

THE EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT STATE AND OUTLOOK 2015



1 June 2015 – SOER 2015 launch Budapest

European Environment Agency



SOER 2015

SYNTHESIS
REPORT

GLOBAL
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A comprehensive assessment of past trends and future outlooks and of opportunities to recalibrate policies, knowledge, investments and innovations in line with the long-term vision of the 7th EAP.

SOER 2015 Synthesis report

SOER 2015 Assessment of global megatrends

Global megatrends

11 briefings

European briefings

25 briefings

Cross-country comparisons

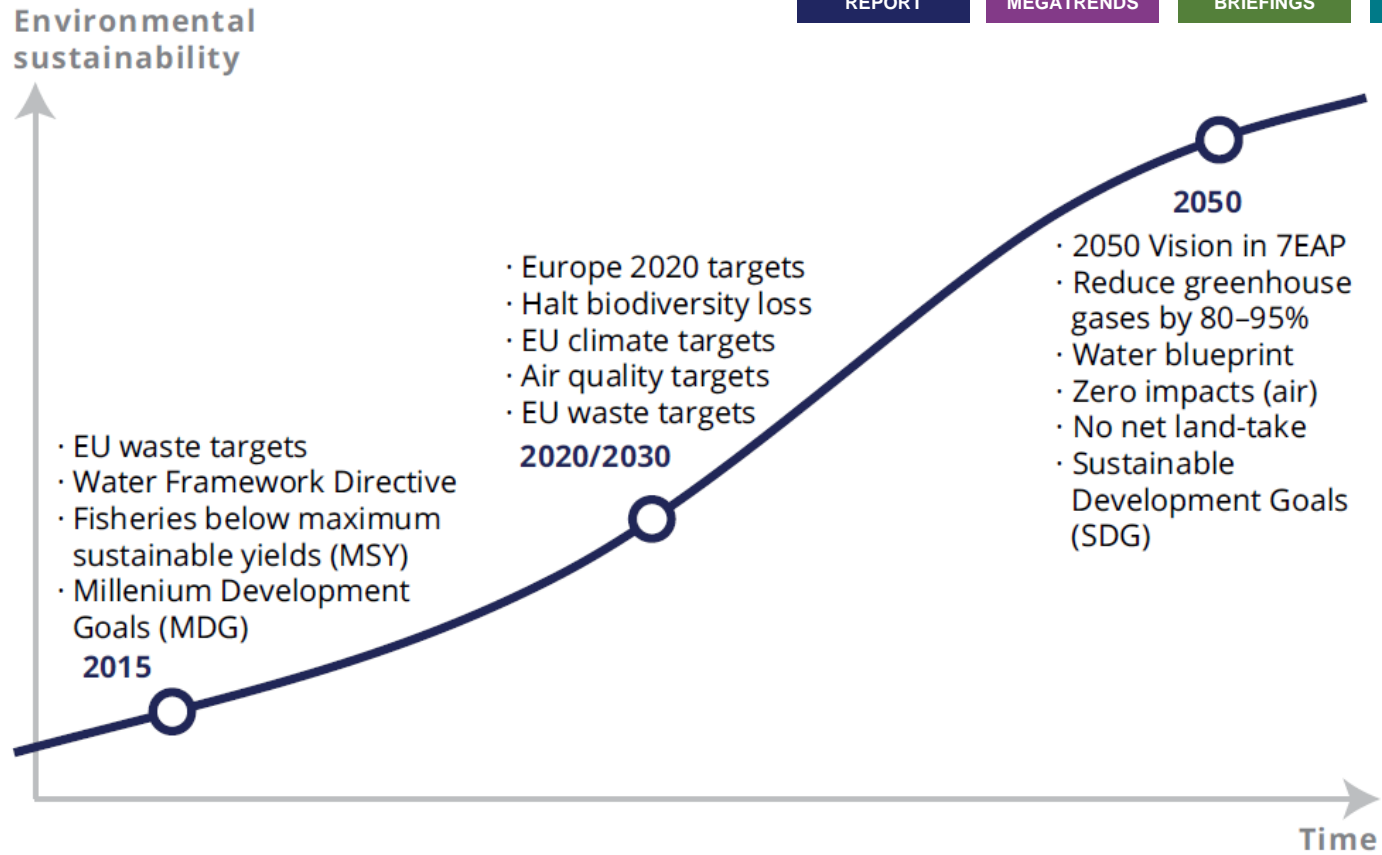
9 briefings

Countries and regions

39+3 briefings



The policy context



2015 Thematic policies, timelines and deadlines
 2020/2030 Comprehensive policies (Europe 2020, 7th Environment Action Programme), or specific target
 2050 Long-term visions and targets with a societal transition perspective

Source: EEA Multiannual Work Programme 2014–2018

Vision of the 7th Environment Action Programme

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‘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 global safe and sustainable society.’

Source: 7th EU Environment Action Programme

Synthesis report

Part 1: Setting the scene

Sets out the evolving context for European environmental policy, and the global megatrends that directly and indirectly affect Europe's environment.

Part 2: Assessing European trends

Provides summary assessments of the trends and outlook for 20 environmental issues, grouped under the three priority thematic objectives of the 7th Environment Action Programme.

Part 3: Looking ahead

Reflects on the overall picture of the European environment's state and outlook. Signals opportunities to adjust environmental policy to support the transition to a more sustainable society.



Key messages from SOER 2015

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- **Policies** have delivered substantial benefits for the environment, economy and people's well-being; major challenges remain
- Europe faces persistent and emerging challenges linked to production and consumption **systems**, and the rapidly changing **global** context
- Achieving the 2050 vision requires system **transitions**, driven by more ambitious actions on policy, knowledge, investments and innovation
- Doing so presents major **opportunities** to boost Europe's economy and employment and put Europe at the frontier of science and innovation



Eco-industries have prospered despite the recession in Europe

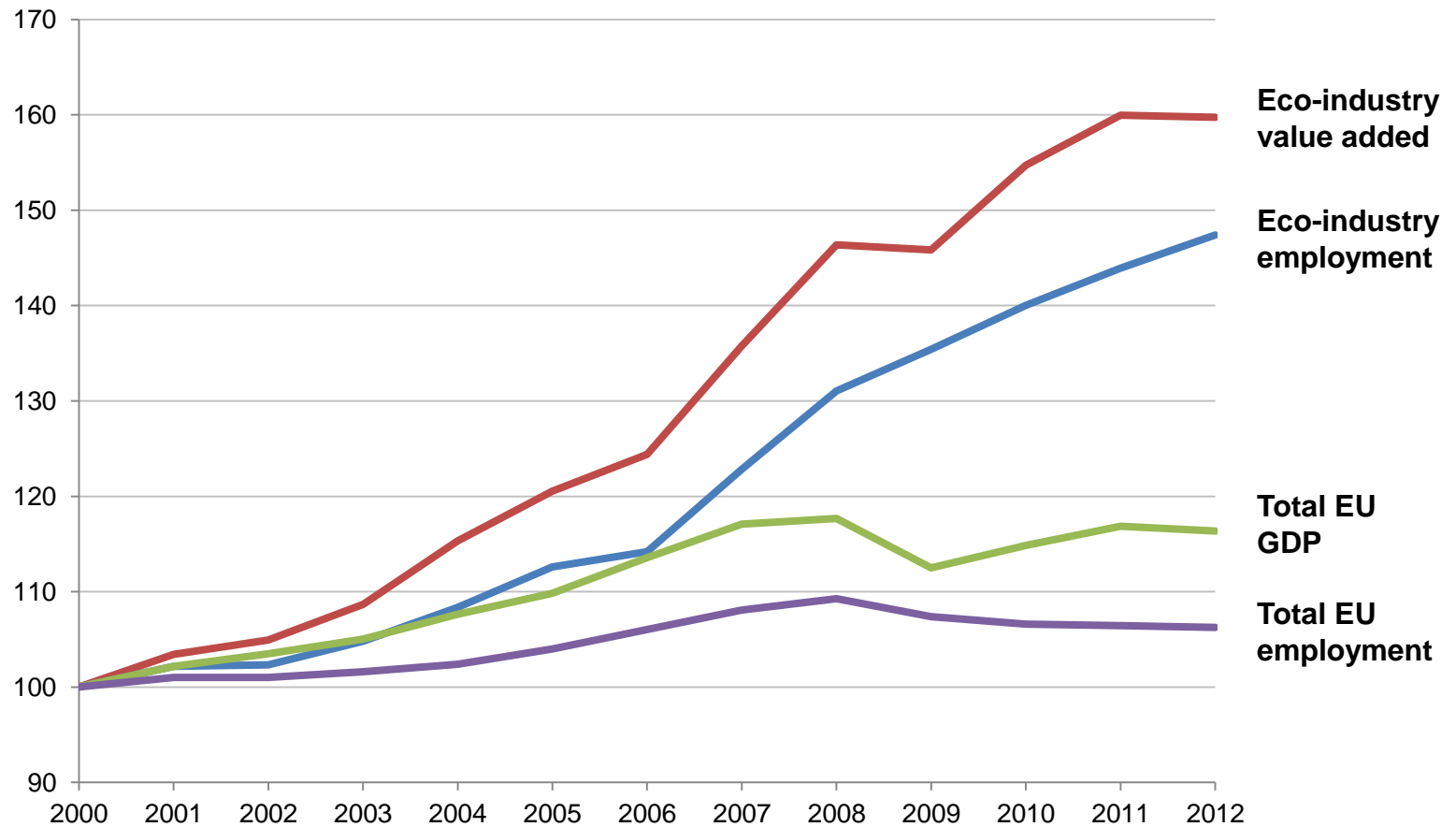
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Source: Eurostat, 2014.

European Environment Agency



Assessing past trends and future outlooks

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The Synthesis report addresses the three thematic priority objectives of the 7th EAP:

1. Protecting, conserving and enhancing natural capital
2. Resource efficiency and the low-carbon economy
3. Safeguarding from environmental risks to health

Two overall patterns emerge:

- Resource efficiency improvements have been notable but have not translated into increased ecosystem and social resilience
- The long-term outlook is often less positive than recent trends



Thematic priority objective 1: Protecting, conserving and enhancing natural capital

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	Past (5–10 year) trends	20+ years outlook	Progress to policy targets
➤ Terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity			☐
➤ Land use and soil functions			No target
➤ Ecological status of freshwater bodies			☒
➤ Water quality and nutrient loading			☐
➤ Air pollution and its ecosystem impacts			☐
➤ Marine and coastal biodiversity			☒
➤ Climate change impacts on ecosystems			No target

Improving trends dominate		Largely on track	
Trends show mixed picture		Partially on track	
Deteriorating trends dominate		Largely not on track	

Source: EEA. SOER 2015 Synthesis report.

Thematic priority objective 2: Resource efficiency and the low-carbon economy

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	Past (5–10 year) trends	20+ years outlook	Progress to policy targets
➤ Material resource efficiency and material use	Yellow	Yellow	No target
➤ Waste management	Green	Yellow	□
➤ Greenhouse gas emissions and climate change mitigation	Green	Red	✓ / ✗
➤ Energy consumption and fossil fuel use	Green	Red	✓
➤ Transport demand and related environmental impacts	Yellow	Red	□
➤ Industrial pollution to air, soil and water	Green	Yellow	□
➤ Water use and water quantity stress	Yellow	Yellow	✗

Improving trends dominate



Trends show mixed picture



Deteriorating trends dominate



Largely on track



Partially on track



Largely not on track



Source: EEA. SOER 2015 Synthesis report.



Thematic priority objective 3: Safeguarding from environmental risks to health

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	Past (5–10 year) trends	20+ years outlook	Progress to policy targets
➤ Water pollution and related environmental health risks	Improving trends dominate	Trends show mixed picture	Largely on track / Partially on track
➤ Air pollution and related environmental health risks	Trends show mixed picture	Trends show mixed picture	Partially on track
➤ Noise pollution (especially in urban areas)	Trends show mixed picture	/	Partially on track
➤ Urban systems and grey infrastructure	Trends show mixed picture	Trends show mixed picture	No target
➤ Climate change and related environmental health risks	Deteriorating trends dominate	Deteriorating trends dominate	No target
➤ Chemicals and related environmental health risks	Deteriorating trends dominate	Trends show mixed picture	Partially on track / Largely not on track

Improving trends dominate
Trends show mixed picture
Deteriorating trends dominate



Largely on track
Partially on track
Largely not on track



Source: EEA. SOER 2015 Synthesis report.



The overall picture: Efficiency improvements have not secured long-term resilience

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Source: EEA. SOER 2015 Synthesis report.

Understanding past trends and future outlooks

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Two major factors explain the uneven progress and prospects:

The changing global context

- Competition for resources
- Pressures from outside Europe
- Planetary boundaries

Systemic characteristics of environmental challenges

- Complexity
- Uncertainty
- Environmental, social and economic interdependencies

Understanding past trends and future outlooks: Natural capital

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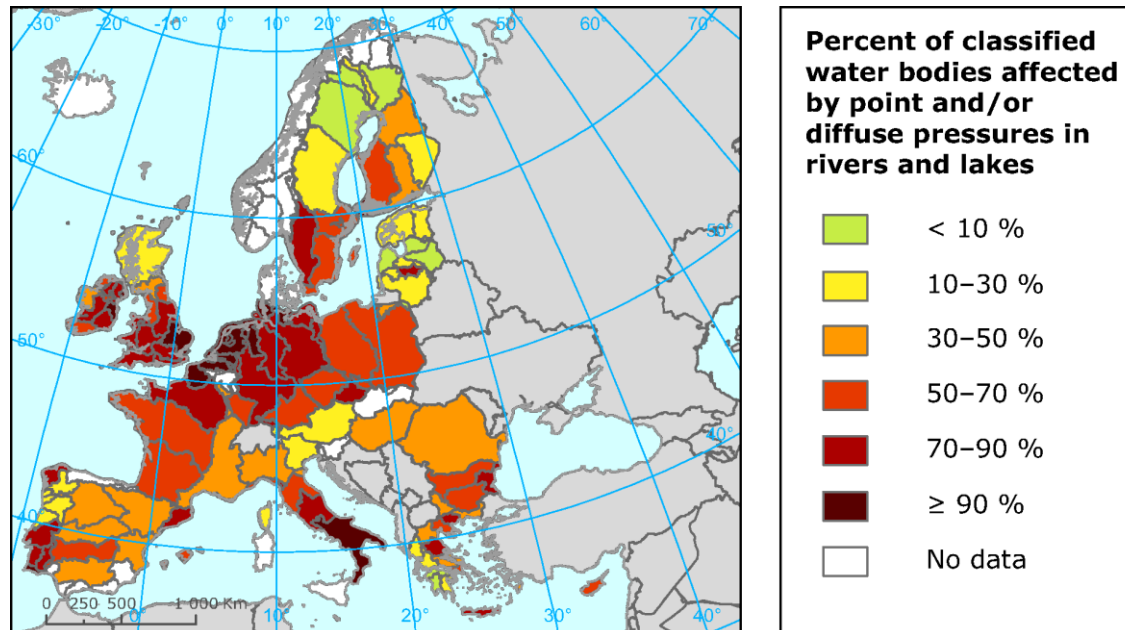
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- Long time-lags between reduced pressures and positive changes
- Pressures on ecosystems remain considerable
- External trends can counteract the positive effects of local efforts



Source: EEA, SOER 2015 Synthesis.

Understanding past trends and future outlooks: Resource efficiency and the low-carbon economy

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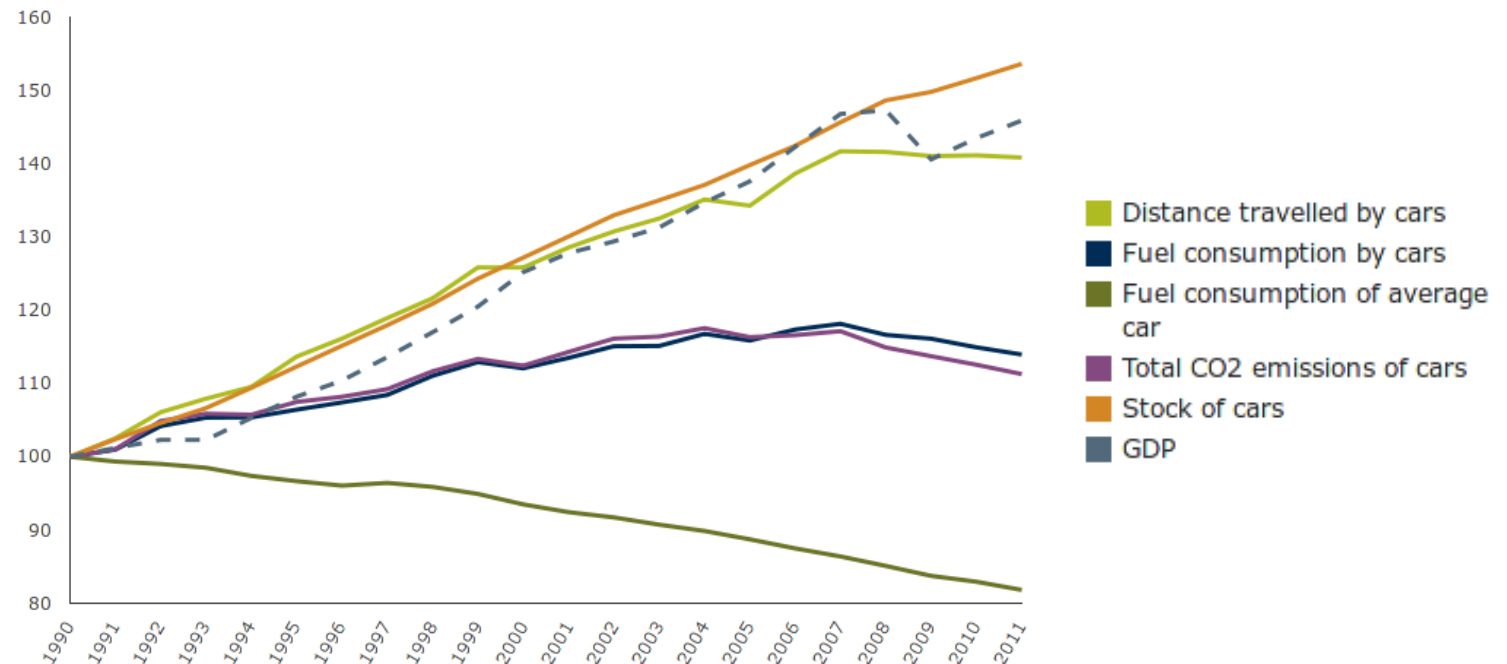
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- Production-consumption systems support livelihoods, creating lock-ins
- Globalisation of production and consumption constrains EU influence
- More efficient production lowers costs, incentivising more consumption



Source: EEA, SOER 2015 Synthesis.

Understanding past trends and future outlooks: Safeguarding from environmental risks to health

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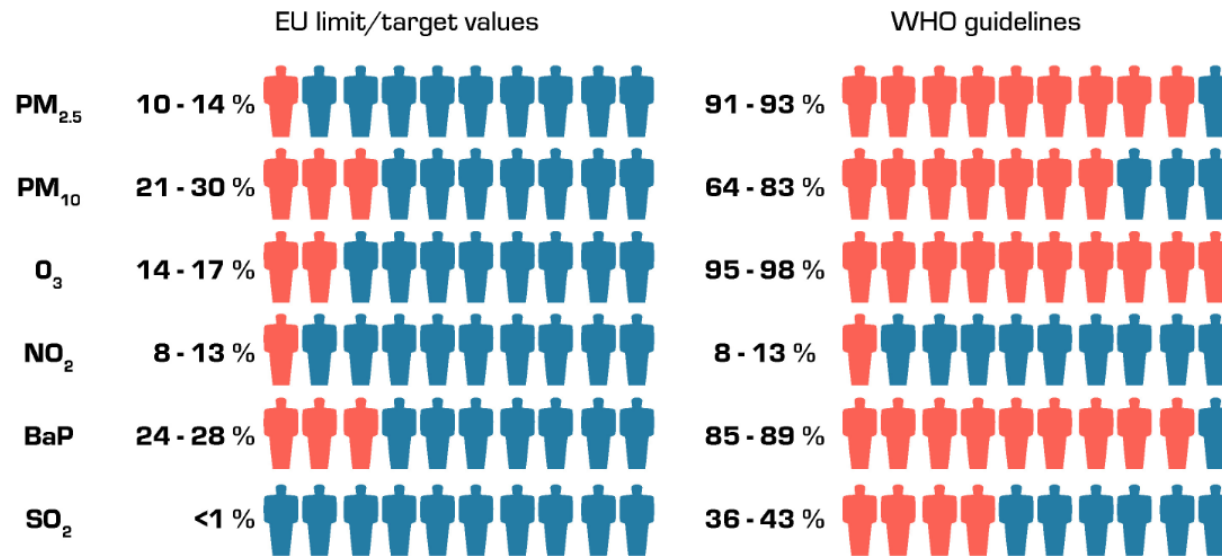
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- Impacts resulting from climate change are expected to worsen
- Changing exposures, urbanisation and ageing increase vulnerability
- Good urban design delivers benefits to health and well-being

EU urban population exposed to harmful levels of air pollution in 2010 - 2012, according to:



Sources: Eurostat, Gisco - Urban Audit 2012; EEA, AirBase and Indicator CSI004.



Looking ahead: Systemic challenges require systemic solutions

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Not just incremental efficiency gains



Source: Tesla

but fundamental transitions in food, energy, mobility, finance and fiscal systems
through profound changes in dominant practices, policies and thinking.

Looking ahead: Building on 40 years of European and national policies

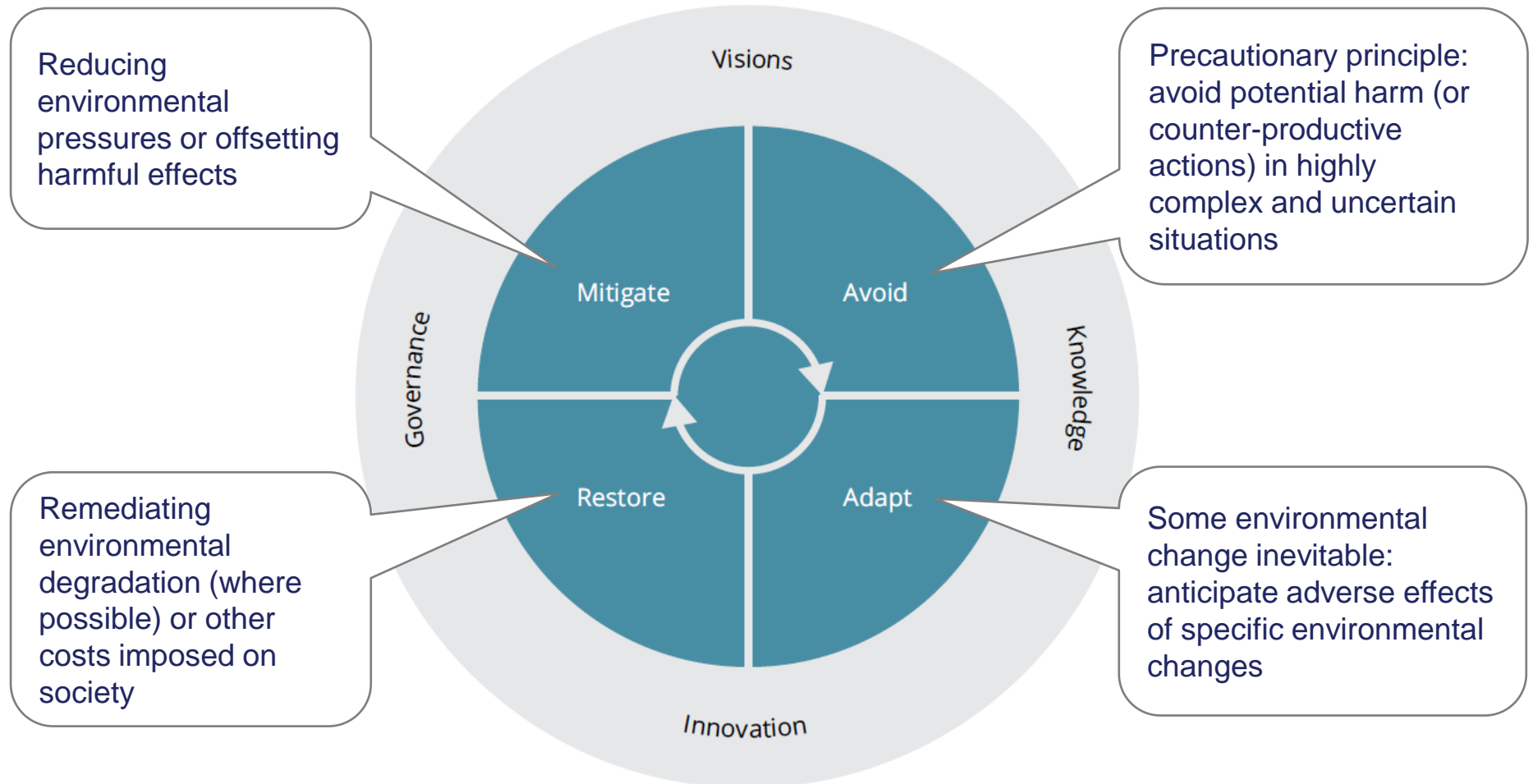
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Source: EEA.

Looking ahead: Innovation

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- Economic, technological and social innovations can support long-term transitions to a green economy
- This requires upscaling niche innovations such as collaborative consumption and prosumerism
- Publicly funded research has fostered many of the most important and commercially successful innovations



Looking ahead: Investing today for the long term

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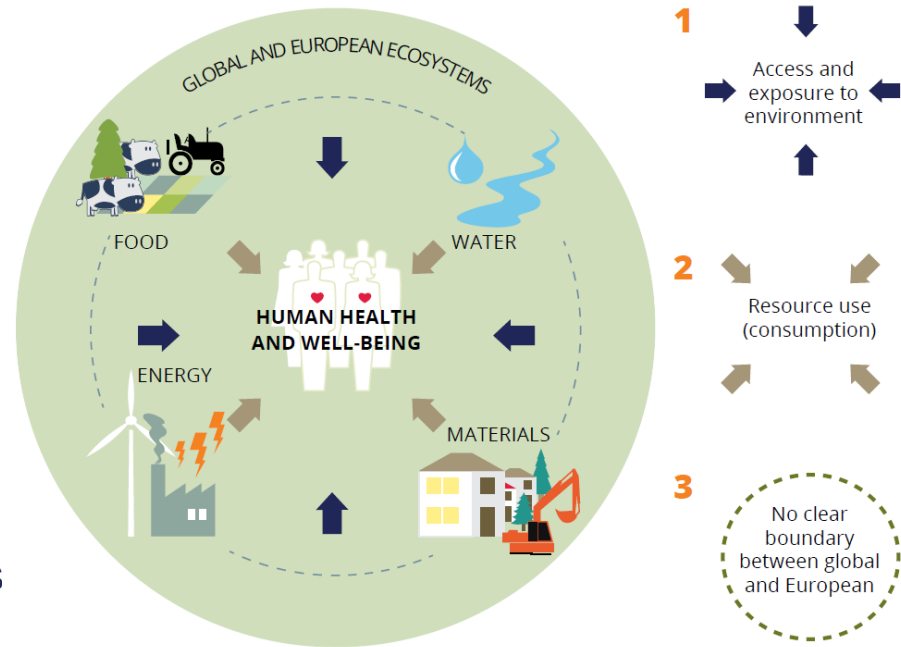
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- European investment needs are huge and today's choices will have long-term implications
- Key criteria for future investments in a green economy:
 - decarbonisation of society
 - circular economy jobs
 - ecosystem services and planetary limits
 - human health and well-being
- Shifting taxation and phasing out environmentally harmful subsidies can stimulate innovation and transition choices.



Looking ahead: Living well within the limits of the planet by 2050

- Achieving the 2050 vision is possible but it depends on our actions and investments today.
- Systemic change must deliver decent employment, opportunities and fairness, as well as respecting environmental limits.
- SOER 2015 illustrates the success of European policy. We should be confident in entering a new stage of environmental governance.



Source: EEA, Signals 2014

Explore SOER 2015 online: eea.europa.eu/soer

SOER 2015 — The European environment — state and outlook 2015

A comprehensive assessment of the European environment's state, trends and prospects, in a global context.



Synthesis report



Global megatrends



European briefings



Cross-country
comparisons



Countries
and regions

The synthesis report informs future European environmental policy in general and its implementation between 2015 and 2020 in particular. It includes a reflection on the European environment in a global context, as well as chapters summarising the state of, trends in, and prospects for the environment in Europe.

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Synthesis report in several languages  

Explore SOER 2015



 Presentation of key facts and figures.

 Online search among all figures.

Key messages

Waste — municipal solid waste generation and management: The large differences in performance indicate room for further improvement and actions to meet the 2020 target to recycle 50% of municipal waste. [See briefing](#)

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