

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

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The Commission presents the mid-term review of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020, which takes stock of progress in implementing the EU biodiversity strategy against the 2010 baseline.

The report recalls that **the opportunity cost of not reaching the 2020 EU biodiversity headline target has been estimated at up to EUR 50 billion a year**. One in six jobs in the EU depend to some extent on nature. At around EUR 5.8 billion, the annual costs of maintaining the EU Natura 2000 network, established under the [Habitats Directive](#), are but a fraction of the economic benefits generated by the network through services such as carbon storage, flood mitigation, water purification, pollination and fish protection, together worth EUR 200-300 billion annually.

Summary of progress since 2011: the mid-term review assessing progress under the EU biodiversity strategy shows that the 2020 biodiversity targets **can only be reached if implementation and enforcement efforts become considerably bolder and more ambitious**.

- Overall, as compared with the EU 2010 biodiversity baseline, **biodiversity loss and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU have continued**, as confirmed by the [2015 European environment - state and outlook report](#). This is consistent with global trends and has serious implications for the capacity of biodiversity to meet human needs in the future. While many local successes demonstrate that action on the ground delivers positive outcomes, these examples need to be scaled up to have a measurable impact on the overall negative trends.
- Since the last reporting period, the number of species and habitats of EU importance with secure /favourable or improved conservation status has increased slightly. Populations of some common birds appear to be stabilising but other species linked to fragile freshwater, coastal and agricultural ecosystems continue to decline. **70 % of EU species are threatened by habitat loss**. While some ecosystem services (in particular provisioning) are increasing, others such as pollination are decreasing.
- The **key threats to biodiversity** — habitat loss (in particular through urban sprawl, agricultural intensification, land abandonment, and intensively managed forests), pollution, over-exploitation (in particular fisheries), invasive alien species and climate change — continue to exert pressure causing loss of species and habitats and resulting in ecosystem degradation and weakening ecosystem resilience. **The EU-28 footprint is still over twice its biocapacity** and this compounds pressures on biodiversity outside Europe.
- The report also notes that favourable conservation status assessments of forest habitats of European importance have decreased from nearly 17 % to about 15 % in the latest assessment. **The vast majority of assessments remain unfavourable (80 %)** but results vary considerably across Europe's biogeographical regions, with the highest proportion of favourable assessments being found in the Mediterranean region.

Outlook: the Commission makes the following points:

- progress has been made in establishing important policy frameworks: the new Common Fisheries Policy, the [Invasive Alien Species](#) (which cause damage of at least EUR 12 billion a year to EU sectors) and [Timber Regulation](#), and the introduction of biodiversity provisions in bilateral trade agreements, to name just a few.

- **The reformed Common Agricultural Policy** provides opportunities for enhanced integration of biodiversity concerns but **the extent of take-up by Member States will be decisive for success.**
- The Commission has supported efforts made by Member States, regional and local authorities and stakeholders in enforcing environmental legislation, addressing policy gaps, providing guidelines, funding, promoting partnerships and fostering research and the exchange of best practice.

It is now **urgent to intensify the implementation of measures across all targets** and to ensure that the principles included in the policy frameworks are fully reflected on the ground.

Achieving the 2020 biodiversity objectives will require strong partnerships and the full engagement and efforts from key actors at all levels, **in particular with respect to completing the Natura 2000 network for the marine environment, ensuring effective management of Natura 2000 sites and implementing the Invasive Alien Species Regulation**, and considering the most suitable approach for recognizing our natural capital throughout the EU.

Achieving this target will also require more effective integration with a wide range of policies, by setting coherent priorities underpinned by adequate funding — **in particular in the sectors of agriculture and forestry which together account for 80% of land use in the EU**, as well as **marine, fisheries and regional development**. EU financing instruments can assist in the process. Achieving biodiversity objectives will also contribute to the growth and jobs agenda, food and water security, and to quality of life, as well as to the implementation of sustainable development goals globally and in the EU.