

Mid-term review of EU biodiversity strategy

Biological diversity is key to our well-being and economy, but indicators show it is under threat, mainly as a result of human activities. In a 2015 mid-term review of the European Union's 2020 biodiversity strategy, the Commission concludes that progress has been insufficient. Parliament is scheduled to vote on a report on the topic during the February plenary session.

Background

Biodiversity – the variety of life on earth – is generally recognised to have an intrinsic value and to underpin our economy and well-being by providing us with food, materials, medicines, clean air and water. 9 out of 10 Europeans think biodiversity loss is a serious global issue, according to a 2015 [Eurobarometer](#) survey. The World Economic Forum lists 'biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse' among top global risks in 2016. The conservation status of 77% of EU habitat types and 60% of species of European conservation interest is unfavourable, according to the 2015 [SOER report](#) by the European Environment Agency (EEA). Among key threats to biodiversity, the EEA underlines habitat fragmentation, degradation and destruction; over-exploitation of natural resources; invasive alien species; pollution; and climate change.

After the EU failed to meet its 2001 target to halt biodiversity loss by 2010, in 2011 it adopted a [biodiversity strategy](#) setting a headline target ('halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss') and six mutually supportive targets, each translated in a series of actions.

European Commission assessment

In October 2015, the Commission presented a [mid-term review](#) of the biodiversity strategy. It estimates that no significant progress has been made towards reaching the headline target, as biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation have continued. According to its assessment, one of the six targets is on track to be met (combatting invasive alien species), four targets show progress but at an insufficient rate (implementing the Nature Directives, maintaining and restoring ecosystems and their services, ensuring a sustainable use of fisheries, helping avert global biodiversity loss), and no significant progress has been made on one target (increasing the contribution of agriculture and forestry to biodiversity protection). The Commission estimates the socioeconomic cost of missing the biodiversity headline target at up to €50 billion a year, and stresses that one in six jobs in the EU depends to some extent on nature.

European Parliament

On 22 December 2015, the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted a [report](#) on the Commission's mid-term review (rapporteur: Mark Demesmaeker, ECR, Belgium). The report expresses concern about the continuing loss of biodiversity, opposes a possible revision of the Nature Directives, underlines that their full implementation and adequate financing are vital prerequisites for the success of the strategy, and stresses that environment and innovation complement one another. It highlights the need for policy coherence, in particular between biodiversity protection and agriculture and forestry, and urges the Commission and Member States to redirect financial resources under the Common Agricultural Policy from environmentally harmful activities to sustainable agricultural practices. It also calls on the Commission to put forward a proposal on a trans-European network for green infrastructure (TEN-G).

In its own mid-term review of the biodiversity strategy, the NGO [BirdLife](#) recommended more financing as well as better implementation and enforcement of EU law. A representative from farmers' association, [Copa-Cogeca](#), stressed that agriculture's contribution to biodiversity protection needs time, financial support and simplified rules to show results.