EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030: Bringing nature back into our lives

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The European Parliament adopted by 515 votes to 90, with 86 abstentions, a resolution on 'The EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030: bringing nature back into our lives'.

With an estimated **one million species threatened with extinction** worldwide and only 23% of the species and 16% of the habitats covered by EU nature directives in a favourable conservation status, Parliament reiterated its position on the need for a **binding post-2020 multilateral agreement**, similar to the Paris Agreement, to halt or reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. Such an agreement should have specific, measurable, realistic and time-bound objectives and indicators, a strong implementation framework and a transparent, independent and science-based monitoring mechanism.

The resolution stressed that the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of a cross-cutting application of the 'One Health' principle in policy making, to reflect the inextricable links between human, animal and environmental health and the inescapable need for meaningful change throughout society. The Commission is invited to base any legislative proposal on a comprehensive impact assessment that takes into account the individual and cumulative effects, the impact on social and economic sustainability of the relevant sectors.

Protection and restoration

Parliament expressed strong support for the EU targets of **protecting at least 30% of the EU's marine and terrestrial areas** (covering forests, wetlands, peatlands, grasslands and coastal ecosystems) and for the strict protection of **at least 10% of the EU's marine and terrestrial areas**, including all remaining primary and old-growth forests and other carbon-rich ecosystems.

These targets should be binding and implemented by Member States at national level, in cooperation with regional and local authorities. They should be based on scientific criteria and take into account the differences in size and proportion of natural areas in each Member State as well as regional and local particularities.

Protected areas should result in the creation of an **ecologically coherent and representative network**, building on existing protected areas.

Parliament emphasised the importance of a more sustainable and balanced management of forests while stressing the need to achieve, as soon as possible, a good conservation status for all protected species and habitats protected under the Birds and Habitats Directives.

Member States were invited to: (i) improve the quality and completeness of their monitoring systems for the Natura 2000 network; (ii) improve national legislation to strengthen protection against illegal logging; iii) safeguard the level of genetic diversity of wild species; (iv) ensure good environmental status of marine waters.

Strongly regretting the decline of **pollinators**, Members called for an urgent revision of the European Pollinator Initiative, which should include a new framework for pollinator monitoring across the EU, with robust measures, time-bound targets and indicators, including for measuring impact, and sufficient capacity building.

Changes in land and sea use

Parliament asked the Commission to submit a legislative proposal to establish a **common framework for the protection and sustainable use of soil** and to integrate soil protection into all relevant EU policies. For their part, Member States should not authorise new hydraulic fracturing operations in the EU.

Members backed the establishment of an EU platform for urban greening and the setting of binding urban biodiversity targets such as a minimum percentage of green roofs on new buildings, support for urban agriculture, a ban on chemical pesticides and the extension of green areas according to population.

Direct use of organisms

Parliament expressed its support for the 2030 targets of bringing **at least 25 % of agricultural land under organic farm management**, stressing that biodiversity was essential to guaranteeing food security in the EU. It called for farmers to be supported, including economically, and trained in the transition to sustainable farming systems. The Commission is asked to develop a strategy for local value chains.

The resolution called on the Member States to put in place the necessary measures to promote biodiversity-rich areas in their strategic plans under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), with the objective of achieving 10% or more of the area of high diversity areas beneficial to biodiversity.

The Commission and Member States are called upon to work towards the full recovery of marine habitats and the rebuilding of fish stocks to maximum sustainable yield (MSY), applying an ecosystem approach to fisheries management. The Commission should take an ecosystem approach to all drivers of marine biodiversity loss.

Parliament also called on the Commission to:

- assess the impact of **climate change** on the abundance and distribution of species and present a long-term EU action plan on climate and biodiversity as soon as possible;

- set clear and ambitious benchmarks for achieving the target of reducing by 50% the use of the most hazardous **pesticides** and chemicals and the losses of nutrients from fertilisers by 50 %. Members opposed the renewal of the authorisation of the active substance glyphosate after 31 December 2022;

- step up its efforts and ensure that **invasive alien species** impacting on endangered species are included on the EU list;

- address the issue of illegal trade in the revision of the EU Action Plan against **Wildlife Trafficking**, which should be fully in line with the Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and adequately funded.

Funding

Parliament called for the effective implementation of the ‘do no harm’ principle in relation to all EU spending and programmes. It called on the Commission to carry out a full assessment of the options for mobilising the minimum **EUR 20 billion per year** needed for nature, to make proposals for the EU's annual budget accordingly and to examine the need for a specific funding instrument for the Trans-European Nature Network (TEN-N).