

remained stagnant since 2010, devotes only 1.72% of Britain's gross domestic product to research and development—significantly less than many other developed nations including Germany, the United States, and Japan (all around 3%), and the European Union average of 2.08%. The flat budget “is biting scientists and engineers and squeezing universities,” and may deter outside investment, CaSE Director Sarah Main said in a statement.

Brussels 5

World Map of Environmental Conflicts Launched

Want to see which communities around the world are fighting off a project, such as a mine or a dam, that could harm the environment? A new online “atlas of environmental justice,” developed by a group of academics and activists funded by the European Commission, allows just that. Activists, scholars, or the purely curious can search and filter the data across 100 fields, including by commodity, company, country, and type of conflict.

The atlas, launched last week, was built by Environmental Justice Organisations, Liabilities and Trade (EJOLT), an E.U.-funded project that brings together 23 teams from academic and activist organizations. It now lists 915 conflicts; 271 involve local scientists and professionals, and 17% are described as environmental victories. “It’s only the tip of the iceberg,” says EJOLT spokesman Nick Meynen. The organization aims to raise the coverage to 2000 conflicts in the coming year, which would enable quantitative analyses. Academics can provide input to expand the range of cases and fill the gaps—including blank spots in China. <http://ejatlas.org/>

NOTED

>The World Health Organization (WHO) was set to **declare India and the 11-country Southeast Asia region polio-free** on 27 March. Long the global epicenter of the virus, India saw its last case on 13 January 2011. That leaves two more WHO regions to go: the Eastern Mediterranean Region, where Afghanistan and Pakistan are the roadblocks, and the African region, where Nigeria remains endemic and has sparked nearby outbreaks.



Champions of the Sargasso

It may lie beyond the jurisdiction of any nation, but the Sargasso Sea—and the hundreds of marine species it supports—has many advocates. Last week, a team of 33 researchers with the Danish Eel Expedition 2014 arrived in this open-ocean region of the North Atlantic to study the declining European eel populations that spawn there. Using fine-mesh nets (pictured above) to catch larvae, they hope to “plug the main gaps in our knowledge” of the eel’s early diet and breeding habits, says the project’s leader, Peter Munk of the National Institute of Aquatic Resources at the Technical University of Denmark in Charlottenlund. The team also will examine whether climate-related changes to ocean currents are contributing to the eel’s decline.

Meanwhile, five countries, including the United States and the United Kingdom, signed a nonbinding agreement earlier this month to protect the area from overfishing and pollution. The organization behind the agreement, a partnership between scientists, conservation groups, and the government of Bermuda called the Sargasso Sea Alliance, released a film celebrating the agreement, available at <https://vimeo.com/89868953>.

NEWSMAKERS

Tyler Prize Goes to Ecologist With a Mathematical Eye

Whether he’s looking at a colony of mussels or the international balance of political power, Princeton University ecologist **Simon Levin** sees the same thing: complex systems. This week, Levin was named the 2014 recipient of the \$200,000 Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement for a 4-decade career that connects mathematical



concepts such as game theory to the dynamics of animals and ecosystems.

Levin’s work has influenced Pacific salmon recovery efforts and protection of the Hudson River, but it has also found some unlikely applications in topics beyond environmental science, from the destructive dynamics of cancer cells to global affairs in the age of terrorism.

Levin says he’s encouraged that a complex, interconnected view of ecosystems is triumphing over more “simplistic” management schemes. “What you’re really trying to preserve are the broad, emergent features of the system,” he says, “whether it’s a forest system or a financial system.” >>