

SPECIAL REPORT

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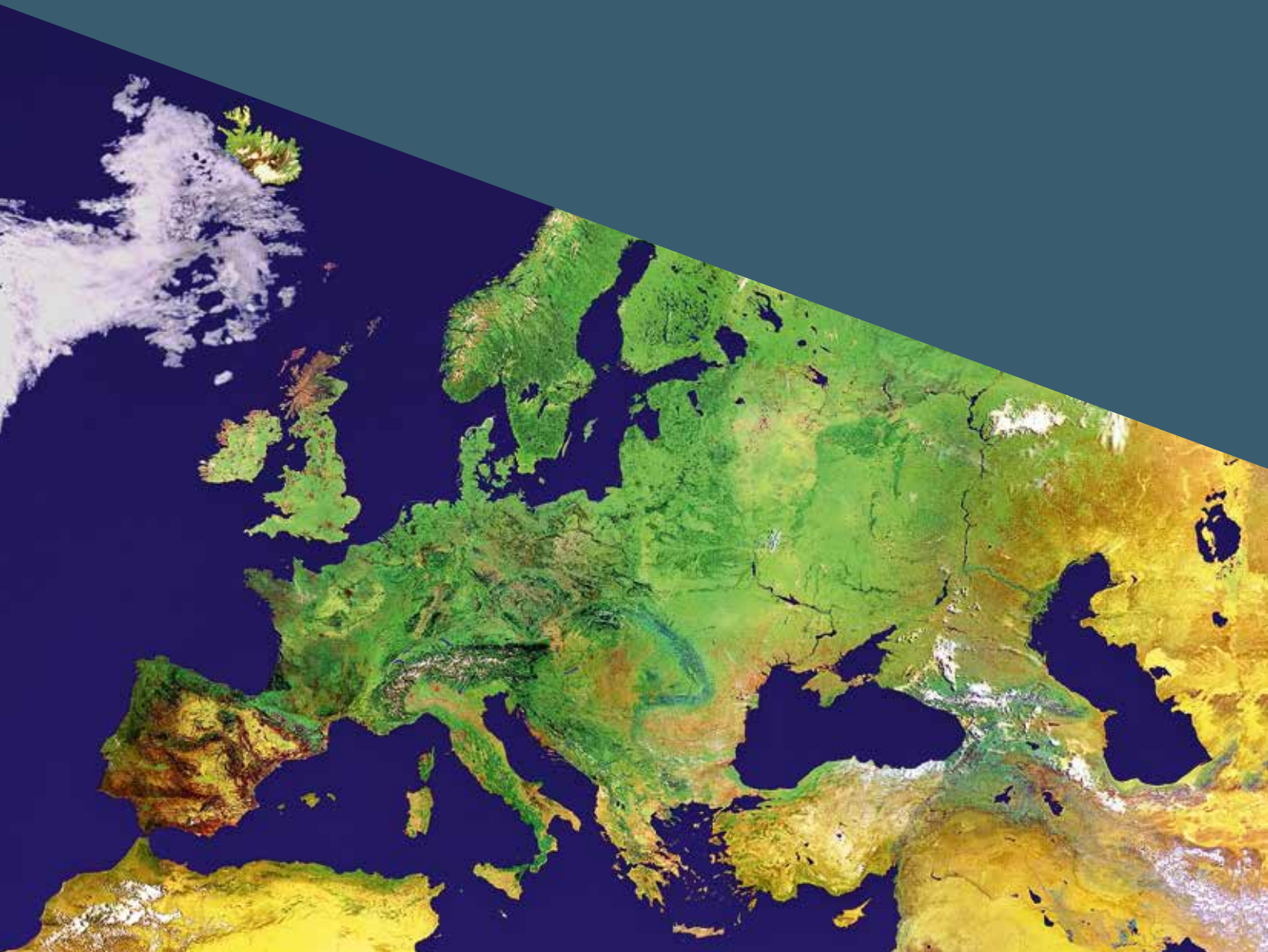
In association
with



An environmental union?

What environmental professionals think about
the European Union and the EU referendum

APRIL 2016



Foreword



An environmental union?

An ENDS special report

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Much has been said about the environmental pros and cons of Britain's membership of the European Union. Though a number of environmental campaign groups have made pro-EU statements, this report is not intended to bolster one side or the other in the referendum campaign. Rather, we wanted to dig deeper to discover what practising environmental professionals really think.

Our headline finding is that environmental professionals favour remaining in the EU by a larger margin than almost any social group. But we are pleased to be able to fill in a huge amount of detail about how environmental professionals see the EU's strengths and also its weaknesses.

Crucially, we have also been able to shed light on what environmental professionals see as key green priorities whatever the referendum outcome.

We were delighted to receive nearly 900 full survey responses and believe we have some fascinating findings to report that should interest everyone working in the environmental field and many beyond it.

Whether the UK remains in or leaves the EU, there is no doubt about the complexity of the social, environmental and economic challenges we face. The transition to a low-carbon economy cannot be achieved by regulation alone. But this survey highlights that environmental regulatory frameworks provide drive and opportunity. To deliver our aspirations for society and future generations, we must consider whether this is best achieved alone or in Europe.

The Society for the Environment was keen to be involved with the development and circulation of this survey. More than 40% of respondents hold the Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv) designation – a peer-reviewed professional qualification that demands proven knowledge of environmental principles and experience of applying that in practice within a particular field of expertise.

The survey results show the breadth of knowledge of environmental professionals and a demonstrable level of integrity and engagement in their chosen careers. They also show an overwhelming agreement by respondents on the positive benefits of certain EU legislation, as

We are grateful to the professionals who took the time to complete the survey questionnaire. We worked hard to make the questions neutral so respondents could express their real opinions. We received some useful comments on the wording of certain questions and have taken these into account in our analysis.

We are also thankful to the many respondents who volunteered to speak to us in more depth after completing the questionnaire. We were not able to speak to everyone, but the enthusiasm to participate in the debate was a credit to the profession.

ENDS would like to thank Society for the Environment (SocEnv) for backing our research, helping develop the survey and publicising it to Chartered Environmentalists and its network of licensed partners. Nevertheless, all conclusions reached in the report are ours and no statements should be taken to be a position of SocEnv.

ENDS



well as highlighting that more needs to be done in other areas, such as the CAP, fisheries policies, emissions and energy efficiency regulations. This balanced view lends realism and credibility to the survey.

In the UK, modern life and expectations will still demand rigorous environmental regulation and our society will expect an environment as good as in any other European country. Whether in or out of the EU, it is crucial to share skills and knowledge, build capacity and to develop mutually recognised standards and practices.

Professional competence will remain key to good-sense decision-making. If the UK votes to remain in the EU, Chartered Environmentalists can help government to get the best out of it. If the UK leaves, they should be called upon to ensure that the best of EU legislation – and there's an awful lot that's good – is not lost.

Society for the Environment



An environmental union?

The EU plays a huge role in environmental policy and standards. Does the UK environmental profession respect the EU and want Britain to remain, or has familiarity bred contempt? ENDS surveyed the profession to find out

The UK's choice over whether to remain a member of the European Union will have enormous consequences for politics, economics, law and society, but many experts agree that in no field would a 'Brexit' change things more than environmental protection and sustainability.

ENDS wanted to discover what the environmental profession itself thinks of the EU and the referendum choice before the nation, and set out to investigate in more detail.

Of course, we wanted to confirm if majority support for continued EU membership is real. But also to shine a more detailed spotlight on underlying attitudes, and the profession's environmental priorities whichever way the vote goes.

The survey questionnaire was open for responses for a month between 24 February and 24 March and was promoted to the ENDS and SocEnv networks. We were very pleased to receive 893 full responses suitable for analysis from a broad swathe of the environmental profession, from all parts of the UK, from men and women and across a range of ages (see box).

Voting intention

The results show a clear majority of environmental professionals in favour of a 'Remain' vote in June's referendum. About 77% say they would vote for the UK to stay part of the EU, against 14% who said they would vote for 'Leave'.

Excluding 'don't knows' and 'would-not-votes' this is a margin of 85:15 in favour of EU membership, compared with close to 50:50 among the general population (see figure 1, p4).

Indeed the pro-EU majority among environmental professionals is strikingly larger than the strongest pro-Remain groups in wider society, such as Labour and Liberal Democrat voters who recent polls show are split 73:27 in favour of Remain, and social classes A, B and C1 who are roughly 66:33.

But further analysis shows some variation in the size of the pro-Remain majority among different segments of the environmental profession (see box, p4).

Strength of voting intention

Pre-election polls often explore not only headline voting intentions but also how firm these are. Our results show environmental professionals are very certain about how they will vote.

Two thirds of respondents said they would definitely vote Remain, compared with a quarter of the general public asked the same question by pollsters YouGov. Only 3% are entirely undecided, compared with 16% of the general public.

Our results further underline the majority among environmental professionals for Remain, with a total of 82% likely or definite to vote to stay, while only 16% say they are likely to or definite to vote Leave (see figure 2, p4).

Survey respondents

Environmental professionals of all stripes responded to our survey.

They work across the environmental spectrum, from water and waste to energy and nature, for environmental consultancies, professional institutions and government departments, and for tiny NGOs or for themselves.

Whereas professional polling companies generally weight their samples to the known balance of party support, gender, age and social class we acknowledge, our sample is self-chosen and unweighted. We can therefore make no formal claims that it is representative of the UK environmental profession.

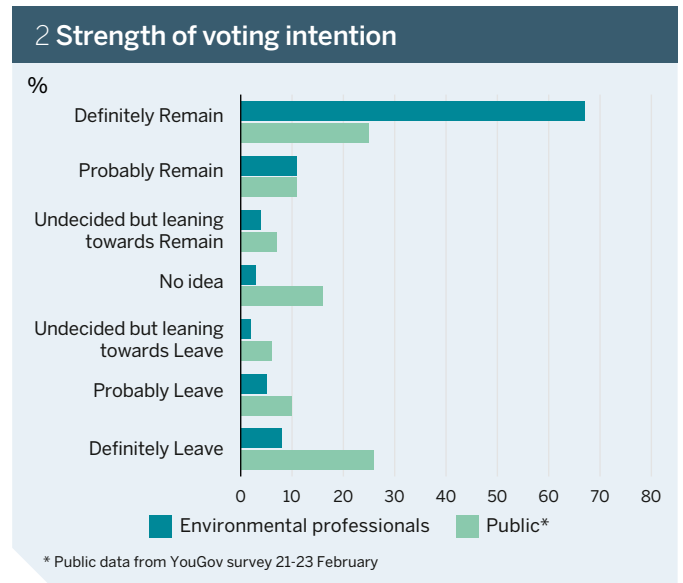
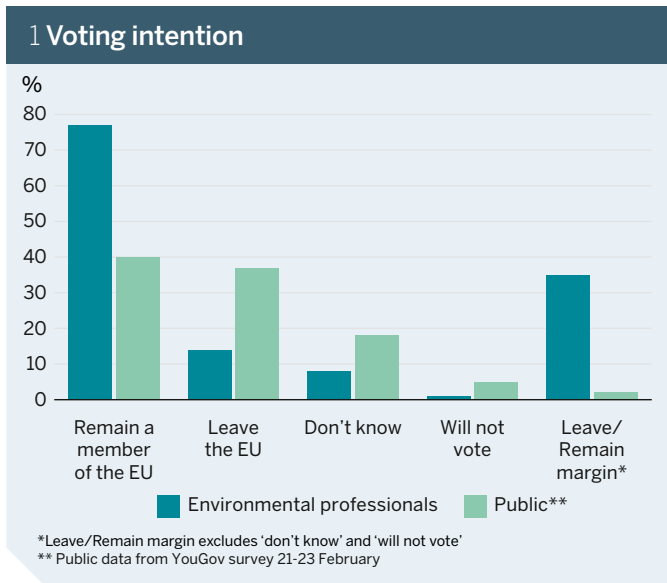
But by revealing more about the demographics of our respondents, we can show there is a good spread of

backgrounds, leading us to believe our sample is fairly representative:

- **Age:** The largest group of respondents were aged 40-59 (55%), followed by 24-39 (23%), the over-60s (20%) and those aged 16-24 (2%).
- **Gender:** 73% of respondents were men and 26% were women.
- **Geography:** 83% said they were based in England, 8% in Scotland, 4% in Wales and 2% in Northern Ireland.
- **Business sector:** 33% work in consultancy, followed by 27% in government and regulatory authorities, and 21% in industry or the service sector. Smaller proportions work in education or NGOs or are retired.

- **Environmental role:** 30% identified themselves as consultants, 16% as environment managers, 18% as engineers or scientists and 14% as regulators, making up the four largest groups. Others included policy professionals, communications, educators and lawyers.
- **Environmental specialism:** Respondents identified with a wide range of specialisms. The most common were water (35%), waste (32%), energy (28%), nature (20%), climate change (16%), land-use development (14%), air management (13%), contaminated land (13%), buildings (11%) and chemicals management (11%). But this is far from an exhaustive list.

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Attitudes to the EU

Sometimes the European debate is framed as nationalist versus federalist, with each side seeing either nothing or everything good about the EU. Our results show that for environmental professionals this would be the wrong question to start with.

Pollster YouGov asked the public to express a degree of agreement with eight adjectives about the EU – four positive and four negative. We put the same question to our respondents.

Environmental professionals think much less negatively about the EU than the general public. In particular they agree more with the idea that the EU is democratic (34 points higher than the public) and accountable (21 points higher), and less with the idea that it is arrogant (20 points lower) (see figure 3).

But for all their relative positivity, environmental professionals are not 'net positive'. If we sum the scores we see an overall agreement of 32% with negative adjectives against 23% with positive ones. This shows that whatever drives environmental professionals to be mostly pro-EU it is not because they believe it is perfect.

Prime minister David Cameron and other EU leaders agreed changes to the UK's membership terms a few days before ENDS' survey opened. We asked environmental professionals about their attitudes towards the general idea of renegotiation.

The results show a clear majority support the idea of making at least some adjustments. Half of respondents agreed with a need to make "some adjustments to protect the British interest", compared with 18% who saw no need for renegotiation.

More strikingly, 27% believe "significant" or "major" changes are needed. This further underlines that environmental professionals may be pro-EU but they are not uncritical.

EU impact on UK environment

Our next survey question provides an emphatic answer to why so many environmental professionals support continued membership of a union that they are critical of. They believe by a very large margin that membership has been good for UK environmental protection and sustainability.

About 85% see the EU's impact as good or very good, against just 5% who see it as bad or very bad. Excluding neutrals, this means environmental professionals see the EU as being good

Voting intention in more detail

Our survey results clearly show environmental professionals believe the EU is a force for progress and intend to vote Remain in the June referendum. Are there nevertheless differences between the different parts of the profession? An analysis of headline voting intentions show:

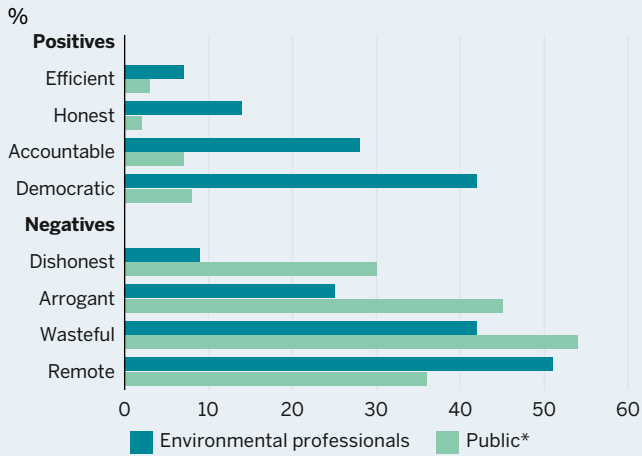
- Women are more likely to vote Remain than men. Excluding 'don't knows' and 'will-not-votes', 91% of women were for staying in the EU compared with 81% of men.

- Younger environmental professionals are more likely to vote Remain. Excluding don't knows and will-not-votes, the majorities for staying in the EU are 91% for the 16-40 age group, 87% for the 40-59 age group and 72% for the over 60s.
- The UK country in which respondents live appears to have little impact, though Scotland perhaps had a hint of an even higher pro-remain majority.

Excluding don't knows and will-not-votes, the figures to remain in the EU are 84% in England and Northern Ireland, 82% in Northern Ireland and 87% in Scotland.

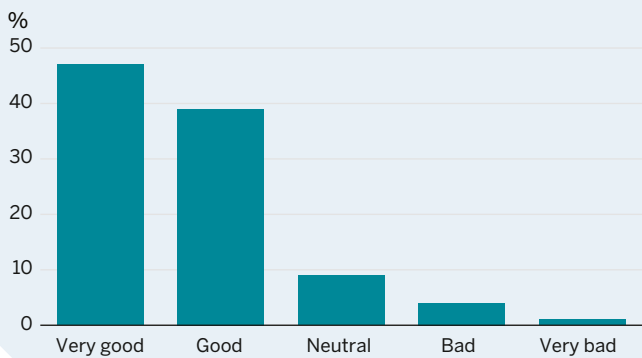
- Environmental professionals working for government are slightly more likely to vote to remain (89% excluding don't knows and will-not-votes) than those working in consultancy (83%) or industry and services (82%).

3 General attitude to the EU



* Public data from YouGov survey, Nov 2015

4 Environmental impact of EU membership



for the environment by 94:6, significantly higher than the overall pro-Remain margin (see figure 4).

To explore in more depth how and why environmental professionals believe the EU is good (or bad) for the environment and sustainability we asked them to identify with a series of statements about its possible environmental benefits or disbenefits.

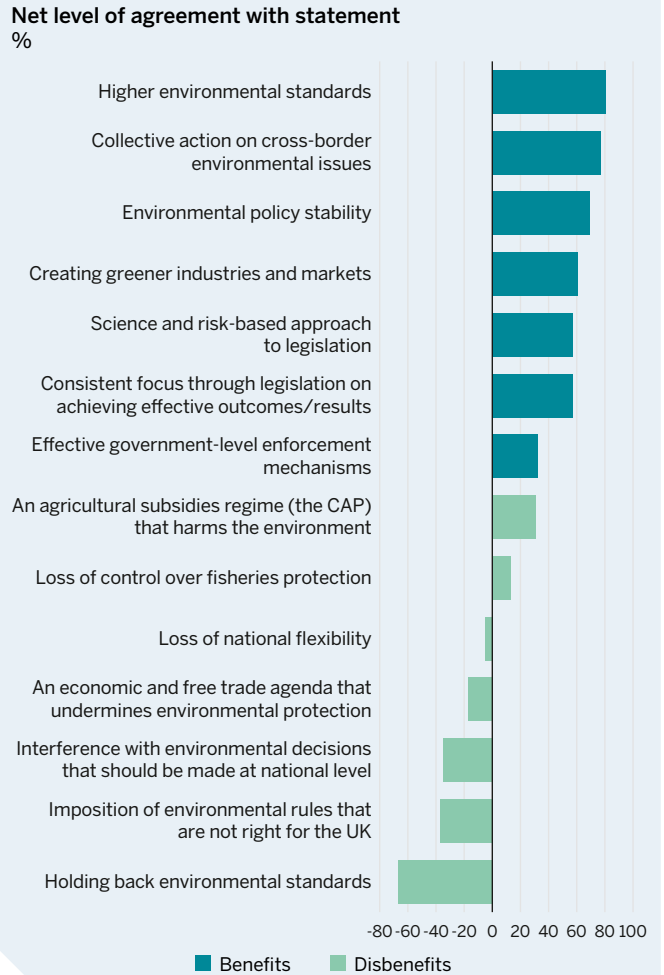
Respondents agreed by large majorities with every one of seven benefits statements we proposed. In particular they agree with suggestions that the EU brings higher environmental standards (86%) and enables collective action on cross-border issues (84%) (see figure 5).

On the negative side, respondents disagreed with five of seven proposed disbenefits. But they rejected only by a small margin the idea that the EU results in a loss of national flexibility over the environment. And they agree by large majorities that the Common Agricultural and Fisheries Policies produce net environmental harm.

Impact of institutions

Talking simply of 'the EU', however, can be far too vague in many contexts. Environmental responsibilities and powers are wielded by specific organisations at sub-national, national and EU levels.

5 EU environmental benefits and disbenefits



We asked environmental professionals which institutions – both national and EU – they believe are having the most positive or negative environmental impacts, with striking results.

The three main EU institutions are seen in a positive light, but no more positive than the UK's main environmental protection agencies, with England's Environment Agency in particular receiving high marks for its environmental impact (see figure 6, p6).

UK governments and ministries are viewed less positively. But there is a gulf between the current Scottish and Welsh governments, both of which are seen as net positive for the environment, and the current UK-wide government, whose rating could reasonably be summarised as disastrous.

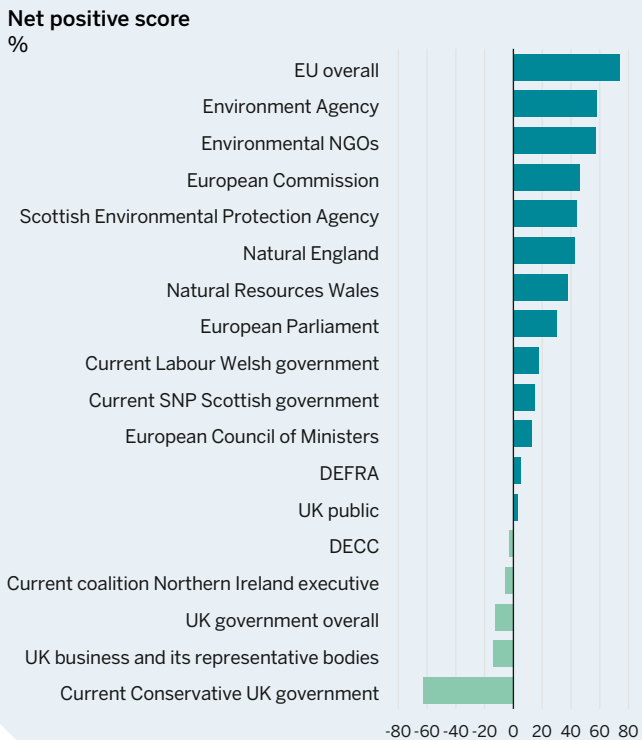
Most important EU policies

Leaving the EU would mean the UK would no longer be bound to continue with some or all of the extensive web of European environmental legislation built up over nearly half a century.

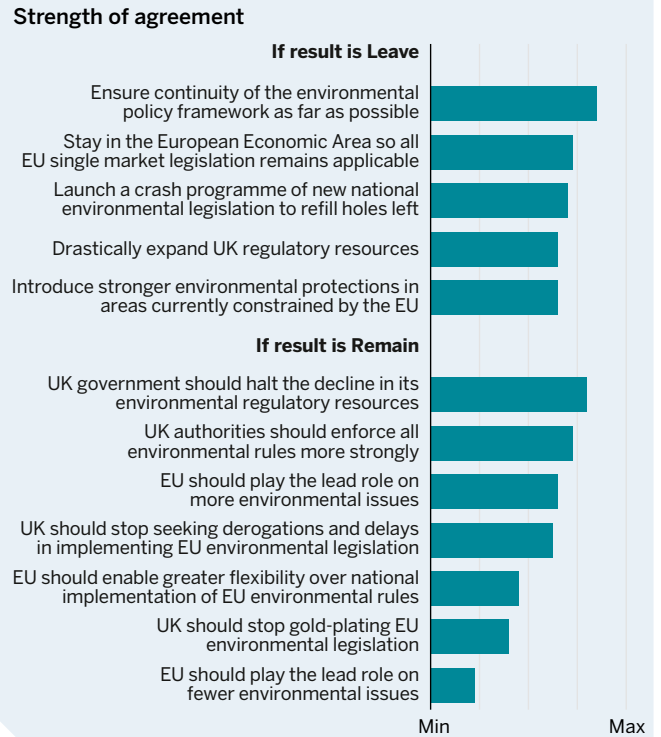
We asked environmental professionals which laws would be most missed if the UK exited the EU and started changing the rules. According to respondents, most likely to come under threat would be energy and climate policies in general (52%) followed by the Habitats and Wild Birds Directives (45%), the

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6 Environmental impact of key bodies



7 Environmental priorities after the referendum



Environmental bodies' positions on referendum

Neutral

Campaign for the Protection of Rural England
Chartered Institution of Wastes Management
Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment
Institute of Fisheries Management
Institute of Water
Institution of Environmental Sciences
Society of Environmental Engineers
WRAP

Explicitly pro-Remain

Client Earth
E3G
Environmentalists 4 Europe
Friends of the Earth
Green Alliance
Greenpeace
Wildlife Trusts

Linked with Remain

Aldersgate Group
Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management
Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management
Environmental Industries Commission
Institute for European Environmental Policy
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
WWF
National Trust

Linked with Leave

Global Warming Policy Foundation

Water Framework Directive (42%) and the Waste Framework Directive (32%).

Others pointed to a range of further environmental laws, including EU air quality directives and the environmental impact assessment regime. A number of respondents pointed out that no EU environmental rules would cease to apply on exit, but rather a post-Brexit UK government would have greater latitude to start making changes.

Post-referendum priorities

We asked respondents to identify with a range of possible environmental priorities should the UK as a whole vote either to Remain or Leave the EU.

As has become clear in the recent debate, a vote to leave would have to be followed by a further substantial negotiation over what this would mean in practice. In our survey environmental professionals are clear about one aspect: they strongly agreed the UK should remain in the European single market or the European Economic Area (EEA) (see figure 7).

Respondents agreed even more strongly that in the case of a Leave vote the UK government should ensure continuity in the environmental policy framework.

In fact both the above statements are closely intertwined because many 'market-oriented' EU environmental laws would continue to apply if the UK left 'only' the EU (see box, p8).

But what most environmental professionals want, of course, is for the country as a whole to vote Remain. In which case they want the UK government to step up its own environmental efforts: 82% want a halt to declining regulatory resources, 67% want better enforcement of environmental rules and 58% want the UK not to seek derogations and delays on EU rules.

E NDS spoke to a number of respondents in depth after the survey. Most said that, although they would consider matters other than the environment in their final voting decision, it was difficult to separate their professional and personal views.

Patric Bulmer, head of environment strategy at Bristol Water, says: “For me, given that I’ve worked in the water industry for 25 years, it’s formed me root and branch. And because I believe in what I do I don’t have a clear demarcation between my personal and professional views.”

Keith Clarke, vice-president of the Institution of Civil Engineers and chair of Swansea bay tidal lagoon, agrees: “I don’t know the difference between professional and personal. I think it changes your frame of reference but that doesn’t mean it changes your values.”

The survey results show a strong belief among environmental professionals that an international forum is essential to resolving cross-boundary problems, such as climate change, air and water pollution or nature protection.

Rob Bradley, water team leader at consultancy RPS Group, but speaking in a personal capacity, says: “The key thing that legislation does is enable dialogue. It’s through that opportunity of meeting and speaking with like-minded – and in some respects non-like-minded – professionals on both sides of borders that we start to get an appreciation of what we have and what other people don’t have.”

Environmental professionals do not ‘love’ the EU as such. Every respondent ENDS spoke to began by listing what they saw as its flaws. However, the survey does show a strong belief that the EU has been and remains an effective force for environmental progress.

One respondent, who works for a UK environment regulator but spoke off the record, says: “We’re all operating to the same standard of what we can emit into the atmosphere, into rivers or dispose of as waste. It gives a level playing field for business and public bodies compared with our European neighbours.”

The implications of EU action for democracy is another hot issue. Environmental professionals appear to agree that the EU is democratic. There is an appreciation, however, that part of the reason for its effectiveness has been its separation from short-termist national politics.

Bulmer believes the EU kick-starts environmental action quicker than member states are willing or able to do alone. “Something like the Water Framework Directive (WFD) is broad-brush, and might be so high level that you can pull holes in it, but it gives a sense of direction. And when a member state wants to implement something it means there is a driver,” he says.

“It plays almost a parental role; it’s the body that can be blamed for something, which means that the things that need to be done can be pushed through a little more quickly. I think that something like the WFD, with deadlines in it, does create a sense of ‘hurry up.’”

Professor Andy Jordan, at the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, who has reviewed a wide swathe of legislation as part of the Economic and Social Research Council’s expert review on the referendum, notes that the EU also has more indirect environmental impacts.

“It has affected access to environmental information, helped environmental groups secure greater leverage in Brussels (greater arguably than they would have had in London), pro-

vided citizens with rights to challenge legislation and provided a check on executive power,” Jordan says.

Others cite the EU’s effectiveness as a forum to deal with market-based problems such as waste and energy. Justin Bolger, project manager at the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, says: “One of the best ways to reduce our [energy production] carbon footprint is interconnection with Europe. You have always got bits of Europe that can produce energy and bits that can’t.”

And Michael Warhurst, director of chemicals NGO ChemTrust, says its positive impact reverberates outside its own border: “The EU has a history of intervention that has changed global markets; REACH and RoHS are good examples. It shows things are possible.”

Our survey shows by contrast a rather deep scepticism that UK authorities will set and maintain similarly high standards, though there is greater trust in the devolved administrations of Scotland and Wales.

Keith Clarke, vice-president of the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) and chair of Swansea Bay Tidal Lagoon, puts it bluntly: “I don’t think the UK would have got anywhere close to the same level of air quality and water legislation without

.....
“The UK wouldn’t have got anywhere close to the same level of air quality and water legislation without Europe”
.....

Keith Clarke, Institution of Civil Engineers
.....

Europe. It has led on substantive environmental legislation which I think has been entirely constructive. We could have done it. We could do it in the future. I just don’t believe we would.”

Anita Lloyd of law firm Squire Patton Boggs is more positive: “I don’t think it’s fair to say we would continue to have been the ‘dirty man of Europe’ and would not have had a reasonable level of environmental protection. But I think the EU has gone further on, for example, water quality and habitats.”

A number of respondents stressed the negative impacts of uncertainty about what would happen after a Leave vote, what the UK’s role and relationship would be and how the environment would be affected. For environmental professionals this fear is clearly a strong driving force for remaining in the EU.

Independent sustainability consultant David Stubbs, says: “If we left, I would fear our environmental protection would drop down. But they have never really described what it would be like if we left. It would be a leap into the dark.”

Andrew Warren, chair of the British Energy Efficiency Federation, notes a large overlap between people campaigning to leave the EU and climate change sceptics, although he does not claim all Brexiters hold this belief. “It means that effectively those are the policies that they will try to carry through because that’s the hymn sheet the anti-EU campaign is singing from. These are the people pushing for the Climate Change Act 2008 to be removed. I think it’s an enormous risk.”

Survey respondents strongly agree that if Britain votes Leave in June it should still stay in the EU single market. The difference between leaving or remaining in this market would

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indeed be huge in environmental terms as by far most key EU environmental laws apply across the EEA (see box).

Even if the UK did exit the single market, some respondents think it would be difficult for Britain to wholly dismantle current protections. Lloyd of Squire Patton Boggs suggests that not only EU but also international rules will constrain a UK government in the case of exit.

Lloyd says: "I'm pro-EU in that I think it's done a lot for the shape of our environmental laws. But I think that whichever way we go we'd pretty much end up in the same position. If we come out of the EU then the other trade agreements and international conventions that we'd have to be part of would entail us signing up to very similar or the same environmental laws."

If the referendum were won by Leave, green professionals recognise there would be a long legal extrication period.

ICE's Clarke says: "It comes across in the general press that this is a 'buy a theatre ticket or not' argument. It's not portrayed as a vote for a fairly extensive and incredibly complex unwinding and replacing of all the useful EU laws and regulations with self-standing rules and trade agreements. And if anyone ever thought that the rest of Europe would be benign and helpful to our leaving – they won't."

But if Britain stays, environmental professionals like Lloyd say the EU's legislative and legal processes could be improved. "I think it can definitely be overly cumbersome and bureaucratic and the legal process takes too long. As an organisation and a system for justice it definitely takes too long and can put

people off going through that process. There are definitely changes that could be made to make it work more efficiently."

From a legislative point of view, she would mainly like to see process-based improvements – particularly more transparency and efficiency.

Warhurst says the UK government's positioning within the EU should be more transparent. "The government is not held to account on EU issues – it's not very effective and has a low public profile. And that's one of the things that leads to pervasive ignorance on the EU. If Westminster were to have a quality debate on EU processes I think that would improve things."

The last time the UK voted on whether to remain part of the then European Economic Community was 43 years ago. Likewise, this June's referendum will set the direction for at least another generation.

Our survey reveals the environmental profession to be not Euro-idealists but practical people who have direct experience of the EU achieving progress that would not have happened without it, and who by a large majority want Britain to stay in.

This practical profession wants to keep on delivering practical solutions to ongoing sustainability challenges. To paraphrase Winston Churchill's famous comment about democracy – environmental professionals see the EU as imperfect, but better than any other alternative. ■

DOWNLOAD

See the full survey results at www.ends.co.uk/downloads/EURefSurvRslts.pdf

Selected EU-only and EEA-relevant environmental laws

EU only

- Bathing Water Directive 76/160/EEC
- Quality of Fresh Waters Directive 78/659/EEC
- Shellfish Waters Directive 79/923/EEC
- Birds Directive 79/409/EEC
- Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC
- Floods Directive 2007/60/EC
- Trade in Hazardous Chemicals Regulation 649/2012/EU
- Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) (Regulation 1306/2013/EU)
- Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) (Regulation 1380/2013/EU)
- Offshore Safety Directive (OSD) 2013/30/EU

EEA applicable

- Sewage Sludge Directive 86/278/EEC
- Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive 91/271/EEC
- Nitrates Directive 91/676/EEC
- Packaging Waste Directive 94/62/EC
- Landfill Directive 1999/31/EC
- End of Life Vehicles Directive 2000/53/EC

- National Emissions Ceilings Directive 2001/81/EC
- GMOs Deliberate Release Directive 2002/623/EC
- Environmental Noise Directive 2002/49/EC
- Public Participation Directive 2003/35/EC
- Emissions Trading Scheme Directive 2003/87/EC
- Mining Waste Directive 2006/21/EC
- Groundwater Directive 2006/118/EC
- Waste Shipments Regulation 1013/2006/EC
- REACH Chemicals Regulation 1907/2006/EC
- Ambient Air Quality Directive 2008/50/EC
- Waste Framework Directive 2008/98/EC
- Classification, Labelling and Packaging Regulation 1272/2008/EC
- Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC
- Ecodesign Directive 2009/125/EC
- Petrol Vapour Recovery Directive 2009/126/EC

- Control of Asbestos Directive 2009/148/EC
- Energy Labelling Directive 2010/30/EU
- Industrial Emissions Directive 2010/75/EU
- RoHS Directive 2011/65/EU
- Environmental Impact Assessment Directive 2011/92/EU
- Seveso III Major Accident Hazards Directive 2012/18/EU
- Priority Substances Directive 2013/39/EU
- Biocidal Products Regulation 528/2012/EU
- Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC
- Environmental Liability Directive (ELD) 2004/35/EC

Decision on EEA status pending

- Energy Performance of Buildings Directive 2010/31/EU
- WEEE Directive 2012/19/EU
- Energy Efficiency Directive 2012/27/EU
- GMO Restriction Directive 2015/412/EU