

POLLUTION CONTROL

CO₂

MAKING A BETTER EARTH



Pollution is heavier and heavier every year: why don't we try to make Earth a little better?

A game on Earth's pollution is something to carefully consider ... and a new game from Vital Lacerda is something to consider even more carefully, after the time spent on his first hit (Vinhos).

Also I must confess that it was not so easy to explain this game to readers that never tried it: so please excuse me if sometimes I will be more annoying than usual. CO2 is a game that must be tested at least a couple of time before being able to appreciate it and I would like to make other gamers understand at least how it works.

When you open the box you are impressed by the number of gaming pieces and by the board. The latter feels really ugly, at the first impact: we see so many beautiful boards today that and you cannot believe that a company may produce something like that!!!

A round score track, six places named Europe, North America, South America, Africa, Asia and Oceania (each of them has 3 cases for new projects some spaces that should be filled with energy plants, from a minimum of 3 in Africa to the 6 of Asia) and, just in the middle, the CEP (Carbon Emission Permits) Market and the International Summit Places. No effort was "apparently" made to try to produce a more appealing graphic!!

The other components: 5 set of colored wooden disks and pawns (a set per player), 40 purple wooden discs (CEP), cardboard coins (1-2-5-10 dollars), a plethora of cardboard tiles (new projects, fossil power plants, green power plants, regional agendas, summits, etc.), 51 cards (lobby, objectives, events), some special markers ("technologic" white cubes, pollution level indicator, decade counter, round counter, etc.) and 5 player aid cards with a summary of the turn's actions.

It will take a few minutes just to distinguish the tiles, as the game components list will not show any drawings (as most games do today) so you must search the rules booklet (in English, Italian, German and French) to find the right chapter where the pieces

are shown. Their graphics are the same as the board: wan ... but they really give you the feeling of the game, where you must fight EARTH POLLUTION, and pollution is something ugly, wan, shifty and ... deadly (as some skulls on the board and on the tiles will always remind you!!!)

This means that effectively the graphic approach immediately dips you in the "atmosphere" (and this word is really the right one for this game!): well done! Ugly, wan, shifty but ... well done!

The players are the Presidents of Multi-national Energy Companies that face the rising demand of "green" power sources in order to save our beloved Earth from the risk of pollution: if the latter is not stopped in time ALL players lose the game.

But this is not another cooperative/collaborative game as those Presidents still need to individually WIN by having more Victory Points (VP) than the others at the game's end. So during their ... career they have to pay constant attention to the pollution level and thus try to "invest" in Continents that need to be helped with Green Energy Plants.

CO2 is played in DECADES (1970-1980-1990-2000-2010-2020); each decade has a certain number of ROUNDS (5 rounds with 2 players and down to 2 rounds with 5 players); each round allows a TURN to all players and some actions. It will take some time to clearly understand this, as the game rules are not too clear and sometimes mix the words decades, rounds and turn during the explanation.

At the Set Up the players receive 1 pawn (Scientist) and all the discs of the selected color, together with some coins (3-4-4-5-5) and two CEP. The "decade" marker is positioned on the case 1970, the "round" marker on the appropriate space (marked with the icons of 2-3-4-5 players) and ONE Fossil Power plant is randomly picked up and placed on the first space of the energy demand cases of the six Continents.

You then add together the CO2 level of each Fossil plant, placing the Pollution marker on the related case on the Pollution track of the board.

Display then the initial SUMMIT tiles on the board: each tile indicate the name of a big town and the arguments that will be discussed there (nuclear power plants, sun power plants, recycling power plants, etc.) and we will see later their use.

Finally you have to assign to each Continent a Regional Agenda tile that will simply remind you the 3 "kind" of green power plants that may be placed there and which is the most important of the three.

Each Continent will also receive a number of CEP equal to the number of "empty" Energy Demand spaces (remember: the first one already contain a Fossil Plant) and 2 CEP are also placed on the Market.

Pietro Cremona

A very demanding game that will occupy most of your concentration and neurons.

Finally you have to randomly (and secretly) assign 1 COMPANY GOAL card (they show you how to make some extra VP at the game's end) and 5 LOBBY cards (they shows some special benefits that you may use during the game) to each player.

All the "UN" GOAL cards are displayed on one side of the board: you may pick up them if and when you meet their conditions and score some VP (for example: if you already have a "solar" and "biomass" plant you may take the related UN card and score 4 VP).

Finally you place the EVENT CARDS on the board and reveal the first two (the first is the ACTIVE event and the second will be the next one) each event is associated to a Continent and shows a regional Disaster that may happens if the CO2 level reaches the 350 ppm.

The first ROUND starts with the first player TURN, followed by all the other players first turn, and so on. Each player must select one of the following three ACTIONS:

1 - Propose a Project: you select a plant project tile (forestation, solar, cold fusion, biomass or recycling) and you put it in one of the available project cases in front of one of the six Continents. You place the tile face down as this is still a "proposal" and the project is not yet approved.

In exchange you receive the "benefit" granted by that project case: MONEY (1 coin per CEP still available in that Continent) or 2 TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES (the white cubes) or a RESEARCH COLLABORATION (you may take in your hand another of your scientists from the reserve or move one of

those that you already have on the board).

2 – Install a Project: you select a PROPOSED project (even those placed by other players) and you turn it face up, paying 1 CEP to the bank. Now you receive the benefit of the project: 2 CEP with “forestation”, 3 white cubes with “solar”, 5 \$ and 1 white cube with “cold fusion”, 3 \$ plus 1 White cube and 1 CEP with “biomass” and 5 \$ plus 1 CEP with “recycling”.

3 – Build a Power plant: you may select an INSTALLED project and build the related power plant. To do that you must have the money and technology (white cubes) printed on the plant tile AND the expertise in that energy source. To verify the EXPERTISE in each energy source you must look at the related tracks printed on the board. If your marker is in a position equal or higher than the number of white cubes printed on the plant tile you may build it: otherwise you cannot, even if you already have the necessary money and white cubes available. We will see later how to advance in the five different expertise tracks

In your TURN you also have always available three FREE ACTIONS:

- Move 1 Scientist
 - Make a visit to the Market (to buy or sell CEP)
 - Play or score a card
- You may do each one only ONCE per turn

The players start the game with ONE SCIENTIST available, but there are three extra pawn for each color in the common reserve: to get them you need to place a project on the Research Collaboration case of any Continent.

Then you need to use your free move to place a Scientist on the board, either from your hand to one project tile; or from one project to a different one; or from a project to a “Summit” tile. The Scientists are important because they grant you some facilities:

- If an opponent want to build a factory using a project tile that has one of your Scientists on he must pay 1 coin to you and you must then either take it back in your hand (gaining 1 Expertise point in that energy source) or send it to a summit where this source is displayed.

- At the end of your TURN you gain 1 Expertise point in a source where you have a Scientist (and the choice is yours)

- When a Summit is completed (all the “arguments” are covered by a Scientist) you gain 1 expertise on the source covered by YOUR Scientist plus 1 Expertise in one of the sources discussed at the summit (at your choice)

Going to the CEP MARKET allows you to purchase a new CEP marker (from the reserve pile in the middle of the price track) or sell one CEP (adding it to the reserve and re-

ducing the official price by one case). If the Reserve runs out the bank add 2 CEP and increase the price by one on the price track.

PLAYING A CARD allows you to get some extra benefits:

- LOBBY cards have two possibilities: an immediate benefit (shown on the bottom of the card: a cube, some coins, 1 CEP, etc.) or a conditional one (if you do something in a Continent you gain something: for example if you propose a Project in Europe you gain 3 coins, etc.)

- UN GOAL cards give VP to the first player who built “X” green plants (for example: you get 7 VP if you are the first to build a solar + forestation + cold fusion plants)

EXPERTISE POINTS are fundamental in the game to build energy plants and therefore high attention must be paid to the different tracks on the board. When you gain your first Expertise Point in one of green energies you place a colored disc on the first case of the related track: any time that you gain extra points on that track you move your disc forward and eventually gain other benefits (printed on some cases: for example, select another track and advance your disc one case, or receive technical cubes, etc.).

You gain Expertise points:

- When one of your Scientists is in a project



at the end of your turn (your choice)

- When you build a new Green Energy Plant (you take a point on that energy track)

- When a Summit is completed

- When you take your Scientist back if another player selects his project

Expertise tracks are also important to assign coins at the beginning of each turn (starting with turn 2).

The SUMMITS allow you to get Expertise Points but they "block" your Scientists until the tile is complete: you cannot never move a Scientist that attended a Summit. Initially all Summits need only TWO scientists and are quite easy to finish, especially if players cooperate sending quickly their Scientists in order to increase their Expertise points tracks.

Once a Summit is complete the Scientists are returned to their owners and the tile is discarded: a new Summit tile is randomly picked from the reserve to replace the old one. Summits may have up to FOUR different "themes" and those tiles are not easy to complete, so later in the game you must pay high attention before sending a Scientist to a Summit as you risk to block him for a long time.

When you have the necessary requisites to build an energy plant you may select this option on your turn: then you discard the related project tile and you place the corresponding green energy PLANT TILE on the first available case of the selected Continent. You mark this plant with one of your colored discs. Note that the cost to build the first TWO plants of each types is cheaper than the following three, and this is a consideration that will force the players to meticulously program their initial strategies and purchases. When the track of a Continent is full you may still build a plant there only if there are still Fossil Plants: you discard the Fossil (reducing the CO2 track of the same quantity) and you install the new plant at its place.

Each Continent has a REGION CONTROL tile that shows which kind of green energy plants may be installed there: if you control most types you control that Continent and this grants you the possibility to spend the CEPs of that Continent instead of using your own. At the game's end you may also take the Continent's last CEP available and calculate them as VP for your total.

When all the players finish their turn the ROUND marker is advanced one case and

everything starts again for another turn. When the last round is finished you must advance the DECADE marker one case and start the SUPPLY PHASE for the following decade.

INCOMES are first distributed (the players on first and second place on each Expertise tracks receive the amount of coins printed on their cases), then you must verify the POLLUTION LEVEL of each Continent: if a new green plant was built in each Continent in this Decade nothing happens, otherwise you must fill that case with a new Fossil Plant randomly selected from the reserve and increase the CO2 level accordingly. The player that control that Continent must also pay 1 CEP to the bank. If (unfortunately) the CO2 level reaches 350 ppm or more a DISASTER occurs in the Continent shown on the active EVENT card and all the players that do not have a green plant there must pay 1 technology (white cube) or lose 2 VP.

If the CO2 level reaches or pass the 500 ppm ... the Earth is dead and all the players lose the game: be prepared to lose the first couple of games but do not worry, as this is normal when you learn CO2. So don't be discouraged and try again as you will certainly beat pollution in the following games and you will finally appreciate it.

If Pollution does not win, when the last turn of the last round of the last decade is completed the game ends and VP are calculated. Each player collect all the CEP of the Continents that he controls and sell them to the Market, then you get:

- X VP if you met the conditions of your COMPANY GOAL card
- 1 VP for each 2 coins in your hand
- 3 VP for the player with most white cubes in hand
- 3 VP for the player who scored the most "UN" GOAL cards

This is a demanding game, absolutely not suggested to the casual gamers as you are asked to make long term programs (usually based on which GOAL and LOBBY cards you received at the beginning). Initially the Biomass and Recycling plants are low cost and thus interesting enough to get the most possible resources and coins (on the Expertise tracks), but they will not grant too many VP. Solar and Cold fusion are probably the best plants to use as they have a good balance between cost and VP. Forestation is the most lucrative plant: not only is the most represented on the board, but also grand twice VP as the Biomass and Recycling (but it also cost twice!). Most of the Region Control tiles have Forestation on top (thus assur-

ing the control of the Continent in case of tie on the Plant track).

To be more flexible you must try to get at least another Scientist in the first Decade as they are very important to get the Expertise Points needed to build plants. It is now clear that you must select in advance which strategy to follow in order to place your Scientist in the right projects.

Remember that you will not be able to build plants without CEP so if the market offers then at low cost (1 coin) do not hesitate to purchase them early in the game as they will be vital towards the end. And if you get the control of a Continent use its CEP to build new plants and keep in reserve the ones you have in your hand.

Never forget to check if you have enough plants to claim a UN GOAL card: they offer quite a lot of VP so carefully plan your new project

I like this game (because in general I like games with long term strategies that really occupy most of your neurons) but I cannot recommend it to normal players, families or causal gamers.

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INFORMATION

Designer: Vital Lacerda

Artist: G. Tappainer, P. Simonetti

Price: ca. 50 Euro

Publisher: Giochix 2012

www.giochix.it

PLAYERS:
1-5

AGE:
12+

TIME:
150+

EVALUATION

Strategic resources management
For experts
Version: multi
Rules: de en fr nl + ru
In-game text: no

Comments:
Idiosyncratic, very individual design *
Challenging mechanisms * Long-term strategy is essential

Compares to:
As regards to topic all games on environment, otherwise resources management games with long-term strategies

Other editions:
Stronghold Games, USA

