

Virtual Symposium (4 February 2022)

Fit for 2050?

Strategies for achieving the EU's 'no net land take' goal

Rationale: By 2050, the loss of natural or semi-natural land through building on previously undeveloped land within the EU is to be reduced to a minimum and, where it proves unavoidable, fully compensated. This goal of "no net land take by 2050" was proclaimed by the EU Commission in 2011 and is part of the Union's 7th Environmental Action Programme. In reality, however, settlements and infrastructure projects continue to spread and "consume" more than 500 km² (50,000 ha) of previously undeveloped land within the EU every year. Furthermore, the transition to a bio-based economy fuelled by renewable energies and resources will come along with additional land demands. Already now, land take is unevenly distributed within and between EU Member States, and reducing it is a serious challenge in the face of economic aspirations, demographic changes and an undersupply of adequate housing and infrastructure in some regions. In addition, there are persistent challenges in measuring and recording land take that hinder reduction and monitoring.

Although responsibilities for spatial planning and territorial development lie almost exclusively with the Member States, the role of the EU is crucial in several respects - for example, by setting strategic guidelines (land use targets and benchmarks), monitoring trends and patterns of land take on a larger scale, promoting transnational cooperation as well as data and knowledge exchange. The EU Soil Strategy, published in November 2021, aims to address the majority of these demands by defining important targets and emphasising the relevance of healthy soils for various sectors. In conjunction with the European Green Deal, the strategy invites a broad and comprehensive view of the issue of land use. The role of healthy soils and climate-friendly land use is also emphasised in the "Fit for 55 package", through which the European Commission aims to achieve the goal of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030. Reconciling land demand with policies aimed at economic, social and environmental sustainability is indispensable for protecting our natural resources and creating healthy and attractive habitats. Clearly, there are multiple synergies between sustainable land use and e.g. local adaptation to climate change, biodiversity conservation, liveability of urban areas or sustainable urban transport. On the other hand, necessary steps of societal transformations towards sustainability, e.g. in the supply of energy and raw materials, can also have significant impacts on land use and land take. Against this background, the event will provide a forum to discuss persistent challenges in monitoring and combatting land take as part of current political strategies as well as new drivers of land consumption and necessary action to achieve the "no net land take by 2050" target.

Aim: The symposium aims at discussing strategies to achieve the "no net land take by 2050" goal.

The event will provide a forum for

- 1) Exchange on persisting challenges in monitoring and reducing land take,
- 2) Get to know latest policy strategies on land take reduction at national and EU level
- 3) Discuss emerging drivers and wider issues of land take against EU's Green Deal and "fit for 55"-ambitions

Target audience: Policy makers dealing with spatial planning and territorial governance

Program

9:00	<i>Opening of virtual meeting room</i>	
Opening		
09:15	Welcoming Address by the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection	Christian Kühn, State Secretary
Persisting challenges in monitoring and reducing land take		
9.30	International Standards and Strategies for the Reduction of Land Consumption – Main findings from the SURFACE project	Christoph Schröter-Schlaack, Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research – UFZ
09:40	Land take in environmental assessments: Recent advances and persisting challenges in selected EU countries	Eva-Maria Schatz, Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research – UFZ
10:00	Land take data in a European context – Comparing apples and oranges?	Stefan Fina, Research Institute for Regional and Urban Development
10:20	Q+A Discussion	
Policy strategies towards 'no net land take'		
10:30	The EU's soil strategy for 2030 and its relevance for land take	Humberto Delgado Rosa, EU DG ENV
10:45	First Soil Strategy of Austria	Martin Schamann, Austrian Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Regions and Tourism
11.00	Land take objectives and strategies in Flanders	Eddy Wille, Public Waste Agency of Flanders, Department Soil Management
11.15	Q+A Discussion	
11:30	<i>Coffee Break</i>	
The 'no net land take goal' in the context of sustainability and the European Green Deal		
11:45	Panel discussion Panelists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humberto Delgado Rosa, Director for Natural Capital, DG Environment, European Commission • Dirk Messner, President of the German Environment Agency • Martin Schamann, Austrian Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Regions and Tourism • Eddy Wille, Public Waste Agency of Flanders (OVAM) – Department Soil Management 	Moderation: Bernd Hansjürgens, Head of the Soil Commission at the German Environment Agency
Closing		
12:50	Concluding Remarks	Dirk Messner, President of the German Environment Agency
12.55	Adjourn	
13:00	<i>Closing of virtual meeting room</i>	