. The gender pension gap is at a staggering 38%, making poverty in old age increasingly female. Women remain a small minority among political decision-makers and company executives, and account for only 31% of entrepreneurs.

Gender stereotypes permeate all spheres of life and gender-based violence remains widespread in many forms, ranging from domestic violence to sexual harassment and cyberbullying.

As a fervent advocate of gender equality, the EESC has repeatedly warned of persistent gender segregation and discrimination in European labour markets and society. Prompted by a recent backlash against women's rights in some EU countries, earlier this year it called for a political commitment to achieving equality between women and men in Europe.

In pursuit of these aims, the EESC launched the Civil Society Prize in June to highlight progress towards a more equal society for women and men and to encourage further action.

The prize, now in its 11th year, is awarded to individuals and non-profit organisations for "excellence in civil society initiatives". A different theme is chosen each year, covering an important area of the EESC's work. The prize money and the recognition received should help the winners to scale up their projects and provide further help in the community.

In 2018, the prize went to initiatives that celebrated European identities, values and cultural heritage. Previous themes included innovative entrepreneurship supporting labour market integration of disadvantaged groups, combating poverty, and solidarity with refugees and migrants.