



# Biodiversity Protection - Beyond 2010

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*Briefing Paper by the European Habitats Forum*

## Introduction

Biodiversity is of intrinsic value and should be maintained for its own sake as well as for its life supporting functions. Characteristic biodiversity is a vital component of well functioning ecosystems and increases their resilience. It acts as a climate buffer and carbon sink and underpins ecological security. It is a precondition for global economic prosperity and long-term human wellbeing.

Citizens have a moral responsibility to care for nature and a right to enjoy access to it. This improves mental and physical health and wellbeing. Nature has practical, cultural, emotional, scientific, recreational and economic significance. These benefits need to be better understood and valued.

The European Union target of halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 has not yet been achieved. Europe has some excellent nature legislation; implementation needs to be speeded up and improved. Progress has also been slowed by lack of funding, sectoral policies with conflicting objectives and growing overall pressure on the environment. The global situation is also worsening with the loss and degradation of ecosystems and species loss accelerating everywhere, driven by increasing populations and unsustainable levels of consumption and production.

The EU is an important global player and a clear, credible and strong political commitment to biodiversity recovery is needed to set society on a new course and influence discussions for a global post-2010 biodiversity target at the CBD COP10. Some ecosystems can be irreversibly damaged and their continued degradation will be

an irreplaceable loss to future generations. For others the cost of action and restoration will be smaller if it starts today than it will be if damage continues and recovery is further delayed.

In summary, the scale of the threat to biodiversity, ecosystems and thus to human wellbeing is increasing. There is a global crisis in which economics, energy use, climate, ecosystems and biodiversity are all linked. And there is an urgent need for greater political will and early action to mobilize citizens and businesses to step up action to halt the loss of biodiversity and invest in recovery.

### **A 2020 target for biodiversity**

**EU Heads of Government should commit to a new target for 2020 which goes beyond halting the loss of biodiversity and aims for recovery of characteristic species and habitats and well functioning ecosystems and achieves synergies between sustaining biodiversity and mitigating and adapting to climate change.**

Such a target should meet the following criteria:

- be global but with specific EU sub-targets and measurable milestones to track progress;
- have a timeline of 2020 for the goal and a longer term vision for 2050
- articulate the value of biodiversity for human wellbeing (supporting, provisioning, regulating and cultural services) as well as its intrinsic value;
- highlight the critical role of biodiversity in mitigating and adapting to climate change;
- convey a sense of urgency;
- stress the importance of equitable sharing of benefits from biodiversity;
- highlight the importance of mainstreaming biodiversity into all land and sea use activities;
- should be measurable (i.e. have a baseline and robust set of indicators)
- should speak in clear and simple terms to everybody.

Specific targets/indicators for the EU should include:

- **Spatial targets/indicators** (e.g. % of land and sea under biodiversity protection, % of Protected Areas as wilderness reserves, % of farmland managed for biodiversity, no further losses of High Nature Value farmland, increased access to nature close to where people live);
- **Species population targets** (e.g. % of species of Community Interest in favourable conservation status or improving compared to 2008, % increase in the Common Bird and Grassland Butterfly Indices, % improvement in the Red List Index, fish stocks restored to safe biological levels);

- **Habitat targets** (e.g. % of habitats of Community Interest in favourable conservation status or improving compared to 2008)
- **Improvements in ecosystem functionality and resilience** (eg increases in habitat connectivity at a landscape scale)
- **Clear targets for sectoral and financial contributions** to biodiversity recovery

### **NGO Asks for a Post 2010 EU Biodiversity Policy**

- 1) Future biodiversity policy of the EU must **strengthen and build on existing legislative standards, action plans and achievements**, especially on the Birds and Habitats Directives and the Natura 2000 network. Implementation and enforcement of these and other tools, including the Water Framework, Marine Strategy, Environmental Impact Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Environmental Liability and other Directives must be significantly improved.
- 2) A strengthened EU biodiversity policy can only work when it is part of a **move to a new economic policy model** which recognizes both the intrinsic and functional/service values of biodiversity, the irreplaceability of some natural assets and the urgent need to value them more adequately in economic decision making. Environmentally damaging incentives must be abolished and EU and Member States' regulatory and fiscal policies should be reformed to support existing high nature values, minimize biodiversity losses and provide incentives for restoration and recovery.
- 3) The **EU must reduce its ecological footprint across Europe and the world**. To this end, it is essential to define sustainability thresholds for production, consumption and the use of resources, energy and space to ensure a reduction on the overall pressures on the environment across Europe and globally.
- 4) Urgent concerted action to **reduce greenhouse gas emissions and invest in climate change adaptation measures which avoid damage and sustain biodiversity** is vital. In this context, the EU has to promote limits to overall energy use, help build stronger links between the UN Conventions on Climate Change and Biodiversity, promote ecosystem based adaptation and support strong tools (REDD) and targets to stop deforestation and forest degradation.
- 5) Mainstreaming biodiversity remains a key challenge and better governance is needed. **All sectoral policies which have adverse effects on the environment need to be reformed to support the resilience of ecosystems and contribute to the restoration of biodiversity**. For example, the Common Agricultural Policy has to be transformed into a sustainable land use and rural development policy, to reward land-users for delivering public goods for public money and to maintain and restore High Natural Value farmland and forests. The Common Fisheries Policy needs to be reformed to reduce fishing pressure and restore all fish stocks to safe biological levels. The contribution of all sectors to damaging, sustaining and restoring biodiversity should be systematically measured, monitored and reported.

- 6) The EU must significantly **increase funding for investing in biodiversity and ecosystems** and for the delivery of the Birds and Habitats Directives and other relevant legislation. For the Natura 2000 network several billion euros are necessary from the EU and Member States' budgets every year. **Monitoring of biodiversity must be funded.** In addition, more must be invested by the EU, governments and companies in preventing damage and conflict and where necessary also restoring biodiversity, helping biodiversity adaptation and in strengthening ecosystem resilience across Europe. Increased financing is needed to protect biodiversity and ecosystems in the EU's outermost regions and overseas territories and in developing countries across the world.
- 7) The **EU should urgently adopt new legislation in 3 areas** - to reduce the threats and damage from invasive alien species; to conserve soil resources; and to safeguard the biodiversity of the outermost regions of the EU.
- 8) **An EU sustainable land use strategy should be developed.** And Member States need to implement more strategic and coherent spatial planning systems that give greater recognition to the importance of ecosystem integrity and functionality and ensure that cumulative impacts of development are sustainable. More habitat mosaics, increased connectivity at a landscape scale and investment in green infrastructure are all needed.
- 9) The EU and national governments must start immediately and at a large scale to **mobilize action and communicate, positively and effectively, the importance and benefits of biodiversity and ecosystems** to citizens, media and economic stakeholders. This must highlight the contribution of the Natura 2000 network and the links between unsustainable consumption, loss of biodiversity and ecosystem health and how this threatens the wellbeing of people and the planet.

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**The European Habitats Forum (EHF) is a coalition of 17 conservation NGO networks active in the European Union. Its main objective is to promote better implementation and further development of EU biodiversity policy.**

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