

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

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The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted the own-initiative report drafted by Gerben-Jan GERBRANDY (ADLE, NL) in response to the Commission communication entitled 'Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020'.

The committee deplores the fact that the EU failed to meet its 2010 biodiversity target. It supports the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020, including all its targets and actions and takes the view, nevertheless, that **some actions may have to be strengthened and specified more clearly**, and that more concrete measures should be deployed in order to ensure effective implementation of the strategy.

**Mainstreaming biodiversity in all EU policies:** Members highlight the importance of mainstreaming biodiversity protection and conservation in the development, implementation and funding of all other EU policies – including those on agriculture, forestry, fisheries, regional development and cohesion, energy, industry, transport, tourism, development cooperation, research and innovation – in order to make the EU's sectoral and budgetary policies more coherent and ensure that it honours its binding commitments on biodiversity protection.

The report states that:

- the EU Biodiversity Strategy should be fully integrated into the strategies for the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change;
- protecting, valuing, mapping and restoring biodiversity and ecosystem services is essential in order to meet the goals of the [Roadmap to a Resource-Efficient Europe](#), and calls on the Commission and the Member States to consider, as part of specific measures, presenting a timetable for mapping and assessing ecosystem services in the EU which will enable targeted and efficient measures to be taken to halt the degradation of biodiversity and ecosystem services;
- given that the loss of biodiversity has devastating economic costs for society, the Commission and the Member States should value ecosystem services and to integrate these values into accounting systems as a basis for more sustainable policies.

**Conserving and restoring nature:** the report emphasises the need to halt the deterioration in the status of all species and habitats covered by EU nature conservation legislation and achieve a significant and measurable improvement in their status at EU level.

Regretting that, in the EU only 17 % of habitats and species and 11 % of key ecosystems protected under EU legislation are in a favourable state, Members call on the Commission to analyse, as a matter of urgency, why current efforts have not yet succeeded and to consider whether other, **potentially more effective instruments are available**.

Members call on the Commission and the Member States to undertake to adopt **integrated strategies** in order to identify each geographical area's natural values and the features of its cultural heritage, as well as the conditions necessary for maintaining them. They stress that, in order to establish a clear pathway to achieving the 2050 vision, **at least 40 % of all habitats and species must have a favourable conservation status by 2020**. The report recalls that, by 2050, 100 % (or almost 100 %) of habitats and species must have a favourable conservation status.

In this regard, the report:

- urges the Member States to ensure that the process of designating **Natura 2000 sites is finalised by 2012**; the Commission and the Member States are called upon to ensure proper conservation of the Natura 2000 network through adequate funding for those sites;
- highlights the urgent need to step up efforts to **protect oceans and marine environments**, both through EU action and by improving international governance of oceans and areas beyond national jurisdiction;
- underlines the need to organise biodiversity **awareness and information campaigns** for all ages and social categories, on the understanding that awareness campaigns for children and adolescents should, as a priority, be organised at school ;
- recommends extending **governance** to the mobilisation of citizens, and also to non-profit organisations and economic actors, with the emphasis, in the case of the latter, being on integrating biodiversity into company strategies.

Members stress the need to **invest more in research on biodiversity**, including in relation to one or more of the relevant ‘societal challenges’ addressed by Horizon 2020.

**Maintain and restore ecosystems and their services:** the report notes the requirement under the CBD to restore 15 % of degraded ecosystems by 2020. Members regard this as a minimum, however, and wish the EU to set a considerably higher restoration target reflecting its own **more ambitious headline target** and its 2050 vision, taking into account country-specific natural conditions. Members recognise, however, that it is unlikely that a more ambitious EU target for the restoration of degraded ecosystems will be a stimulus to more ambitious international and national commitments, within or outside the CBD.

The Commission is urged to:

- adopt a **specific Green Infrastructure Strategy by 2012** at the latest, with biodiversity protection as a primary objective; underlines that this strategy should address objectives relating to urban as well as rural areas;
- develop an effective **regulatory framework** based on the ‘No Net Loss’ initiative, taking into account the past experience of the Member States while also utilising the standards applied by the Business and Biodiversity Offsets Programme;
- devote particular attention to species and habitats whose ‘functions’ are of priceless economic value.

The report recognises the need to **promote green infrastructure**, eco-innovation and the adoption of innovative technologies in order to create a greener economy, and calls on the Commission to draw up good practice guides in this area.

**Agriculture:** the committee stresses that the CAP is not confined to the aim of food provision and rural development, but is a crucial tool for biodiversity, conservation, mitigation of climate change, and maintenance of ecosystem services. It considers it regrettable, however, that these measures have so far failed to halt the overall decline in biodiversity in the EU and that farmland biodiversity is in continued decline. It calls therefore, for a **reorientation of the CAP** towards the provision of compensation to farmers for the delivery of public goods, since the market is currently failing to integrate the economic value of the important public goods agriculture can deliver.

Members call for the greening of Pillar I of the CAP in order to ensure the conservation of biodiversity in the wider farmed landscape, improve connectivity and adapt to the effects of climate change. The report calls for:

- all CAP payments, including those made from 2014, to be underpinned by robust cross-compliance rules which help to preserve biodiversity and ecosystem services, covering the Birds and Habitats

Directives (without watering down the current standards applicable from 2007 to 2013), pesticides and biocides legislation and the Water Framework Directive;

- a strengthening of Pillar II and for drastic improvements in all Member States to the environmental focus of that pillar and to the effectiveness of its agri-environmental measures, including through minimum mandatory spending on environmental measures – such as agri-environmental measures, Natura 2000 and forest environment measures – and support for High Nature Value and organic farming;
- the **inspection of agricultural practices** to be strengthened in order to prevent biodiversity loss; maintains, in particular, that discharges of slurry should be controlled and even prohibited in the most sensitive areas in order to preserve ecosystems.

The committee calls on the Commission, in the context of the new CAP reform, to step up its efforts in support of agricultural sectors which make a proven contribution to preserving biodiversity, and in particular the **bee-keeping** sector.

As regards **forestry**, the report calls for specific action with a view to achieving Aichi Target 5, whereby the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, should be at least halved by 2020 and where feasible brought close to zero, and degradation and fragmentation significantly reduced.

Members welcome the Commission's proposals for the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, which should guarantee the implementation of the ecosystem approach and the application of updated scientific information serving as the basis for long-term management plans for all commercially exploited fish species. They emphasise that only by securing the long-term sustainability of fish stocks can we ensure the economic and social viability of the European fisheries sector.

In addition, they call on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that measures are taken to prevent both the entry of new **invasive alien species** into the EU and the spread of currently established invasive alien species to new areas. They urge the Commission to come forward in 2012 with a legislative proposal which takes a holistic approach to the problem of invasive alien plant and animal species in order to establish a common EU policy on the prevention, monitoring, eradication and management of these species and on rapid alert systems in this area.

**Financing:** the committee calls on the Commission and the Member States to **identify all existing environmentally harmful subsidies**, according to objective criteria, and calls on the Commission to publish, by the end of 2012, an action plan (including a timetable) on how to phase such subsidies out by 2020 in line with the Nagoya commitments.

The report also emphasises:

- the importance of mobilising both EU and national financial support from all possible sources, including the creation of a specific instrument to finance biodiversity, and of developing innovative financial mechanisms – in particular habitat banking in conjunction with offsetting – in order to reach the targets set in the area of biodiversity;
- the imperative need to ensure that the next Multiannual Financial Framework (2014-2020) dedicates **at least 1 % of resources** to environmental protection and supports efforts to achieve the six targets set out in the Biodiversity Strategy, and that funding for the LIFE programme is stepped up.

Members note, furthermore, that the enormous economic value of biodiversity offers a worthwhile return on the investment in its conservation. They call, therefore, for an increase in funding for nature conservation measures.

Lastly, the committee calls on the Commission and the Member States, with a view to ensuring adequate financing of the Natura 2000 network, to ensure that at least **EUR 5.8 billion per year** is provided through EU and Member State funding.