

Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020

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The Council had an exchange of views and adopted **conclusions** on the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020.

Following the Environment Council conclusions of June 2011, endorsing the Strategy as proposed in the Commission's communication, the present conclusions constitute the **second political response of the Council, intervening in the context of ongoing negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework for the period 2014-2020** and at a time when other EU policies which are relevant to the achievement of the EU biodiversity headline target by 2020 - in particular the Common Agricultural Policy, the Common Fisheries Policy and the Cohesion Policy – are undergoing a reform process.

Without prejudging the outcomes of these negotiations, the Council stressed the need to integrate biodiversity concerns into all EU and national sectoral policies, in order to reverse the continuing trends of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation. It confirms the importance of mobilising both EU and national **financial resources** from all possible sources as appropriate, including innovative financial mechanisms, in order to ensure adequate levels of funding towards meeting biodiversity objectives for example by providing incentives to attract private sector investments.

The conclusions concern in particular the **measures required** to reach the main objectives of the Strategy:

Target 1: Fully implement the Birds and Habitats Directives: the Council encourages the Member States to complete, in a timely manner, the establishment of the Natura 2000 network, develop and implement management plans or other equivalent instruments which set out conservation objectives, as well as if appropriate, restoration measures for Natura 2000 sites, including in the marine environment, thereby establishing a solid basis for strategic planning with a view to the subsequent implementation of the MFF 2014-2020.

Target 2: Maintain and Restore Ecosystems and their Services: the Council stresses the need of maintaining, restoring as far as feasible and enhancing ecosystems and their services. They call on the Commission to consider, within the scope of the Green Infrastructure Strategy under preparation, among others, the following issues:

- possible scope and key components of GI;
- possible framework for GI implementation based on existing experience, particularly in spatial planning, including coastal;
- methodological issues related to GI, including with regard to spatial connectivity between protected areas and basic requirements for the delivery of the necessary ecosystem services;
- options to integrate GI in existing policy instruments and importance of GI in terms of climate change adaptation;
- identifying opportunities for financing GI;
- communication and promotion of GI targeting different stakeholders and sectors, and in particular local authorities.

The Council stresses the importance of ensuring **appropriate funding** at EU and Member States level for maintenance and restoration of ecosystems and their services. It agrees that a common approach is needed for the implementation in the EU of the '**no net loss**' principle.

Target 3: Increase the contribution of Agriculture and Forestry to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity: the Council encourages conservation and sustainable use of all genetic resources, especially genetic resources for food, agriculture and forestry. It calls on the Member States to encourage the widespread adoption and implementation of Forest Management Plans or equivalent instruments, inter alia, through effective application of rural development measures, and stresses the importance to include in forest management plans or equivalent instruments appropriate measures for conservation and recovery of protected species and habitats within as well as beyond Natura 2000 areas.

Target 4: Ensure the sustainable use of Fisheries Resources: the Council supports the ongoing efforts to protect and sustainably use of fish populations and aquatic genetic resources in seas and inland waters, including aquaculture. It calls on the Commission and Member States to strengthen efforts for the collection of scientific data on fish populations, where these are deficient, in order to provide stronger scientific advice.

The Member States are called upon to make sure that their activities comply with the requirements for achieving favourable conservation status of species and habitats in the Birds and Habitats Directives as well as for achieving good environmental status of the marine environment in accordance with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

Target 5: Combat Invasive Alien Species (IAS): the Council reiterates the need for an EU strategy on IAS including a dedicated legislative instrument on **IAS by 2012**, which should consider all aspects of the challenge posed by IAS, including their identification and prioritisation, control and eradication as well as management of their pathways following a risk-based approach and in a proportionate and cost-effective manner.

Target 6: Help Avert Global biodiversity loss: the Council considers it necessary for the Commission and Member States to develop specific initiatives to reduce the negative impacts on natural resources of the EU consumption and production patterns, and to ensure that biodiversity concerns are systematically reflected in **all relevant trade agreements** concluded by the EU, where appropriate, and in the Union's development cooperation actions and programmes.

The Commission is called upon to:

- include, as part of its work to reform, reorient and/or eliminate environmentally harmful subsidies by 2020, criteria for identification of subsidies harmful to biodiversity at EU level, and to prepare a road map for the achievement of this objective, taking into account the specificities of each Member State;
- deliver on the commitments made at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 10) in Nagoya;
- present a proposal, based on the results of the impact assessment and as regards matters falling within EU competence, for the timely ratification and implementation of the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilisation on behalf of the EU in preparation for the first Meeting of the Parties;
- continue promoting a common approach to nature conservation in the whole EU territory, including Member States' outermost regions and overseas territories which are home to several important global biodiversity hotspots.

Lastly, the Council invites the Commission to develop and agree with Member States a common implementation framework to underpin the effectiveness of the Strategy. It calls on the Commission to report back on the progress on the development of the common implementation framework to the Council in early 2012.