



Throughout the Netherlands, Christian groups are engaging in habitat management at sites of conservation importance. (Rogier Bos)

An evangelical voice for the environmental crisis

Once upon a time we used to talk about the environmental crisis; slowly we have come to talk about crises. Global warming, pollution, overfishing, damage to ecosystems, invasive species and other matters are all topics of major concern.

As these crises multiply and start to reinforce each other, the engagement of Bible-believing Christians becomes increasingly urgent. This need is surely on both sides. The conservation world – overstretched, under-resourced and frequently disheartened – cries out for our help, our enthusiasm and, perhaps most importantly, our hope.

The conservation world cries out for our help, our enthusiasm and, perhaps most importantly, our hope

The need on the Christian side is more subtle. Quite simply, we have to ask what sort of salt and light we are if, when God's very creation is imperilled, we do nothing? Yet with exceptions, that engagement is widely strained or lacking. A gap exists.

The conservation organisation *A Rocha* was founded over 30 years ago in Portugal: *A Rocha* means 'The Rock' in Portuguese. Very early on, the operating principles of *A Rocha* were summarised as 'the 5 Cs': Christian, Conservation, Community, Cooperation, and Cross-Cultural. *A Rocha* has since spread to 20 countries (including 7 in Europe: Portugal, France, Netherlands, Switzerland, Finland, the Czech

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EDITORIAL

The First Commandment

According to the creation narrative in Genesis 1, the very first commandment that God gave was to birds, whales, fish and other creatures to "be fruitful and multiply", to fill the seas and skies with God's creatures (Gen. 1:22). His first commandment to humans was to "fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28).

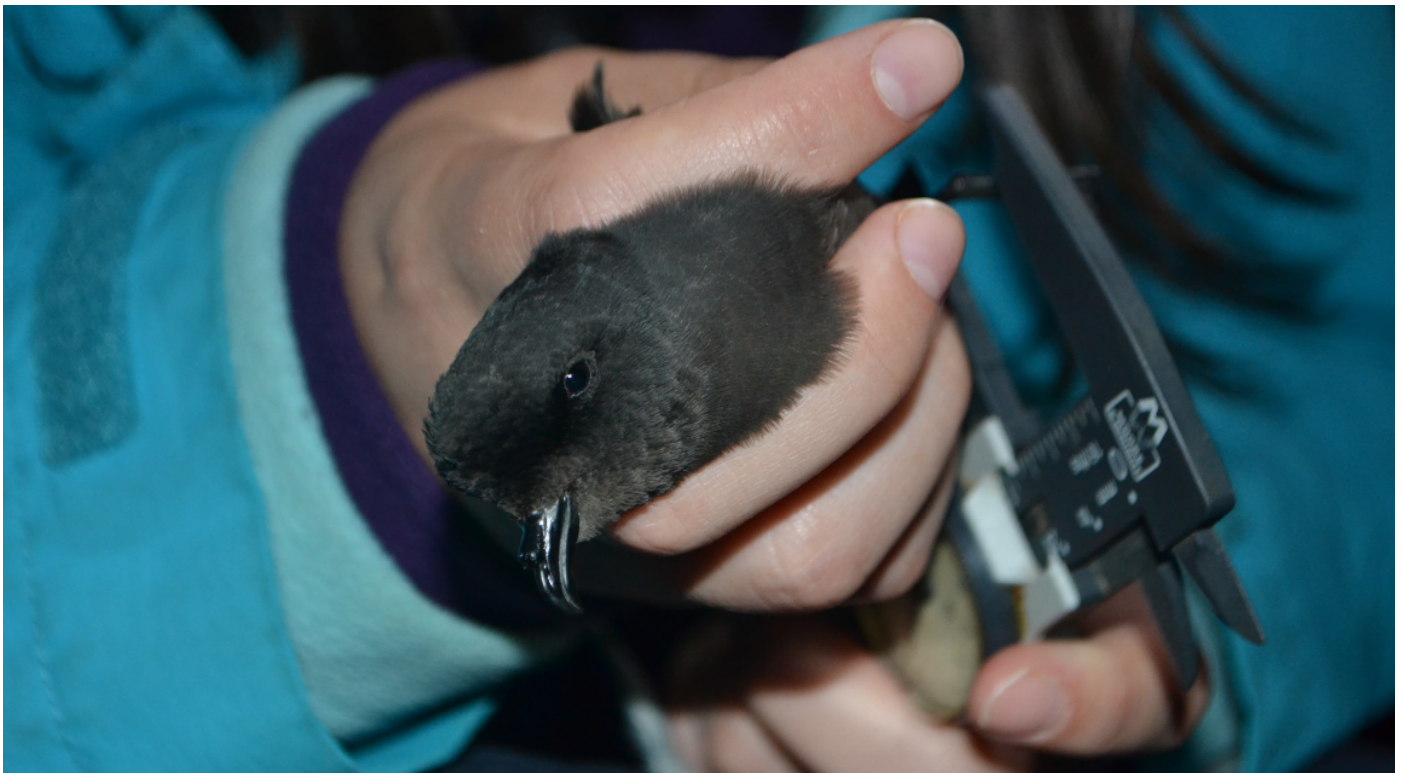
For most of human history the subjection of creation was a daily struggle for farmers, herders and every human, as they toiled against the awesome power of nature. The industrial revolution changed all that, and today global ecosystems are increasingly "subject" to human influence in all sorts of negative ways.

It is only very recently that evangelical Christians have woken up to the part that Creation Care has in God's mission. Chris Walley of *A Rocha* provides our lead article—a case for evangelicals to engage in environmental conservation then Darrell Jackson reviews mission agency engagement with this issue.

We then focus more specifically on Europe. Martin Hodson of The John Ray Initiative gives an overview of the impact of climate change on Europe, and I then give a national example, setting out the particular challenges of climate change for Spain. Jo Appleton concludes this edition of *Vista* by reviewing attitudes to the environment among Europeans.

We pray this edition of *Vista* challenges you to think again about God's first commandment to us.

Jim Memory



A Rocha Portugal has been studying the European Storm-petrel since 1990. The team has caught and released over 6,000 of these sparrow-sized seabirds on migration, gathering data which is helping us understand how climate change is affecting marine ecosystems. (Andrew Shepherd)

Republic and the UK) and those Commitments still guide us, but projects are very varied. As befits an environmental organisation, it is an organic body that adapts to local needs rather than a top-down, one-size-fits-all solution. Nevertheless, one common feature has been the attempt to bridge the gap between the Christian and the secular conservation world.

One contribution to this gap is suspicion on both sides. And if there are five C's that *A Rocha* stands for, you could say that there are also four C's of concern that we stand against.

Let's take the church side first. Many Christians worry that any interest in the environment will lead to spiritual corruption. A widespread fear lingers that to be concerned for nature is to take the first step to New-Age paganism or a gospel-less liberalism. *A Rocha* is getting alongside ministers and individual Christians and demonstrating that you can be committed to preservation of the natural world without losing any evangelical zeal. So, we encourage our team members to be involved in a church and have hosted church events at centres such as the spectacular Les Courmettes in France. There is also the anxiety of complexity. The multiplicity of environmental problems is frequently complex and rarely simple. Understandably, many Christians have found it easier to treat

the environment with scepticism or silence. Here our response has been of education and support. A good illustration is that during the big COP21 climate conference in Paris, *A Rocha* France put together a very well attended day-long conference on the subject of climate change and its implications with excellent speakers well qualified in both theology and science.

Secular environmentalism has its own concerns. The first is that – to be blunt – we Christians are crazy. It's not easy to allay such anxieties in an increasingly irreligious Europe but slow and persistent work in practical conservation has gone a long way to make friends and ease fears. There are many reasons for our commitment to a solid science base for conservation but this is an incidental benefit. So, for example, we have accumulated many years of excellent data collection from study centres in Portugal, France and the Czech Republic. Another relevant factor is the fact that almost everywhere we are heavily involved in educational programs. This is of profound importance at a time when children are increasingly urbanised and more in touch with the digital world than the natural world. That we conduct such programs with integrity and enthusiasm has helped in overcoming suspicion.

Another concern is that our interest in the environment is counterfeit. Helped by the widespread confusion between evangelical and evangelistic there is often

a worry that our motivating interest is in making converts. There is no quick fix but persistent, sacrificial work within the community goes a long way to proving that such fears are unfounded. So *A Rocha* Portugal's long and, for the moment, successful defence of the Alvor Estuary against the development that has blighted the rest of the Algarve has given the organisation well-earned credibility amongst environmentalists.

Overall, we sense a turning of the tide. As a previous generation of evangelicals realised that action against poverty was part of their discipleship, so a new generation is recognising that the defence of God's creation is not just legitimate, but expected. Increasingly too, secular conservationists are realising that we are worth listening to. It's not easy work, being in the middle of two suspicious parties and bringing them together, but then Jesus never promised his followers that discipleship would be easy. Not easy — but certainly worthwhile.

DR CHRIS WALLEY *A Rocha International / Mediterranean Science and Projects Coordinator, A Rocha France*

Resourcing you:

Find out more about *A Rocha's* community conservation projects at www.arocha.org

'A Christian response to climate change' www.arocha.org/COP21

***Pollution and the death of man (1970)* was Francis Schaeffer's response to criticisms made during the 1960s that evangelical Christianity lacked a theology of proper care for the environment. Schaeffer argued, to the contrary, that the causes and solutions to the crisis were adequately explained in Scripture.**

Over the following fifty years of reflection on the care of creation, evangelical theology has become much better equipped to outline and recommend appropriate responses to current environmental crises. Since *Pollution and the death of man* was published, evangelicals have issued, for example, *An Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation* (1993), formed the *Evangelical Environmental Network* in 1992, and played major roles in other similar networks. Gradually, evangelicals began speaking with an authentic voice and finding a welcome within the various movements, social and broadly Christian, which were actively engaged with environmental issues.

However, much of this was usually labelled 'Christian ethics' and included in discussions of justice, peace, public theology, faith and science, etc. Very few evangelicals were making the connections between creation care and mission. The 1993 *Evangelical Declaration*, for example, recommended 'deeper reflection on the substantial biblical and theological teaching which speaks of God's work of redemption in terms of the renewal and completion of God's purpose in creation.'

That reflection really only emerged when the re-invigorated Lausanne Movement met at Cape Town in 2010 and issued its *Cape Town Commitment*. The four page section 'We Love God's World' unambiguously declares 'Creation care is a gospel issue within the Lordship of Christ' and continues, 'persons... society, and... creation; all three must be part of the comprehensive mission of God's people.' Two years later, the WEA and Lausanne issued the joint *Jamaica Call to Action* (2012). It outlines ten action steps which it follows with a *Call to Prayer*. It is available in nine languages.

Obviously, the production of statements by global evangelical bodies is no guarantee of reflection and action by grassroots mission agencies in Europe. As a result we decided that for this edition of VISTA we needed to showcase some of the ways that mission agencies are taking up the global challenge of implementing creation care as a mission task.

Creation care is a gospel issue within the Lordship of Jesus Christ...for individual persons, and for society, and for creation. All three are broken and suffering because of sin; all three are included in the redeeming love and mission of God; all three must be part of the comprehensive mission of God's people.

Cape Town Commitment

MISSIE NEDERLAND

MN combines the former Dutch Evangelical Alliance and Evangelical Missionary Alliance (EZA), operating jointly as MN since May 2015. MN's Church and Society's work includes responsibility for Creation Care Issues. 'Green Church' and 'Environmental Stewardship' resources were published in 2011. In 2012 they published an article by Peter Siebe on 'Christ and the Climate', which acknowledges the influence of the *Micah Declaration* on climate change, the 1993 *Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation*, and the *Oxford Declaration on Climate Change* (2002).

MN co-operates with the *Micah Sustainable* network in the Netherlands, focusing on environmental justice. The network publishes four local church resources: *Dag Schepping?!* (Creation Day?!), *Verwondering* (Amazement),

Levenkunst (Life), and *Buitengewoon!* (Extraordinary!).

BMS WORLD MISSION

Since 2010, seventeen projects have qualified for grants from the BMS *Eco Challenge Fund*, receiving a total of nearly £27,000. 'Each project needs to meet the exacting standards of the Climate Community Biodiversity Alliance to ensure it benefits the local community and protects wildlife as well as absorbing carbon dioxide.' Eco-ovens, tree-planting schemes, educational materials, and solar-powered phone chargers have all featured in these grants.

A monthly 'Worth Saving' email contains 'links to thought-provoking articles, creation care prayer points, world-changing actions and organisations doing good things to fight for a sustainable future.' *Future Shape* helps local churches to explore creation care issues from a biblical perspective, in partnership with Climate Stewards.

In addition to the monthly creation care points, an annual focus on praying for creation care this April encouraged prayer in the wake of the December 2015 *Paris Agreement* (COP21) and for the 195 governmental signatories who pledged to reduce emissions following COP21. A year in advance of COP21, the BMS magazine *Catalyst* was devoted entirely to the climate change theme. BMS World Mission staff have been routinely carbon-offsetting since 2008.

SWISS EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

In 2007 the SEA acknowledged the need to address Climate Change with the publication of *Herausforderung Klimawandel* (Challenge of Climate Change) through its working group, AKU (Association of Climate, Energy, and Environment). The AKU produces an e-newsletter, offers energy advice for Churches (*Energieberatung für christliche*



Gemeinden) through a network of energy consultants, and publishes a guide for churches and member agencies that helps them assess the impact of their activities, 'Event organisation and environmental impact' (2010).

The AKU hosts meetings, provides information, motivation and networking and is positioning itself as the voice of the evangelical public on climate change and environmental issues. On the basis that God created the earth and his people are called to manage what he has given them, the AKU seeks to promote a return to a faith in the triune God that involves social, economic and environmental dimensions.

The AKU carried out research at *Explo 15*, a Swiss Christian Mission and Discipleship Conference, hosted by Agape Europe. Interviewees were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each of ten statements (see Figure 1).

OM INTERNATIONAL

In mid-2014, the new International Director of OM, Lawrence Tong, was asked about trends and shifts in global mission. His response started with a reference to Creation Care and the 2010 *Cape Town Commitment's* statement that creation care was an integral part of Christian mission. He continued,

'When I share about OM's efforts in organic farming in China and Nepal, it surprises some that OM is already in that arena. But there is so much more we can do in setting an example for Christians everywhere. If I was to dream about a future OM ship, it would employ renewable energy to the extent that the ship itself would make a statement anywhere it went about caring for creation.'

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS (UK)

GC tackles creation care issues as one of 47 'Mission Issues'. It has available a total of 18 resources covering 'natural' disasters (3), climate change (10), sustainability (3), and globalisation (2).

OTHER AGENCIES

A number of creation-care agencies (Operation Noah, Climate Stewards)

Figure 1: Christ and the Environment: responses to a question at *Explo 15*

		Very important	Mostly	A little	Unimportant
1	As a Christian, one should be more environmentally aware?	80%	16.4%	1.8%	1.8%
2	God's Creation must be managed and treated carefully	90.9%	7.3%	-	1.8%
3	Sunday worship should be easy to reach by bicycle and public transport	50.9%	45.5%	1.8%	1.8%
4	Environmental protection is related to mission and evangelisation	57.4%	35.2%	5.6%	1.9%
5	Christian churches and organisations should be 'greener'	65.4%	21.2%	13.5%	-
6	It is important that I have a low-meat diet	34.5%	27.3%	30.9%	7.3%
7	I am aware that greenhouse gas emissions from air travel are a large problem	67.3%	27.3%	3.6%	1.8%
8	Alternative energy sources must be implemented now	70.9%	18.2%	9.1%	1.8%
9	I think it's important to use my money in an ecologically and socially responsible way	57.7%	36.5%	5.8%	-
10	How important is my own ecological behaviour in everyday life	55.6%	38.9%	5.6%	-

along with organisations like Tearfund (which partners with the Church of England's *Climate Justice Fund*), offer support to mission agencies trying to find a way to turn a vision for creation care into policy. It's not always easy. Many of the larger mission agencies we investigated appear to lack any commitment to creation care as an expression of their mission activities. Of course, sustaining such a vision requires resourcing. OM, for example, in the face of traditional areas of OM's mission activity, including evangelism, mentoring and discipleship, relief and development, church planting, and justice, struggles to identify creation care as one of its Key Focus Areas.

Others, such as CMS, have well-established partnerships with creation-care networks through which mutual advantage is gained. CMS seconds Dave Bookless to *A Rocha International*, for example, and through this partnership produced *PlanetWise DVD and CD-ROM* (2008) to accompany Bookless's book *Planetwise*.

LAUSANNE MOVEMENT AND WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

Since the Jamaica Call to Action of 2012, the WEA and Lausanne have been working out their shared conviction that 'Creation Care is indeed a "gospel issue within the Lordship of Christ"' and that, secondly, 'we are faced with a crisis that is pressing, urgent, and that must be

resolved in our generation.' Further regional Conferences are planned. In South Asia, Sept 2016, the UMN (United Mission to Nepal) will partner

with the WEA and Lausanne. A European Conference is planned for October 2016.

At a joint special event on the 6th June, in central London, the Lausanne/WEA Creation Care Network will launch *Creation Care and the Gospel*, a book that is likely to remain a vital resource for evangelicals seeking to find a way through the complexity of issues that have found their way to the heart of a new commitment to care for creation and understand it as an essential focus for the mission of God.

REV DR DARRELL JACKSON is Senior Lecturer in Missiology at Morling College, Sydney

God created the earth and his people are called to manage what he has given them

Climate change is not the only environmental issue, facing us today but it is certainly the one that we hear most about.

What is the problem? The main cause of human-induced climate change is our burning of fossil fuels since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. That has led to an increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration from about 280 ppm in pre-industrial times to 404.16 ppm in February 2016. The extra carbon dioxide is like an extra blanket on your bed, an extra boost to the greenhouse effect, and we would expect that the planet would begin to warm. That has been the case and we are now around 1°C warmer globally than before the Industrial Revolution, quite a rapid rise.

Globally 2014 was the warmest year on record, but that was soon beaten by 2015. January and February 2016 broke even more records. The increase in temperature has caused a number of things: more heat waves, increased severity of extreme weather events, droughts, floods, melting of ice caps and glaciers, and sea level rise. But what of Europe?

Impact in Europe

It would probably be fair to say that the effects of climate change on Europe have, so far, been less than for some other areas and continents: the Arctic, Africa, Oceania and Australia for example.

However, there have been some significant impacts. Perhaps the most well-known was the 2003 heatwave which led to the hottest summer in Europe for at least 500 years. France was particularly badly affected, but



Solar PV Panels, Haddenham, Buckinghamshire, UK

many Western European nations posted record temperatures. Estimates vary, but the heatwave may have caused as many as 70,000 deaths. We also saw widespread crop failures.

Of course we have always had heatwaves, but soon after scientists were able to calculate that the 2003 heatwave was made twice as likely by human emissions. Since 2003 “climate attribution” calculations have become common after extreme weather events, and in many, but not all, cases a human impact on the event has been proven. So climate change has been calculated to have boosted the chances of the wet winter in the UK in 2013/14 by 43%. This rainfall was the cause of serious flooding in much of Southern England and Wales.

In the Eastern Mediterranean and Levant there was a prolonged drought from

1998 to 2012 which is thought to be the worst for 900 years. Here the effect of human emissions is strongly suspected to have intensified the drought, but it is not totally proven. The drought may have played a part in the Syrian refugee crisis. As many as 1.5 million Syrian farmers were forced to abandon their land and go to the cities, which they did in increasing numbers towards the end of the drought in 2010 and 2011. This added to an already tense situation, war followed, and then people started to leave the country for Europe. Could this be a foretaste of things to come?

The prolonged drought in the Eastern Mediterranean and Levant may have played a part in the Syrian refugee crisis

Looking to the future

It is difficult to predict the future for the European climate, and much depends on how successful humanity is in cutting emissions in the next few years. What is clear is that global temperature will continue to rise whatever we do now. It is also certain that some parts of Europe will be more affected than others. The UK is likely to have a more Mediterranean climate, with milder wetter winters and hotter drier summers. The worst predictions for the Mediterranean are pretty dire with large increases in temperature and prolonged droughts.

Moreover, Africa is probably the most vulnerable of all the continents to future climate change. It is possible that later this century we may see continual waves of climate refugees moving north from Africa and the Mediterranean and towards Northern Europe. I hope not.



Syrian refugees making their way across Europe



Climate Change demonstration in Portugos, Sierra Nevada, Spain.
Martin Hodson is on the left of the picture.

In general terms Europe has been at the forefront of environmental policy, and efforts to deal with the threat of climate change. The European Union has been behind a whole raft of environmental legislation, and has been a powerful force in international negotiations.

The European response

However, individual countries within Europe have differed in their responses. The German *energiewende* (energy transition) is a very ambitious plan to increase the use of renewable energy sources. By 2050 the aim is to obtain 80% of power from renewables. There has been major investment in onshore wind, solar and biomass and large offshore wind schemes are being erected in the North Sea.

In Spain wind energy capacity is fourth in the world behind Germany, the United States and China and met 18% of national electricity demands by 2012. Spain also has some of the best sunshine in Europe, and is a world leader for both photovoltaic and photothermal solar energy.

In the UK the Climate Change Act of 2008 was ground breaking at that time.

Sadly, recent government policies on renewable energy and combatting climate change have not followed up on this excellent start. Undoubtedly, the COP21 climate change meeting in Paris in December 2015 will have a major effect on climate change policy for years to come. It is too early to properly assess the Paris Agreement that came out of the meeting, but the French hosts were key in getting all parties to agree.

The Churches' Response

The response of the European Churches to climate change, as with all environmental issues, has been patchy, but there are signs that this is beginning to change. We should pay tribute here to Sir John Houghton, co-chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's scientific assessment working group. An evangelical Baptist, on his retirement Sir John devoted much of his time to convincing church leaders that they should take climate change seriously. He was the driving force behind the setting up of the John Ray Initiative (JRI), a Christian environmental think-tank, in 1997. Christians began to take up the challenge, most particularly in the UK, but also to a lesser extent in other parts of Europe.

It is now common to see Christian organisations involved in climate change demonstrations and campaigns. There was a very strong Christian presence at the COP21 meeting in Paris, some having come on pilgrimages across Europe (see my reflection in "Resourcing You").

In January 2016 we saw the launch of the new Eco Church scheme from A Rocha UK. At present this is aimed only at churches in England and Wales, but there has been a lot of interest from other countries. Inevitably, the scheme is focussed more broadly than just climate change: worship and teaching; buildings and land; engagement with the local community and in global campaigns, and personal lifestyles of the congregation. But if all the churches in Europe were to engage in Eco Church or similar schemes it would have a significant impact, and also be a major witness to their local communities.

In conclusion, it looks likely that climate change will be a substantial problem in Europe this century. How bad that problem will be is, to some extent, in our hands. It is certainly a matter for prayer.

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Resourcing You

Bell, C. & White, R.S. (eds) (2016) *Creation Care and the Gospel: Reconsidering the Mission of the Church*. Hendrickson, Massachusetts and the Lausanne Library.

Eco Church ecochurch.arocha.org.uk

Hodson, M.J. (2015) Paris, Paris- COP 21, a personal reflection and review. *JRI Special Briefing Paper*. www.hodsons.org/MartinHodson/Paris2015.pdf

Hodson, M.J. & Hodson, M.R. (2015) *The Ethics of Climatic Scepticism*, Grove Books Limited, Cambridge.

Hodson, M.J. & Hodson, M.R. (2015) *A Christian Guide to Environmental Issues*, Bible Reading Fellowship, Abingdon.

During the 1960s the southern Spanish region of Almería made the very most of its desert climate. It became a popular location for films like *Cleopatra*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, and *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, and it continues to do so today. However, in recent years, climate change and intensive farming methods are threatening the south of Spain with vast areas suffering from increased desertification. And this is just one of the many ecological challenges that the country faces. We might say that in a way, Spain serves as Europe's climate change observatory.



A film set in Pechina, Almería, Spain

The 5th report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2015) confirmed that Spain will see a general increase in temperatures and a reduction in precipitation. Maximum temperatures are expected to rise by between 5 and 8 °C over the coming century. Heat waves will become more frequent and more pronounced and this will have a negative impact in many sectors, not just in agriculture and forestry, but also in the tourist industry.

Agriculture and Forestry

Spain is the third biggest wine producer globally, providing 12% of the world's wine. Yet as most people are intuitively aware, grapes are one of the

most vulnerable crops to climate variations. The increase in temperatures will have severe consequences for wine production in some parts of Spain with one region (Córdoba) predicted to see up to a 60% reduction in yield.

Global warming will also impact on forestry. Climate change does not cause forest fires; more than 90% are directly or indirectly caused by humans. However, climate change does have an impact on their intensity and the challenge of extinguishing them, as evidenced by the recent fires in Canada. It also has an impact on the ability of the land to recover afterwards.



Vineyards in Cordoba, Spain

Tourism

Spain's tourism industry represents 14% of the country's GDP. Much of this is due to its enviable climate. Yet the IPCC predict that as we move towards the second half of the 21st Century tourism will begin to decrease in southern Europe due to uncomfortably high temperatures in the summer. Some of these tourists will choose to visit in the Spring and Autumn instead but many others will choose the now warmer locations in Northern Europe.

Yet the most dramatic effects of climate change on the tourism industry may well result from rising sea levels. The artists impressions of the impact that this might have on coastal areas, commissioned by Greenpeace Spain, is shown overleaf. It may be an exaggeration but the dependence of Spain on its tourism of "Costas" make this no idle threat. Recent studies indicate that a sea level rise of one centimetre consumes around one metre of beach.

Migration

One final aspect of the probable impact of climate change on Spain is climate-related migration. As some regions in southern Spain become increasingly inhospitable many people will relocate northwards or leave the country altogether for more temperate climes.

The depopulation of a vast swath of northern and central Spain has been a phenomenon of Spanish life for many



Map of Spain showing abandoned towns (Source: www.pueblosabandonados.com)

decades. This has been driven by mostly economic factors with the population moving to the larger cities leaving many towns completely abandoned. Each of the labels on the map corresponds to an abandoned Spanish town.

As suggested above, climate change will only exacerbate the problem of depopulation, and more seriously, will accelerate desertification of the land.

The Evangelical Response

Spanish evangelicals have only recently woken up to ecological concerns. The 2012 book by Wickham and Wickham, *Ecología y Cambio Climático*, was perhaps the first attempt to provide a theological and informational treatment of this subject for a general readership. The Spanish Lausanne Committee have established a working group to promote

ecological action and reflection but, as indicated above, this is not a day too soon.

In Isaiah 44:3 we read of God's promise to his servant, Israel: "For I will pour out water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring and My blessing on your descendants" May God's servants in Spain today be inspired by His Spirit to bless that country not only with the words of the gospel but also a care for His creation that will bring much needed water to a thirsty land.

Jim Memory

Sources:

IPCC, 2014. *Fifth Assessment Report: Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability* <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg2/>

Greenpeace, 2014, *España: hacia un clima extremo*, <http://www.greenpeace.org/espana/Global/espana/2014/Report/artico/artico%202014%20web.pdf>

Buck, A Spanish exodus to the cities leaves a desert in its wake, *FT*, 12th Dec 2014, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/09fde45a-8053-11e4-9907-00144feabdc0.html#slide0>

Artists impressions of the impact of climate change on Spain, Greenpeace 2014

Benidorm (Alicante)



A vineyard in Southern Spain



Photos: Greenpeace, Spain, 2014

How concerned are people living in the EU about the environment – and what do they think should be done to address these concerns?

This was the focus of a Eurobarometer survey carried out in 2014 across all EU member states. Questions included the general attitudes, behaviour and priorities of Europeans towards the environment, the role of business and government and the interplay between the environment, economics and social factors. The results will inform the environmental objectives of the EU's Europe 2020.

Personal attitudes and behaviour

At a personal level, protecting the environment is considered important or very important by more than 90% of respondents in all countries, with three-quarters of those surveyed feeling that environmental problems have a direct impact on their daily lives.

Cyprus (95%), Greece (93%) and Malta (90%) report the highest impact on daily life, whereas more northern European countries such as Denmark (56%), Austria (66%), the Netherlands (66%), Belgium (67%) and Germany (68%) have the lowest number of people reporting an impact.

Specific concerns about the environment range from air (56%) and water (50%) pollution and the impact of chemicals on health (43%), to the depletion of natural resources (36%) and consumption habits (24%). Bottom of the list are land take (15%), noise pollution (15%), soil

pollution (13%) and invasive non-native species (11%).

Encouragingly, the survey indicates that people are prepared to take action. Overall, 85% of people totally or tend to agree with the statement that 'as an individual, you can play a role in protecting the environment in (your country)'. Only 3% totally disagreed, and a further 10% tended to disagree. The highest levels of agreement were in Malta, Ireland, the Netherlands (all 96%) and Sweden (95%). Conversely, the Czech Republic (73%), Hungary and Finland (74%) and Poland (75%) had the lowest levels of agreement – although it should be noted, that three in four people from these countries still agree they can play a part.

The most common activities they engage in are separating waste for recycling, cutting down energy consumption and reducing water consumption. The table opposite compares the figures for the 2014 survey with the previous 2011 survey. The number of people who don't do anything has reduced from 6% to 4%. (Figure 1)

Buying local or environmentally friendly products and choosing environmentally friendly travel methods has increased slightly along with separating waste for recycling – however the other actions have shown a slight reduction. Three quarters of respondents would be prepared to pay more for environmentally friendly products, however one in five would not. People who left education after the age of 20

are over 20% more likely to be prepared to pay more than those who left aged 15 or under (85% compared with 63%). In addition, people who say that protecting the environment is important to them are far more likely to pay more (83% compared with 32%)

What should big business and government do?

While a growing number of people think that citizens are doing about the right amount (29% of respondents, up 4% from 2011), the overall consensus is that neither national government nor big companies and industry are doing enough to protect the environment.

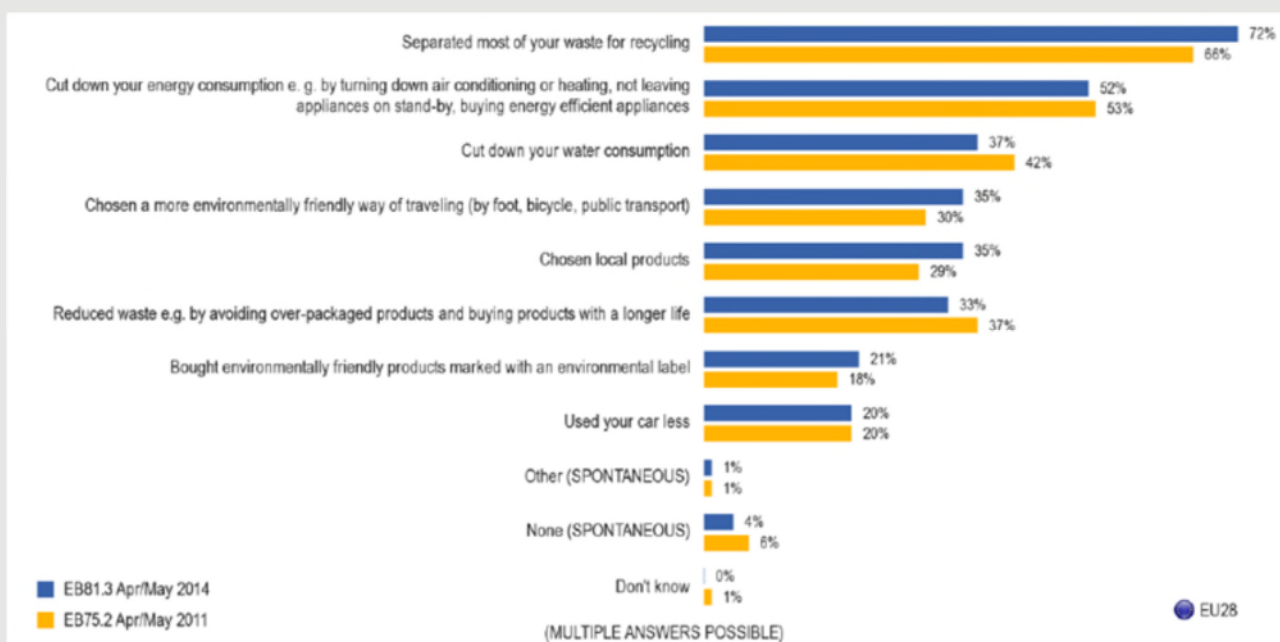
In Greece, 96% considered big companies and industry were not doing enough, and 91% thought the government could do more. This was the highest country specific figure. With regard to industry, other high scorers were Spain (89%) and Croatia (88%) whereas Estonia (61%) and Denmark (62%) were the lowest.

86% of respondents in both Croatia and Spain thought the government could do more – more than double the lowest figure of 40% in Malta.

Options for making a difference include introducing heavier fines on the worst offenders (40% considering this most effective), along with greater financial incentives (33% agree) as the view is that the big polluters themselves have a primary responsibility towards repairing the damage they cause.

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

Figure 1 — Have you done any of the following for environmental reasons in the past month?



Alongside local government, there was general agreement that the EU was also not doing enough to protect the environment (56%) with 3% thinking it was doing too much. Sweden (76%), Austria (70%), Germany (67%) and Spain (67%) perceived the greatest lack of EU action. In most countries however, the number who thought the EU was not doing enough was lower than that of the 2011 survey, with the greatest difference seen in Hungary (34%, -16pp), Lithuania (37%, -16pp), Latvia (42%, -15pp) and the Netherlands (53%, -13pp).

In 23 out of 27 member states, a majority of respondents think that national governments and the EU should take environmental decisions jointly. Spain (77%) has the highest proportion of respondents who take this view, followed by Portugal (76%), Belgium (73%) and Cyprus (70%).

The five countries where most people think only the national government should be responsible are Lithuania (61%), the Czech Republic (56%) Finland (56%), Estonia (54%), and the UK (50%).

So how should the EU be involved?

At least three-quarters of respondents agreed the following:

- European environmental legislation is needed to protect their country's environment
- The EU should be able to check that environmental laws are being

applied correctly in their country

- Non-EU countries should receive assistance from the EU to improve environmental standards
- Environmentally friendly activities should receive more EU funding.

In conclusion

Overall, there does not appear to be a regional or country specific pattern to the various areas explored in the survey. If there is a pattern, it is to do with socio-demographic issues. Across all countries, people who left education after the age of 20 or are in managerial roles are more likely to be concerned about the environment than those who left education at 15 or younger, or are not in employment.

And unsurprisingly, those who think that protecting the environment is very important are more likely to take personal action, or consider that the national government or EU should be more involved.

Jo Appleton

Resourcing you:

For more detail and further questions, downloaded the report from ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_416_en.pdf

The EU's Europe 2020 Environment Strategy can be found at ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/eu_policy_en.htm

INTRODUCING CHRIS DUCKER

We are delighted that Chris Ducker, Lecturer in Mission at Redcliffe College is joining Vista's editorial team.



Chris has a background in economics and management, with Masters Degrees in Development Studies from Cambridge and Contemporary Mission in Intercultural Contexts from Redcliffe.

Between 2007 and 2014, he and his wife Helen served in Moldova working alongside local churches and encouraging them in mission, evangelism, youthwork and community transformation.

His interests include holistic mission, cross-cultural church partnerships, Christian responses to globalisation, business as mission, cross-cultural leadership and approaches to short-term mission.

Chris comments: "I have frequently recommended Vista to my students and friends in the international missions community. I hope to contribute by drawing on my experience of mission in Eastern Europe, my training as a missiologist, and my passion for justice being seen as a key focus of mission – at a time when so many of Europe's crises are justice-related issues."



Editorial Team: Darrell Jackson, Jim Memory, Jo Appleton & Chris Ducker

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Please Note: The views expressed in Vista are those of the authors of each article and do not necessarily reflect the position of Redcliffe College.

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