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REPORT

on the communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on a European Community biodiversity strategy (COM(98)0042 - C4-0140/98 and SEC(98)0348 - C4-0155/98)

Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection

Rapporteur: Mr Jonas Sjöstedt

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By letter of 5 February 1998 the Commission forwarded to the Council and the European Parliament its communication on a European Community biodiversity strategy and, by letter of 20 February 1998, it forwarded to them the first report on the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity by the European Community.

At the sitting of 13 March 1998 the President of Parliament announced that he had referred these documents to the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection as the committee responsible and to the Committee on Fisheries, the Committee on Transport and Tourism and the Committee on Research, Technological Development and Energy for their opinions, and the documents were also referred to the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development on 30 March 1998 for its opinion.

At its meeting of 25 February 1998, the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection appointed Mr Jonas Sjöstedt rapporteur.

It considered the draft report at its meetings of 4 June and 23 September 1998.

At the latter meeting it adopted the motion for a resolution unanimously.

The following were present for the vote: Collins, chairman; Dybkjaer, vice-chairman; Sjöstedt, rapporteur; d'Aboville, Blokland, Breyer, González Álvarez, Grossetête, Hulthén, Koch (for Bébéar), Kuhn, Lange (for Apolinário), Pinel, Pollack, van Putten, Roth-Behrendt, Schlechter (for Díez de Rivera Icaza), Tamino, Trakatellis, Valverde López and Virgin.

The opinions of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, the Committee on Fisheries, the Committee on Transport and Tourism and the Committee on Research, Technological Development and Energy are attached to this report.

The report was tabled on 29 September 1998.

The deadline for tabling amendments will be indicated in the draft agenda for the relevant part-session.

A
MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

Resolution on the communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on a European Community biodiversity strategy (COM(98)0042 - C4-0140/98 and SEC(98)0348 - C4-0155/98)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission's communication to the Council and the European Parliament on a European Community biodiversity strategy (COM(98)0042 - C4-0140/98),

- having regard to the first report on the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity by the European Community (SEC(98)0348 - C4-0155/98),

- having regard to Article 130r(2) of the EC Treaty,

- having regard to the Convention on Biological Diversity,

- having regard to the Dobris report by the European Environment Agency,

- having regard to the Council's decision on the signing of the Convention on Biological Diversity( ),

- having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament of 25 June 1993 on the Commission's proposal for a Council decision on the signing of the Convention on Biological Diversity( ),

- having regard to the Council's conclusions to the Fourth Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity( ),

- having regard to the UN's Agenda 21,

- having regard to the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy,

- having regard to the amended proposal for the fifth environment action programme( ),

- having regard to Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds ('the Birds Directive'),

- having regard to Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora ('the Habitats Directive'),

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(1) OJ L 309, 12.12.1993, p. 1.
(2) OJ C 194, 19.7.1993, p. 401.
(3) Minutes of 23.3.1998 from the 2076th Council meeting.
(4) COM(96)0648.

- having regard to Directive 85/337/EEC on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment ('the EIA Directive'),

- having regard to the Commission's proposal for a directive on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment ('the SEA Directive)( ),

- having regard to the Commission's communication on a Community strategy to combat acidification( ),

- having regard to Regulation (EC) No 722/97 on environmental measures in developing countries in the context of sustainable development,

- having regard to the report of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection and the opinions of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, the Committee on Fisheries, the Committee on Transport and Tourism and the Committee on Research, Technological Development and Energy (A4-0347/98),

A. whereas Article 3d of the Amsterdam Treaty states that 'environmental protection requirements must be integrated into the definition and implementation of the Community policies and activities referred to in Article 3, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development',

B. whereas the Community's nature conservation legislation is not yet fully operational; whereas, moreover, many Member States have failed to implement that legislation,

C. whereas the Convention on Biological Diversity has prompted all the EU Member States to draw up national action programmes; noting that the Member States have not yet all compiled their action programmes and that the programmes produced vary in quality and scope,

D. whereas biological diversity is not only of biological and economic benefit but also an irreplaceable part of our cultural heritage and history, and is a legitimate resource for future generations,

E. whereas fish stocks have been reduced, sometimes to alarming levels, both within European waters and around the world, as documented by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations,

F. whereas the introduction of genetically modified organisms may have far-reaching implications for existing indigenous organisms,

G. whereas approximately 1% only of the EU's agricultural aid is spent on measures to preserve and promote biological diversity and some 4% is spent on other environmental measures,

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(1) COM(96)0511.
(1) COM(97)0088.

H. whereas it is estimated that 16% of species of mammal in the world and 42% of those in Europe are currently under threat( ),

I. whereas the ever quickening rate at which biological diversity is decreasing shows no sign of easing up; whereas, moreover, the main reasons for this development are highly intensive use of land for agricultural and forestry purposes and the break-up of natural habitats through infrastructure and urbanisation, and their pollution,

J. whereas the EU should be fully compensating damage caused by the CAP, the TENs or regional policy in the form of extra nature conservancy areas or other measures, which should be financed from the Community budget,

K. whereas, in contrast to a number of other environmental problems, it is impossible to make up for losses of diversity of species, ecosystems and natural gene banks,

L. whereas the extinction of species and the loss of habitats are two of the main risks to environmental stability and human well-being,

M. whereas the Commission's communication is of a general nature and whereas there is a need for practical proposals in the next phase of Community policy on biological diversity,

N. whereas the bulk of genetic resources are situated in the less developed parts of the world, particularly the tropical forests and low-lying coastal areas such as mangrove swamps, and whereas traditional life-styles and know-how have a special contribution to make to preserving worldwide biodiversity,

O. whereas processes and activities such as deforestation, the introduction of non-sustainable farming methods and the unfair distribution of the advantages arising from the use of genetic resources and poverty, but also from non-sustainable development projects financed by the EU, are having an adverse effect on biodiversity in the less developed countries,

1. Welcomes the Commission's communication on a European Community biodiversity strategy which constitutes a first step towards incorporating biodiversity in other Community policies and marks the beginning of moves to stem the loss of natural resources;

2. Welcomes the Commission's communication and shares its basic view that the proposed strategy should integrate biodiversity conservation into the Community's other areas of policy, while forming a framework for Community policies aimed at fulfilling the EU's and its Member States' commitments under the Convention on biological diversity; requests the Commission also to encourage integration *between* the various policy areas;

3. Considers that the objectives formulated in the communication are valid but too general and that the two key issues of unlimited growth of transport and tourism and the implementation of a sustainable sound approach are missed;

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(1) Source: IUCN - The World Conservation Union.

4. Emphasises that biodiversity plays an important role in ecosystems, since it guarantees the quality of water and air, climate stability and soil quality and ensures the presence of resources that are indispensable for the survival of man on Earth;

5. Stresses the particular need for coordinated initiatives, measures and programmes to promote research into biodiversity at Community, national and international level;

6. Notes that there is periodically a need for a detailed and comparable inventory of species ('the state of nature'), ecosystems and natural gene banks to enable the situation of those that are threatened to be assessed, evaluated and improved; calls therefore on the Commission to present as soon as possible an overview of the measures which the Community has initiated and a proposal for a periodical inventory of biological diversity, for example through the European Environment Agency and Eurostat;

7. Urges the Commission's appropriate departments to comply with the forthcoming series of indicators that will need to be laid down, particularly by the European Environment Agency and Eurostat; considers that such indicators are important for the development and assessment of every part of the communication relating to sectoral policies; draws attention to the importance of transparency in the process for taking decisions on the indicators;

8. Calls on the Commission to include in the policy sectors it proposes the objective 'Development of basic knowledge of biodiversity and the functioning of ecosystems' in order to promote research into the development of biodiversity indicators, basic monitoring and assessment methods to ascertain the state of individual species and ecosystems, research into and the systematic recording of all forms of life, a systematic study of the genetic wealth of various forms of life and research into the reciprocal effects of different species;

9. Maintains that protected areas offer insufficient protection for biological diversity and stresses that the Community's other areas of policy must integrate biodiversity conservation issues; considers that the link between the Community's nature conservation and agricultural policies is particularly inadequate;

10. Calls on the Commission to take initiatives to ensure that the Habitats and Birds Directives are implemented fully in the Member States by means of an appropriate regulatory framework aimed at ensuring effective implementation and monitoring of those directives;

11. Calls on the Commission to adopt the appropriate measures to require Member States fully to comply with Community law on the environment and nature conservancy;

12. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to intensify monitoring and environmental control in sensitive areas;

13. Stresses the importance of preserving the EU's remaining virgin forests and other natural woodland;

14. Calls on the Commission to stipulate that the action plans proposed in the communication should be drawn up and ready within two years after the Commission has received notification and to specify timetables for the individual measures proposed in those plans; also calls on the Commission to consolidate the action plans into an overall plan which

must be adopted by the European Parliament and Council; finally calls on the Commission to draw up each individual action plan and their subsequent evaluations in close cooperation with national experts and representatives of individual organisations;

15. Calls urgently for a transparent control mechanism to be established, for a unit at the Commission to be designated responsible and for periodic reports to be drawn up on the results achieved in terms of compliance with the objectives of the communication in all sectors;

16. Considers the Commission's reference to strategies for acidification and climate change as inadequate reasons for not drawing up biodiversity action plans for the transport and energy sectors and calls, therefore, on the Commission also to submit action plans for those sectors; notes, furthermore, that the Commission devotes no attention at all to the impact of chemical and industrial processes on biological diversity;

17. Notes that the future accessions to the EU will entail fundamental change in the agricultural sector in the applicant countries and that one of the main objectives of this change must be the preservation of biological diversity in order to avoid the risk of the wide-ranging and permanent impoverishment of biodiversity;

18. Urges the Commission therefore to include the applicant countries' national action plans in the EU's ongoing evaluation of biological diversity; also urges the Commission to make aid to those countries dependent on biological diversity criteria and not to grant derogations from the Community's nature conservation legislation;

19. Stresses the importance of the EU ceasing to provide aid via the CAP, the TENs or the Structural Funds for projects with a directly negative impact on biological diversity and also calls on the Commission to step up its efforts to adapt the EU budget to take account of the environment;

20. Notes that the common agricultural policy often has a directly negative impact on the Community's biological diversity and calls, therefore, on the Commission, in the current revision, to press for a switch to sustainable agriculture which respects biological diversity and for a greater part of agricultural aid to be earmarked for environmental measures and organic farming;

21. Agrees in principle with the analysis of the status quo contained in the Commission proposal for a European Community biodiversity strategy; considers it necessary, however, in addition to the associated targets, to put forward more specific proposals on the integration of protection and utilisation measures in the framework of the common agricultural and the forestry policies and draws attention in this connection to the proposals of the European Working Group on Research and Biodiversity (EWGRB) set up by DG XII;

22. Points out that the sustainable rural development policy put forward in Agenda 2000 and the integration of environment and agriculture policy are particularly suited to the conservation and use of the diversity of genetic resources;

23. Considers it counterproductive in this context for the Commission, in the framework of the reform of the agricultural policy, to withdraw increasingly from Community initiatives and

European coordination activities and to abandon or leave to the Member States targeted project support for the integration of conservation measures and agricultural use of genetic diversity without coordinating or harmonising the initiatives taken;

24. Is disappointed that the Commission has not used the accompanying measures of the programme of work for Regulation 1467/94, with which the exchange of experiences and the necessary cooperation between collections (state and private gene banks), research and users (farmers, horticulturists, breeders) was to be supported;

25. Stresses the need to improve the quality of the permanent inventory of resources which have already been collected in the framework of Regulation 1467/94, in particular by facilitating a better listing and description of in situ collections of plants, animals and trees and by improving the description of the special characteristics with regard to usefulness (cultivation or rearing conditions, importance for landscape conservation, special characteristics with regard to processing, storage, taste, colour, etc.);

26. Considers that there is an urgent need, in relation to the new applicant countries and their financial and staffing problems in the conservation of genetic resources, to extend the programme to these states during the pre-accession phase;

27. Calls on the Commission to alter the requirements for support for projects on a shared cost basis and concerted actions such that not only individual species but also associated groups of species and their specific environment are taken into account and that in particular integrated in situ conservation and utilisation measures can be supported;

28. Calls on the Commission to coordinate the projects carried out in the framework of Regulation 1467/94 and their results with the accompanying measures to promote environmentally friendly production and afforestation (Regulations 2078/92 and 2080/92), to support not only aid for endangered species of animals but also the conservation of regionally adapted useful plants and trees and, in the framework of the accompanying measures to Regulation 1467/94, to ensure that practical constructive cooperation develops between researchers, gene banks, in situ conservationists, farmers, horticulturists and breeders;

29. Stresses, from the policy viewpoint of ‘good stewardship', the importance of maintaining and developing agricultural methods which preserve and strengthen biological diversity, such as extensive pasturage, and also calls on the Commission to introduce an exemption from the certification requirement under Directive 70/457/EEC and Directive 70/458/EEC for traditional culinary herbs and ornamental plants which are of minor commercial value;

30. Calls on the Commission to set up an independent forum for the conservation of genetic diversity in agricultural and forestry production and fisheries in which all parties active in the utilisation and conservation of genetic diversity can exchange their experiences, coordinate their work and advise the competent Commission departments in the development of the Community biodiversity strategy;

31. Proposes to the Commission that in the distribution of tasks it should improve its interaction with the European cooperative programme on crop and forestry genetic resources (ECPGR and EUFORGEN) and also on animal genetic resources (global programme for the conservation of farm animal diversity and its implementation at

European level) and concentrate on the conservation of genetic diversity through utilisation in practical agriculture and horticulture, in order to be better prepared for the necessary integration of economic, environmental and social aspects in the framework of the reform of the CAP.

32. Stresses the importance of the report of the international technical conference on genetic resources held in Leipzig (Germany) in June 1996 under the auspices of the FAO;

33. Notes the extremely negative impact which the EU fisheries policy has had on certain fish stocks, marine mammals and turtles and stresses the importance of adapting fishing methods and fishing gear in order to reduce habitat degradation caused by certain types of fishing and to avoid by-catches; also calls on the Commission to press for the incorporation into the Community's fisheries policy of the North Sea Conference( ) principles on the integration of fisheries and environmental considerations;

34. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the principles and commitments undertaken in the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing are fully integrated into the various aspects of the common fisheries policy;

35. Calls on the Commission to set up a working party of scientists with the task of elaborating and facilitating the implementation of a plan for research into the interaction between fisheries and marine ecosystems;

36. Emphasises that the Commission should work in a coordinated fashion on a biodiversity plan for fisheries in order to avoid sectoral interests and to ensure that environmental aspects are more fully integrated in the fisheries sector;

37. Calls on the Commission to use the precautionary approach, as it has been defined in the UN Agreement on Highly Migratory Fish Stocks and Straddling Fish Stocks, in its management of fish stocks and to urge that all regional fisheries management bodies to which the Community belongs also adopt the same principle;

38. Encourages the Commission to form a consistent plan with respect to commitments under international agreements, specifically those relating to fisheries, to which they are signatory in order to strengthen conservation;

39. Calls on the Commission to stipulate how the objectives stipulated in the biodiversity strategy will be implemented to achieve sustainable management of fish stocks and, to possibly re-write objectives in such a way as to encourage a broader ecosystem approach;

40. Calls on the Commission to include in the fisheries policy sector the development of methods for renewing the natural wealth of the seas, particularly as regards species which are subject to intensive fishing, and support for regions which lend themselves to traditional forms of fishing;

( ) principles on the integration of fisheries and environmental considerations;) Fifth International North Sea Conference, ministerial meeting on integration of fisheries and environmental issues, 13-14 March 1997, Bergen, Norway, conclusions.

41. Calls on the Commission to evaluate the effects of the EU's distant water fishing fleets, which operate in both international waters and under the aegis of international fisheries agreements on biological diversity in the world's seas and, where necessary, to reduce the activities of those fleets; further demands that these fleets be subject to similar controls and restrictions as EU vessels fishing in European waters;

42. Supports the Commission's decision to accentuate training and increased public awareness as a key area; urges the Commission, however, to invest resources in strengthening already existing regional environmental campaigning among the public in the context of Agenda 21, for example, instead of investing money as the Commission proposes in an EU campaign;

43. Stresses the principle enshrined in the Convention concerning the sovereign rights of all countries to their own genetic resources and emphasises that that right must take precedence over other principles in the international agreements concluded by the Community, e.g. in the patent sector; stresses that the sovereign rights of other countries must also be recognised in all EU legislation;

44. Takes the view that legislation concerning the introduction and implantation of extraneous species and genetically modified organisms must be based on the precautionary principle, and stresses that in the forthcoming negotiations for adoption of the Biosafety Protocol the starting-point must be a high level of protection of human health and biodiversity;

45. Considers indispensable the establishment of a legislative framework to legally safeguard the use and balanced sharing-out of the benefits of biodiversity including to give practical effect to the provisions of Article 8j of the Convention on Biological Diversity;

46. Calls on the Commission to commit itself to a binding Biosafety Protocol to the Convention which safeguards human and animal health, the environment and biological diversity;

47. Underlines the importance of the activities already under way in the development cooperation sector, such as research into genetic resources, technology transfer, improving capacity, the development of a special policy for indigenous peoples and the particular care of tropical forests; calls on the Commission, in particular, to promote an honest and fair distribution of the advantages arising from the use of genetic material, not only in its own policy but also at the negotiations in international fora set up for the purpose, such as the conference of parties to the Treaty on Biological Diversity, in which the concept of the 'economic value of a natural resource' may form one of the starting-points;

48. Calls on the Commission to assist the developing countries in producing an inventory of and conducting research into the natural resource (species, ecosystems and habitats) and setting up databases and gene banks in those countries;

49. Notes the importance of incorporating the costs arising from the use of biodiversity resources in all stages of the productive process;

50. Calls on the Commission to add the following rules for the export of genetically modified organisms (GMOs):
for the export of GMOs and/or products containing GMOs to non-Member States, the exporter or importer must be in possession of

· approval of the import from the country of destination
· an export permit from the authority in the competent Member State.

Import authorisation from the country of destination must be submitted for the authority in the competent Member State to grant approval;

51. Calls on the Commission to set up a clear and all-inclusive system for labelling products which contain genetically modified organisms;

52. Calls on the Commission to envisage the adoption of positive economic incentives aimed at conserving biodiversity and legislative measures (fines or taxes) to discourage practices or uses which harm biodiversity;

53. Calls on the Commission to stipulate that detailed environmental impact reports be drawn up for projects forming part of the Community's regional policy and that regional aid may be withdrawn if a project does not meet the required environmental criteria or has a directly harmful impact on biological diversity; also urges the Commission expressly to take account of the strategy for biological diversity in the forthcoming regulation concerning the EU Structural Funds for the period 2000-2006;

54. Calls on the European Investment Bank to improve its environment work and carry out detailed, publicly accessible environment impact reports on projects in the applicant countries before those projects are approved;

55. Welcomes the awareness that the loss of biodiversity is significantly due to the 'increased fragmentation of remaining natural habitats by infrastructures and urbanisation and the exposure to mass tourism...';

56. Calls for the enforcement of the Strategic Environmental Assessment procedure within decision-making processes of the European Investment Bank (EIB) concerning TENs projects;

57. Stresses the need to carry out strategic environmental impact assessments of infrastructure projects; also stresses that the Community should not fund TENs which destroy valuable environments;

58. Asks the Commission and Member States to ensure that the construction of new transport infrastructure within protected areas (see Birds Directive, Habitats Directive and Natura 2000 Network) will not lead to a reduction of biodiversity, and that, in any case, projects not respecting this rule do not receive financial support from the Community;

59. Considers that transport infrastructures have a significant impact on biodiversity and calls for the application of Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environment Assessment on all projects involving transport infrastructures;

60. Asks the Commission to include in the legislation on which the TENs and regional policy are based provisions that will make it possible to take special measures in the case of large infrastructure projects to minimise or compensate for the fragmentation of natural environments (for instance by concentrating infrastructure and by constructing viaducts or tunnels for wildlife);

61. Considers that the Community guidelines for the TENs, adopted by Parliament and the Council in 1996, have not proved adequate for the adoption of strategic decisions, and that major transport infrastructure projects have often led to serious loss and/or damage of important European habitats; calls accordingly for the TEN guidelines to be revised, as laid down, by July 1999;

62. Notes the need to shift transport flows to modes which have less impact on biodiversity, for instance from road to rail as requested by the international Alps Convention;

63. Notes that the proposed internalisation of the external costs by the Commission would be essential for the implementation of sustainable transport policies as requested by the Convention on Biological Diversity;

64. Calls on the Commission, within the framework of energy policy, to promote the use of environmentally-friendly renewable sources of energy on the basis of the objectives adopted at the Kyoto Conference on climate change;

65. Asks the Commission to apply best practice among public and private tourism installations and services in order to promote sustainable tourism;

66. Asks the Commission to develop not only international guidelines for sustainable tourism, but also to orientate any existing or future EU tourism programmes towards sustainable tourism;

67. Suggests that the Commission draws up an ecolabel for sustainable tourism;

68. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission.

B
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

1. The Convention on Biological Diversity

The UN Environment Conference held in Stockholm in 1972 identified the conservation of biological diversity (biodiversity) as one of the key issues of future environmental activity, as a result of which the UN adopted a number of international conventions in this field in the 1970s. It was with the aim of creating a framework for the existing conventions that the UN drew up the Convention on Biological Diversity, which entered into force on 29 December 1993.

The Convention pursues three main objectives:

- Conservation of biodiversity: species and habitats
- Sustainable use of the various components of biodiversity
- Fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of biodiversity

The EU and its fifteen Member States are all parties to the Convention and are therefore required to develop their own separate action plans in accordance with their commitments under the Convention. The EU action plan must therefore be geared primarily towards adapting those areas which have the greatest impact on biodiversity, such as agriculture, regional policy and transport.

2. The Commission's communication

Article 6 of the Convention on Biological Diversity requires the parties to 'develop national strategies, plans or programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity' and to 'integrate as far as possible and as appropriate the conservation and use of biological diversity into the relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies'.

The biodiversity strategy proposed by the Commission represents the EU's response to its obligations under the Convention and is one of the elements of the EU's Fifth Environmental Action Programme. One of the strategy's main aims is to integrate nature conservation into the other areas of EU policy, which is in keeping with Article 3d of the Treaty of Amsterdam.

The Commission proposes a two-stage process for fulfilling the EU's commitments under the Convention; the first includes the adoption of the strategy's general guidelines, and the second covers the development and implementation of action plans and other measures within the various Commission departments, with the aim of translating the strategy's guidelines into concrete action. It proposes that specific action plans should be drawn up for the following areas:

- Conservation of natural resources (e.g. implementation in full of the Habitats and Birds Directives)
- Agriculture
- Fisheries
- Regional policies and spatial planning
- Development and economic cooperation

3. The Commission's action plans

The Commission strategy proposes specific action plans for the conservation of natural resources and for agriculture, fisheries, regional policies and spatial planning and development and economic cooperation. The Commission thus does not propose any specific action plans for the energy and transport sectors, both of which have a very substantial impact on biodiversity, but considers that these sectors could be covered by existing EU initiatives, e.g. the strategies to combat acidification and climate change. However, the transport and energy sectors do affect biodiversity in a number of ways that are not covered by those strategies, e.g. by fragmenting habitats and as a result of the production of biomass and the building of dams for HEP schemes. Your rapporteur therefore takes the view that the Commission must develop action plans for these two sectors and calls on the Commission to examine and propose measures aimed at promoting biodiversity in sectors not covered by specific action plans.

The linkage between the EU's agricultural and nature conservation policies has traditionally been inadequate. The CAP has sharply increased agricultural yields in the EU whilst also resulting in an unsustainable burden on the environment and biodiversity, as regards both domesticated/ cultivated species and wild species. Your rapporteur therefore considers agricultural policy to be perhaps the single most important area in which the Community could change its policies for the benefit of biodiversity. Sustainable farming should therefore be made an overarching objective of the CAP, whilst a larger proportion of agricultural aid should go towards funding environmental measures and conversion to organic farming.

A substantial proportion of the world's large fish stocks is being managed in an unsustainable manner. Between them, the EU Member States have the world's biggest fishing fleet, and its fishing activity has a significant impact on biodiversity in all the world's seas and oceans. The common fisheries policy has not helped to improve the conditions for sustainable fishing but has instead increased capacity and the fishing effort. Highly intensive fishing has also left a number of species of marine mammals and turtles facing extinction. Adapting the common fisheries policy along sustainable lines would therefore not only have a positive effect on marine biodiversity in EU waters but also in seas and oceans around the globe.

By-catches are another significant problem. According to FAO estimates, by-catches and discards account for 32% of the total reported catches. Your rapporteur takes the view that the EU must work to ensure that fishing gear is adapted so as to avoid unnecessary by-catches and to increase monitoring so as to reduce the current level of trade in by-catches in the Community. For instance, Norwegian efforts to reduce by-catches could possibly serve as a model for future EU initiatives.

Lastly, your rapporteur takes the view that the individual action plans must be drawn up and ready within two years from the strategy being adopted and that the Commission must draw up each action plan, other measures and the subsequent evaluations thereof in close cooperation with national experts and the individual organisations concerned. The Commission should bring the individual action plans together in a comprehensive general plan to be approved by Parliament and the Council.

4. What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity is the variation amongst living organisms in all environments, including terrestrial and aquatic environments, and the ecological relationships and processes of which those organisms are part. Biodiversity is usually split down into three levels: diversity between species, genetic variation within species and populations and ecosystem diversity.

The genetic variation present within each species is essential for adapting to changing or new environmental circumstances. If the number of individuals within a species falls, so normally does the genetic variation within that species, which can mean that the species finds it more difficult to adapt to new circumstances and hence is at greater risk of extinction.

It is estimated that there are as many as 14 million different species of animal and plant, of which only 1.7 million have been described by man. Biodiversity is constantly changing: the emergence of new species and the disappearance of others is a natural albeit slow process. Man's expansion and activity during the last few centuries has, however, reduced and in some cases even wiped out the habitats of many species. The UN(
) has estimated that, owing to man's expansion and the consumer society, biodiversity has been declining between 50 and 100 times faster than its estima

The UN assessment specifies the five main reasons for the decline in biodiversity as:

- fragmentation, deterioration and, in some cases, loss of habitats
- over-exploitation of biological resources
- pollution
- introduction (and, in some cases, invasion) of non-native species
- climate change

5. Inventory of biodiversity

Comparable data on biodiversity is the key to success as far as action by the Member States and the EU is concerned. Such data must be continuously updated and take account of the latest research findings.

Your rapporteur therefore agrees with the Commission that a comprehensive and comparable inventory of biodiversity is essential in order to be able to assess, evaluate and improve the situation of endangered species effectively and welcomes the European Environment Agency's efforts and the work done by Eurostat in developing indicators of pressures affecting biodiversity. Your rapporteur also stresses that it is essential for the Commission to draw up a catalogue of the measures begun or planned by the EU for drawing up an inventory of biodiversity, so that such information may be disseminated at the national, regional and local levels.

6. The CAP, TENs and the European Investment Bank

(
) has estimated that, owing to man's expansion and the consumer society, biodiversity has been declining between 50 and 100 times faster than its estimated natural rate since the 17th century and that the rate of decline

) UN Environment Programme 'Global Biodiversity Assessment'

Your rapporteur agrees with the Commission that effective action can best be ensured by integrating nature conservation into other areas of Community policy and also takes the view that the objectives of the various areas of EU policy must not directly contradict each other.

The EU should therefore stop providing support via the CAP, TENs schemes and Structural Funds to projects or activities which have a directly harmful impact on biodiversity.

For instance, an irrigation project partly financed through the Structural Funds in one of Aragon's most sensitive arid zones (Los Monegros) has destroyed the breeding sites and habitats of several protected species of bird.

Another example is the new bridge between Denmark and Sweden, which also poses a threat to the habitats of various species on the island of Saltholm.

The objectives of the CAP must take greater account of environmental factors with a view to creating the conditions needed for the development of production systems that are sustainable in the long term.

7. Protected areas and the Habitats and Birds Directives

The main objective of the Habitats Directive is to establish the Natura 2000 ecological network, which is aimed at conserving endangered species and habitats, such as lagoons, sand dunes and natural woodland. Natura 2000 is important not only as means of conserving species and habitats, for it can also provide biological reserves for surrounding areas. Indeed, your rapporteur wishes to stress that even the best protected areas feel the impact of development in surrounding areas. It is therefore not sufficient to take action only within protected areas.

Unfortunately, many Member States have failed to implement these Directives satisfactorily, and several cases of inadequate implementation are currently being considered by the Commission and the European Court of Justice. Your rapporteur therefore calls on the Commission to propose an appropriate set of rules aimed at implementing and monitoring compliance with these Directives in all Member States.

One striking example of Member States' failure to respect EU nature conservation legislation is the law recently adopted by France, extending the hunting season for several species of bird.

Your rapporteur takes the view that a clear link must be established between the EU's nature conservation measures in protected areas and other measures which affect the environment, because it is essential, for example, that EU agricultural, regional and transport policies are adapted so that they respect biodiversity.

8. The applicant countries

The imminent enlargement will result in fundamental changes in the applicant countries' agricultural sectors. If conservation of biodiversity is not made one of the main aims of such

changes, they could cause extensive and, in some cases, irreversible damage to habitats and the diversity of species in those countries. The EU should therefore include the applicant countries' national action plans in its on-going evaluation of biodiversity and make support for those countries, e.g. through Phare, conditional upon the fulfilment of biodiversity-related criteria. Your rapporteur also takes the view that the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) fail to take sufficient account of biodiversity when financing projects in the applicant countries and calls on them to produce detailed and publicly accessible environmental impact assessments of such projects on the same terms as apply to projects in EU Member States.

Lastly, the applicant countries should not be granted extensive derogations from the Community's nature conservation legislation.

9. Increased public awareness

There is broad public support for increased environmental action in the Member States: in one survey conducted by Eurobarometer(
), 83% of those asked thought that environmental protection had to be a high priority, and just over 78% thought that environmental policy was a necess

In spite of this, much needs to be done to increase public awareness of the need to conserve nature. Your rapporteur agrees with the Commission that the role of individual organisations in this area is very important, but, unlike the Commission, takes the view that an EU-wide information campaign on biodiversity is not the most effective way to increase awareness and instead advocates that the Community should support environmental information campaigns that are already running, e.g. as part of local Agenda 21s.

10. Non-native and genetically modified species

Legislation and agreements on biotechnology must be governed by the precautionary principle. Your rapporteur therefore recommends that legislation on the introduction of non-native (alien) or genetically modified species should lay down minimum requirements and give individual Member States the right to introduce or retain more stringent national legislation.

The Convention on Biological Diversity lays down the principle of fair distribution of the benefits deriving from the utilisation of biological diversity. Future EU legislation on genetic engineering must not result in developments which weaken the protection afforded to the vast genetic diversity of the Third World.

(
), 83% of those asked thought that environmental protection had to be a high priority, and just over 78% thought that environmental policy was a necessary element of EU policy as a whole. The interest of the public a

) Eurobarometer: European Public Opinion on the Environment and Economic Development in Europe.

The increased spread and introduction of domesticated and wild species owing to the modern way of life poses a growing threat to biodiversity. The spread by humans of non-native species is a phenomenon which dates back thousands of years, but one which has accelerated during the

past century as man's mobility has increased. Non-native species which have spread to continents and countries where they were previously not found have in some cases displaced native species and ecosystems and also caused substantial economic damage. For example, the Nile perch, a predatory fish, was introduced into Lake Victoria in the 1950s. It has now displaced half of the lake's original 400 species of fish. This threatens to destroy traditional fishing activity in Lake Victoria and upset the whole of its ecosystem. It may also be that the effects only start to be felt long after a species has been introduced. For instance, a European variety of mustard plant reached North America at the end of the 19th century, began to spread in the 1980s and now poses a threat to the flora of eastern North America.

11. Regional policy and spatial planning

Spatial planning has an important role to play in conserving biodiversity in the EU, e.g. by establishing ecological corridors and buffer zones and through their interaction with Natura 2000 protected areas. Spatial planning can also help to achieve a more balanced geographical distribution of economic activity and thus reduce the burdens on vulnerable ecosystems.

EU regional policy has a big impact on spatial planning in the Member States, and your rapporteur therefore calls on the Commission to require detailed environmental impact statements to be drawn up for regional policy projects and for support for such projects to be withdrawn if the environmental objectives set are not met. The same principle should be applied to on-going projects that have a directly harmful impact on biodiversity. Lastly, the Commission should also integrate the biodiversity strategy guidelines in the Regulation on the EU Structural Funds for the period 2000-2006.

24 June 1998

OPINION
(Rule 147)

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection

on the Commission communication on a European Community biodiversity strategy (COM(98)0042 - C4-0140/98 and SEC(98)0348 - C4-0155/98) (report by Mr Sjöstedt)

Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

Draftsman: Mr Friedrich-Wilhelm Graefe zu Baringdorf

PROCEDURE

At its meeting of 15/16 April 1998 the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development appointed Mr Friedrich-Wilhelm Graefe zu Baringdorf draftsman.

It considered the draft opinion at its meetings of 2/3 June and 23/24 June 1998 and at the latter meeting it adopted the following conclusions unanimously.

The following took part in the vote: Colino Salamanca, chairman; Graefe zu Baringdorf, vice-chairman and draftsman; Anttila, Böge (for Ebner), Botz (for Rehder), Cabezón Alonso (for Fantuzzi), Filippi, Fraga Estévez, Funk, Garot, Gillis, Goepel, Hallam, Jové Peres, Keppelhoff-Wiechert, Kindermann, Mayer, des Places, Redondo Jiménez, Rosado Fernandes, Santini, Schierhuber and Sonneveld.

1. Extent and causes of genetic erosion

The 1992 United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro drew attention to the frightening speed at which species are being lost throughout the world. It is anticipated that, with continued felling of the rain forests and unchanged levels of pollution and exploitation of biological resources by industry, agriculture and fisheries, of the estimated 20 to 30 million species of living organisms a further 1.5 million would become extinct over the next 25 years. Up to now only about 1.4 million species have even been discovered and described by scientists.

The lack of concern for biological diversity in the current agricultural, forestry and fishery production methods is apparent from the fact that even in the case of the plants and animals used directly by humans, the diversity of species, varieties and races is declining drastically. The FAO has stated that since the beginning of this century 75% of the genetic diversity of useful plants has been lost globally. The Commission can provide no data yet on losses in the Member States but, in the framework of Regulation 1467/94, is currently in the process of drawing up a register of existing collections and making it accessible to the public. In its opinion (A4-0129/98) Parliament put forward proposals for improving the production of this register.

Commented [COMMENT2]:
Amendment ##

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The cause of genetic erosion is to be found primarily in an approach to breeding which in the past decades has concentrated solely on increasing yields and which, in achieving top yields from a few varieties, has presupposed considerable inputs of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Preventive plant protection measures, which have thus become a necessity, have suppressed the ability of the crops to develop a natural resistance to diseases. The approach to agricultural policy has exacerbated this process of genetic impoverishment by subsidising expanding agri-industrial units and ousting small-scale farming methods, including the associated regional processing and marketing structures.

2. Measures to conserve genetic diversity

Methods to conserve genetic diversity have so far been undertaken mainly with a view to securing potential resources for breeding. The establishment of gene banks as part of government research projects has created significant collections (up to 400 000 different plant varieties). Sperm from useful animals and samples of micro-organisms have also been stored.

While this form of conservation of basic genetic material away from the original location of the useful plants and animals (ex situ) is necessary and appropriate in order to safeguard acutely endangered plants and animals, it also entails the dangers associated with centrally established artificial storage. Gene banks are also extremely dependent on government financing, which is an aspect which has up to now been completely absent from the analyses of the Community strategy to maintain species diversity and which must be taken into account in future in the EU's support policy.

Conservation in situ is practised far less in the Member States' conservation programmes, although it could have a far greater impact in terms of utilisation and would in general be less susceptible to crises. In this field it is mainly the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and horticulturists' and farmers' associations which have developed individual initiatives and formed active networks. As this 'informal' conservation work in the Member States has hardly been recognised up to now or received support, Parliament drew attention in its report on the introduction of Regulation 1467/94 (A3-0104/94) to the urgent need and proposed appropriate project support.

Conservation by means of utilisation in farming faces considerable difficulties because of comparatively low yields and difficulties in the processing and marketing of small quantities. Despite considerable interest in undemanding and robust varieties and races, the information available on sources of supply, the economic incentives for breeders and farmers and contacts between interested users are still not enough.

The active distribution of endangered varieties and races is also hindered by the fact that the agreement reached between the Commission and Parliament on revision of the regulation on the placing on the market of plant varieties has still not been adopted by the Council. It proposes that national lists for conservation varieties should be drawn up and that the recognition procedure should be simplified so that characteristics in addition to the homogeneity, stability and distinctness currently required for the certification of varieties, for example resistance, genetic variability within varieties, etc., would also be taken into account.

3. Possibilities for a Community strategy to maintain species diversity

In the 1992 reform of the common agricultural policy the Commission offered premiums for rearing endangered species of farm animals as part of the accompanying measures. Unfortunately not all Member States included these premium within their national programmes. As regards agriculturally useful plants, there has as yet not been a survey of genetic erosion and nor has a comparable incentive system for the conservation of genetic diversity of varieties been drawn up. It would be logical to offer such an incentive in the framework of Regulation 2078/92 and the new reform proposals for useful plant varieties, linking it to the appropriate information and marketing programmes.

Success for the Community strategy will depend crucially on whether the cooperation between the Member States' own programmes, the gene banks and the activities of the informal sectors, in the sense of practical use of the diversity of varieties and races is actively supported throughout Europe. All the Commission's measures to date have however been half-hearted, cumbersome and ineffective. Within DG VI there is clearly even the idea that the only integrated programme for the conservation, characterisation, collection and use of genetic diversity in agriculture (1467/94) should be allowed to expire after 1999. With regard in particular to the enlargement of the Community and the diversity of useful plants and animal races which exist in central and eastern Europe, but which are starting to disappear, such a development would run counter to the objectives and efforts set out in the Community strategy.

In order to halt the genetic erosion of useful plants and animals effectively, a more precise analysis is needed of the causes and a more exact survey of the extent of losses. The Commission must ensure that the clear contradictions are eliminated between on the one hand, the goal of maintaining genetic diversity, and on the other Community patent law on biotechnology, varietal protection and the seed marketing law.

Encouragement for coordination of national activities at European level will prove effective against continuing genetic erosion only when there is also a strengthening and expansion of conservation work in the regions and when utilisation by breeders, farmers and horticulturists is made possible. Financial support for important collections should not be refused using the pretext of the subsidiarity principle.

A constant exchange of information and increased cooperation between the government and non-government sectors should be supported. The proposed exchange and further training programmes are suitable for this purpose. In addition, measures to extend publicity work in order to foster the interest of farmers and end users are also important.

CONCLUSIONS

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development calls on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following conclusions in its report:

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development:

1. Agrees in principle with the analysis of the status quo contained in the Commission proposal for a European Community biodiversity strategy; considers it necessary, however, in addition to the associated targets, to put forward more specific proposals on the integration of protection and utilisation measures in the framework of the common agricultural and the forestry policies and draws attention in this connection to the proposals

of the European Working Group on Research and Biodiversity (EWGRB) set up by DG XII;

2. Stresses the need to maintain and support extensive farming methods which encourage species diversity in agricultural ecosystems, for example through extensive grazing or hedge management;

3. Points out that the sustainable rural development policy put forward in Agenda 2000 and the integration of environment and agriculture policy are particularly suited to the conservation and use of the diversity of genetic resources;

4. Calls in this context for Regulations 1467/94, 2078/92, 2080/92, 2092/91 (agri-environmental measures) and 2092/93 (rural development LEADER) to be given more funding and staff; calls also for examination of the consequences of the common agricultural policy and its numerous implementing regulations on the utilisation and conservation of genetic resources in agriculture and forestry;

5. Considers it counterproductive in this context for the Commission, in the framework of the reform of the agricultural policy, to withdraw increasingly from Community initiatives and European coordination activities and to abandon or leave to the Member States targeted project support for the integration of conservation measures and agricultural use of genetic diversity without coordinating or harmonising the initiatives taken;

6. Is particularly critical of the Commission's indecision with regard to the financial and staffing provisions for the programme relating to Regulation 1467/94, which led to deletion of funds for the programme in 1997 and to a reduction of funding in 1998, thus making potentially interested parties and operators very insecure and demotivated;

7. Is disappointed that the Commission has not used the accompanying measures of the programme of work for Regulation 1467/94, with which the exchange of experiences and the necessary cooperation between collections (state and private gene banks), research and users (farmers, horticulturists, breeders) was to be supported;

8. Stresses the need to improve the quality of the permanent inventory of resources which have already been collected in the framework of Regulation 1467/94, in particular by facilitating a better listing and description of in situ collections of plants, animals and trees and by improving the description of the special characteristics with regard to usefulness (cultivation or rearing conditions, importance for landscape conservation, special characteristics with regard to processing, storage, taste, colour, etc.);

9. Considers that there is an urgent need, in relation to the new applicant countries and their financial and staffing problems in the conservation of genetic resources, to extend the programme to these states during the pre-accession phase;

10. Calls on the Commission to alter the requirements for support for projects on a shared cost basis and concerted actions such that not only individual species but also associated groups of species and their specific environment are taken into account and that in particular integrated in situ conservation and utilisation measures can be supported;

11. Calls on the Commission to coordinate the projects carried out in the framework of Regulation 1467/94 and their results with the accompanying measures to promote environmentally friendly production and afforestation (Regulations 2078/92 and 2080/92), to support not only aid for endangered species of animals but also the conservation of regionally adapted useful plants and trees and, in the framework of the accompanying measures to Regulation 1467/94, to ensure that practical constructive cooperation develops between researchers, gene banks, in situ conservationists, farmers, horticulturists and breeders;

12. Calls on the Commission to set up an independent forum for the conservation of genetic diversity in agricultural and forestry production and fisheries in which all parties active in the utilisation and conservation of genetic diversity can exchange their experiences, coordinate their work and advise the competent Commission departments in the development of the Community biodiversity strategy;

13. Proposes to the Commission that in the distribution of tasks it should improve its interaction with the European cooperative programme on crop and forestry genetic resources (ECPGR and EUFORGEN) and also on animal genetic resources (global programme for the conservation of farm animal diversity and its implementation at European level) and concentrate on the conservation of genetic diversity through utilisation in practical agriculture and horticulture, in order to be better prepared for the necessary integration of economic, environmental and social aspects in the framework of the reform of the CAP.

14. Stresses the importance of the report of the international technical conference on genetic resources held in Leipzig (Germany) in June 1996 under the auspices of the FAO.

2 July 1998

OPINION
(Rule 147)

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection

on the communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on a European Community Biodiversity Strategy (COM(98)0042 - C4-0140/98 and SEC(98)0348 - C4-0155/98) (report by Mr Sjöstedt)

Committee on Fisheries

Draftsman: Mrs Brigitte Langenhagen

PROCEDURE

At its meeting of 19 March 1998, the Committee on Fisheries appointed Mrs Langenhagen draftsman.

It considered the draft opinion at its meetings of 15 April, 25 May and 24 June 1998.

At the last meeting it adopted the following conclusions unanimously.

The following took part in the vote: Fraga Estévez, chairman; Kindermann, vice chairman; Langenhagen, draftsman; d'Aboville, Apolinário, Baldarelli, Girão Pereira (for Gallagher), Olsson (for Kofoed).

BACKGROUND

As a signatory of the Convention on Biological Diversity(
), the Community has an obligation to develop a strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity (biodiversity). The Commission

Biodiversity is a measure of variation in genes, species and ecosystems. This variation is valuable for many reasons. For instance, the degree of genetic variation within the stock of a certain species may be critical to the capacity of this stock to avoid falling victim to a disease or to adapt to a change in the environment.

Because of human activities, rapid losses of biodiversity occur. The Convention on Biological Diversity recognises this problem and it is now up to the signatories to develop effective methods for addressing it.

(
), the Community has an obligation to develop a strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity (biodiversity). The Commission has now presented a communication including such a strategy.

) Adopted in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 5 June 1992. Ratified by the Community 21 December 1993.

The Commission intends to develop biodiversity action plans for a number of policy areas. Fisheries is one of them.

Biodiversity and the Common Fisheries Policy

Clearly, fishing is an example of a human activity that can threaten biodiversity. While extinction of marine species is extremely rare, serious depletion is a rather common and often painfully experienced phenomenon caused by the huge catch capacities of today's fishing fleets, in combination with ineffective management measures and an insufficiently developed sense of responsibility. Not only commercially exploited stocks are affected, but also stocks of marine mammals and other species. They may be caught unintentionally in great numbers or be deprived of their food as a result of fishing activities. In addition, certain fishing gear or methods may cause destruction of habitats.

The need to make the Community's conservation policy much more effective is generally recognised. By means of the Multi Annual Guidance Programmes, the Community is trying to scale down its fishing fleet and reduce the fishing effort. A new regulation on technical conservation measures has been adopted by the Council(
) and the annual decisions on total allowable catches are also supposed to prevent over-exploitation.

A similar mix of measures has, however, already been used for a couple of years with quite limited success and it is not evident that adjustments that have recently been decided upon will prove sufficient. There is, for example, reason to believe that the policy on monitoring and control within the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) must be overhauled and that considerable pressure must be brought on the Member States to engage in a much more serious cooperation than could be seen so far.

The issue of biodiversity and the CFP is closely linked to the general need for more effective conservation of fish stocks. This applies not only to Community waters, but also to international waters and to the Exclusive Economic Zones of third countries with which the Community has concluded fisheries agreements. Article 4 of the Convention on Biological Diversity contains a general provision on the jurisdictional scope of the convention.

While once more focusing attention on the conservation policy in general, the consideration of the issue of biodiversity and the CFP should also include some more specific topics.

Effects of human intervention in the reproduction of commercially exploited species is of particular relevance. Such intervention, notably the rearing and subsequent release of salmon or the breeding of aquaculture species and the escape of some individuals that very often ensues, can have very significant effects on the genetic variation within stocks, or on the species composition of ecosystems. In the case of the Baltic Sea salmon, this problem has been recognised by the International Baltic Sea Fisheries Commission, which has adopted an action plan intended at saving the wild Baltic Sea salmon from extinction and thereby conserving

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(and the annual decisions on total allowable catches are also supposed to prevent over-exploitation.) Council Regulation (EC) No 850/98, OJ L 125, 27.04.1998, p. 1

genetic variation. Problems linked to the introduction of new species are dealt with in a Code of Practice on the Introduction and Transfer of Marine Organisms adopted by the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) in 1995.
The pursuit of the aim of conserving biodiversity must give a strong impetus to the quest for a multi-species or ecosystem approach to fisheries management. That quest is, however, hampered by insufficient knowledge to date of the functioning of marine ecosystems and the dynamic effects on them of increases or reductions in the mortality of certain species as a result of fishing activities. Consequently, research efforts must be increased. In this context, the Commission should be reminded of Parliament's call, already in 1996, for a working party of scientists to be set up and a plan for research into the interaction between fisheries and marine ecosystems to be established( )

The lack of sufficient knowledge should, however, not be used as a pretext for not taking protective measures. This principle, known as the precautionary approach, must be fully respected, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

When discussing the effects of human activities on marine habitats, it should, of course, be borne in mind that activities other than fisheries may also have considerable impacts.

Procedure

The present Commission communication provides very limited guidance as to what will be the contents of the biodiversity action plan for fisheries. Parliament should therefore be consulted before the adoption of this action plan. Possibly, the whole set of action plans can be grouped into an overarching plan on which Parliament is consulted.

Conclusion

The Committee on Fisheries calls on the Committee responsible to include the following paragraphs in its resolution:

1. Calls on the Commission to set up a working party of scientists with the task of elaborating and facilitating the implementation of a plan for research into the interaction between fisheries and marine ecosystems.

2. Emphasises that the Commission work in a coordinated fashion on a biodiversity plan for fisheries in order to avoid sectoral interests and to ensure that environmental aspects are more fully integrated in the fisheries sector.

3. Calls on the Commission to use the precautionary approach, as it has been defined in the UN Agreement on Highly Migratory Fish Stocks and Straddling Fish Stocks, in its management of fish stocks and to urge that all regional fisheries management bodies to which the Community belongs also adopt the same approach.

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(1) Resolution on the Commission communication on the biological impact of fisheries, OJ C 065 , 04/03/96, p.199

4. Encourages the Commission to form a consistent plan with respect to commitments under international agreements, specifically those relating to fisheries, to which they are signatory in order to strengthen conservation.
5. Calls on the Commission to stipulate how the objectives stipulated in the biodiversity strategy will be implemented to achieve sustainable management of fish stocks and, to possibly re-write objectives in such a way in order to encourage a broader ecosystem approach.

6. Asks the Commission to consult Parliament before adopting the action plans.

25 June 1998

OPINION
(Rule 147)

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection

on a European Community Biodiversity strategy (COM(98)0042 - C4-0140/98 and SEC(98)0348 - C4-0155/98) (report by Mr Sjöstedt)

Committee on Transport and Tourism

Draftsman: Mr Gianni Tamino

PROCEDURE

At its meeting of 21 April 1998 the Committee on Transport and Tourism appointed Mr Tamino draftsman.

It considered the draft opinion at its meetings of 20 May and 23 June 1998.

At the last meeting it adopted the following conclusions by 9 votes to 2 .

The following took part in the vote: Wijsenbeek, acting chairman; Sisó Cruellas, vice-chairman; Tamino, draftsman; Camisón Asensio, Castricum, van Dam, González Triviño, Kaklamanis (for Donnay), Schlechter, Schmidbauer and Watts.

BACKGROUND

The existence and the development of life on earth is due to and characterised by its biological diversity. Without adequate biodiversity events such as climate change and pest infestations are more likely to have catastrophic effects. According to UNEP's Global Biodiversity Assessment, on a global level, biodiversity is decreasing at a faster rate now than at any other time in the past. The situation in Europe is critical. In some European countries up to 24% of species of certain groups such as butterflies, birds and mammals are now nationally extinct.

The reasons of such a decline are mainly highly intensive, partially industrial forms of agriculture and land use, the increased fragmentation of remaining natural habitats by infrastructure and urbanisation and the exposure to mass tourism as well as pollution of water and air. Given the projected growth in economic activity, the rate of loss of biodiversity is far more likely to increase than reverse.

The European Union together with the 15 member countries is Party of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD). The Communication defines a framework for the actions necessary to fulfil the European Community´s legal obligations under the CBD.

GENERAL COMMENTS
The communication sets objectives supported by the CBD at the international level and by article 130R (2) of the EU Treaty which imposes the obligation of integrating environmental concerns

into sectoral policies. Furthermore, the Amsterdam treaty establishes that "environmental protection requirements must be integrated into the definition and implementation of Community policies and activities, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development".
Although the existence of high impact of transport and tourism policies on ecosystems conservation, the Communication pretends that there is no need for the implementation of specific Action Plans on transport and tourism" as the development and implementation of the Community strategies on climate change and acidification.....together with the implementation of adequate environmental assessment procedures should be adequate to achieve the biodiversity objectives in these policy areas".
This choice prevents on the one hand the implementation of adequate procedures of control in the mentioned areas (as explained in the end of part IV) by the European bodies, and limits on the other hand the possibilities of promotion and development of related policies from the Community.

CONCLUSIONS

The Committee on Transport and Tourism

1. Welcomes that the Commission - presenting this strategy on biodiversity - complies with its obligations entered into by signing the Convention on Biological Diversity.

2. Welcomes the awareness that the loss of biodiversity is significantly due to the "increased fragmentation of remaining natural habitats by infrastructures and urbanisation and the exposure to mass tourism..."

3. Draws attention to the judgment in the case of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (Court of Justice, 11 July 1996, RSPB, C-44/95, ECR, p. I - 3805), which states that it follows from Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora) that special areas of conservation may be altered, inter alia, for economic reasons.

4. Welcomes the consideration of "programmes for public information, education and awareness raising on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity" and calls for the promotion of specific related programmes in the Tourism area.

5. Considers that the objectives formulated in the Communication are valid but too general and that the two key issues as unlimited growth of transport and tourism and the implementation of a sustainable sound approach are missed.

6. Notices the necessity to shift the transport flows to the modes which cause less impact on biodiversity as for instance from road to rail as requested by the international Alps Convention.

7. Notices that the proposed internalisation of the external costs by the Commission would be essential for the implementation of sustainable transport policies as requested by the Convention on Biological Diversity.

8. Asks for an immediate enforcement of the Kyoto Agreement on climate change as well as the Community's acidification strategy and reminds that also eutrophication and elevated levels of tropospheric ozone pose a considerable threat to biodiversity

9. Considers the importance of the impact of transport infrastructures on biodiversity and calls for the application of Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environment Assessment on all projects involving transport infrastructures.

10. Calls for the enforcement of the Strategic Environmental Assessment procedure within decision-making process of the European Investment Bank (EIB) concerning TENs projects.

11. Asks the Commission and Member States to ensure that the construction of new transport infrastructure within protected areas (see Birds Directive, Habitat Directive and Natura 2000 Network) will not lead to a reduction of biodiversity, and that, in any case, projects not respecting this rule don't receive financial support from the Community.

12. Asks the Commission not only to encourage the assessment of the tourism carrying capacity of different ecosystems and habitats, but to identify upper limits of the carrying capacity for sensitive areas.

13. Asks the Commission to apply best practice among public and private tourism installations and services in order to promote sustainable tourism.

14. Asks the Commission to develop not only international guidelines for the sustainable tourism, but also to orientate any existing or future EU tourism programmes to sustainable tourism.

15. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to intensify the monitoring and the environmental control in sensitive areas;

16. Suggests to the Commission to work out an Ecolabel for sustainable tourism.

17. Insists that the Commission services in charge of transport and tourism will comply with the future set of indicators to be mainly identified by the European Environment Agency and EUROSTAT. Considering the importance of these indicators in the development and assessment of each policy sector part of the Communication, the Committee stresses the importance of transparency in the decision-making process of the indicators.

18. Calls for the implementation of a transparent control mechanism and a periodical report on the results achieved for complying with the goals of the Communication in the Transport and Tourism sector.

7 September 1998

Commented [COMMENT3]:
NOAM

OPINION
(Rule 147)

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection

on the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on a European Community biodiversity strategy (COM(98)0042 - C4-0140/98 and SEC(98)0348 - C4-0155/98) (report by Mr Sjöstedt)

Committee on Research, Technological Development and Energy

Draftsman: Mr Antonios Trakatellis

PROCEDURE

At its meeting of 17 March 1998, the Committee on Research, Technological Development and Energy appointed Mr Antonios Trakatellis draftsman.

It considered the draft opinion at its meetings of 23 June and 2 and 3 September 1998.

At the last meeting it adopted the following conclusions unopposed with 2 abstentions.

The following were present for the vote: Scapagnini, chairman; Quisthoudt-Rowohl, Adam and Lange, vice-chairmen; Trakatellis, draftsman; Ahern, Camisón Asensio (for Soulier), Chichester, Estevan Bolea, Ferber, Graenitz (for Linkohr), Haarder (for Plooij-van Gorsel), Holm (for Bloch von Blottnitz), McAvan, McNally, Malerba, Matikainen-Kallström, Mombaur, Pinel (for Le Pen), Pompidou, Rovsing, Stockmann, Tannert and van Velzen W.G.

INTRODUCTION

Biodiversity is one of the most important manifestations of nature. It constitutes the diachronic quintessence of the dynamic balance of various forms of life and ecosystems which finds expression in the biodiversity of genes, species and ecosystems on our planet. Biodiversity is thus the essential precondition for the stability and harmonious functioning of ecosystems. It also constitutes an important source of economic wealth which makes a significant contribution both to economic development and to human progress in many sectors. It has a direct bearing on the quality of life of European citizens because it affects their daily environment and leisure activities and also forms part of their natural heritage.

Unfortunately, the laws of nature which have created and continue to create a dynamic balance between the various forms of life on our planet have been violated and distorted by the many activities undertaken by man. Over the last few years these activities have precipitated the decline of biodiversity, and the rate at which this is happening poses a great threat to the future of life on earth. It has been calculated that, unless appropriate measures are taken, every 30 years we will lose between 5 and 10% of existing species, the number of which is currently calculated at 10 million. Although we do not know exactly the relative importance of the

factors that lead to a decline in biodiversity, it is clear that the change in land use at the expense of land which sustains a rich biological variety, such as forests, is one of the main reasons for this development; this is borne out by relevant studies.

There are many different aspects to the management and sustainable use of biodiversity, both genetic (species and ecosystems) and social and economic. Research into biodiversity and its sustainable use must therefore be interdisciplinary and involve: (a) an overall appraisal of the state of biodiversity (indicators, methods and measurements), (b) management policies and practices, and (c) the identification and analysis of the threats to biodiversity. Today, owing to science and technology, we are in a position to intervene in biodiversity in a beneficial way in order to correct distortions and to halt its decline. For this reason incentives and actions are needed to identify and eliminate the distortions to which many ecosystems are subject. The future life of man on earth must not be allowed to adversely affect the essential elements of biodiversity: judicious interventions can change it in a controlled manner. All the above will lead to a better understanding of how ecosystems function and limit human activities so that they do not disturb biodiversity.

THE COMMISSION'S COMMUNICATION: COMMENTS

The management of biodiversity must clearly include the complete recording of the state of ecosystems so that appropriate corrective action can be taken in good time wherever it is needed. The whole matter needs to be addressed by a comprehensive suitable policy, such as that which the Commission communication proposes. A strategy is needed, both at Community and at international level, involving both the industrialised and the developing countries, if we are to address the problems and strike a balance between the demands of economic growth and the preservation of biodiversity. This is the basic component of the model of sustainable development. In its communication on an EU strategy in this field, the Commission seeks to set out the steps which must be followed in future, if we are to reverse the current decline in biodiversity. Given the challenges to biodiversity world-wide, such a strategy is particularly important in order to protect the environment and promote the principles of sustainable development.

The need to promote and develop a strategy in this field arises from the international commitments undertaken by the Member States and the Community which have signed the international Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, 1993). The CBD pursues three basic objectives: (a) the conservation of biodiversity; (b) the sustainable use of its components and (c) the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources. However, as the Commission notes in its communication, steps must be taken to ensure respect for, and compliance with, this international Convention by the EU institutions in drawing up Community policies. Apart from the Community, the Member States are also contracting parties to the CBD, and some of them have launched national policies and actions to achieve the objectives of the Convention. Since, however, not all Member States attach the same importance to the matters covered by the Convention, an EU strategy must be devised and EU action taken to promote and defend biodiversity and achieve the objectives of the Convention.

It should also be pointed out that the incorporation of this strategy and the demands it makes in individual Community policies and in the proposals under review aimed at reforming varying policies and measures is of capital importance within the framework of the Agenda 2000 programme. The review of the Structural Funds, the Common Agricultural Policy, the Fisheries Policy, the pre-accession strategy for the enlargement of the European Union (EU), the

fifth framework programme for research and technological development and the framework agreement between the Community and the ACP countries are all areas in which account must be taken of biodiversity. In this way the future objectives and actions of the Community and Member States will be in line with the principles of this policy which they will safeguard.

The proposed strategy themes

Generally speaking, the Commission strategy set out in this communication contains the most important elements for the protection of biodiversity. The Community policy consists of four basic themes, accompanied by individual special objectives:

1. Conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity

This theme is the most self-explanatory one, given that the conservation of biodiversity on our planet it the main objective. Research and conservation policies have so far focused more on general losses of biodiversity among species and less on losses at ecosystem level. The policy proposed by the Commission is to conserve, and where necessary, to restore ecosystems and populations of species in their natural surroundings. One aspect of this policy is the present EU NATURA 2000 Network; however, this does not give sufficient protection to various species and ecosystems which are outside the protected areas. Furthermore, the policy of conserving only the protected natural ecosystems is a method which will protect only certain species and does not meet the requirements of the sustainable development of biodiversity. A strategy must also be developed for non-protected areas, embracing both in-situ and ex-situ conservation measures. The designation of reserves with great concentrations of rare indigenous species must constitute a priority in the development of policies aimed at implementing the conservation strategy. There is one notable shortcoming in the Commission text, and this concerns biotechnology which can play an invaluable role in managing biodiversity and in sustainable development. However, the uncontrolled use of biotechnological applications and the release of genetically-modified organisms and genetically-modified micro-organisms may upset the balance of ecosystems. They must therefore be employed judiciously; methods must also be devised to evaluate the positive and negative consequences of biotechnology as accurately as possible.

2. Sharing of benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources

The introduction of biodiversity in various sectors of human activity will inevitably lead to a calculation of the cost arising from practices which lead to a loss of biodiversity and to a keener appreciation of its value. A significant incentive to preserve biodiversity and to share the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources would be the establishment of a legal framework for the protection of the use and development of these resources. Consideration must also be given to the adoption of both positive and deterrent legislation with a view to preserving biodiversity and incorporating the costs arising from the use of biodiversity resources in the productive processes. It should be stressed that the matters covered by this theme are particularly intractable, since they require bilateral and multilateral cooperation between states and international organisations and a series of international transfers of technical know-how and scientific cooperation. A global framework proposal of this kind has not yet been formulated at international level, and the EU will have to make very substantive efforts to launch such an initiative. The bulk of biodiversity resources are concentrated in certain regions outside the EU, and notably in the developing countries. As a result, the principles governing the protection and sustainable development of biodiversity must be implemented particularly in those regions which use their natural resources

for their economic development, but do not usually adopt sustainable development practices. Consequently, the European Union, in conjunction with other prosperous industrialised countries, must be prepared to contribute both financially and in other beneficial ways towards maintaining the overall balance of ecosystems and biodiversity on our planet.

3. Research, identification, monitoring and exchange of information

Research into, and the monitoring of, ecosystems and biodiversity constitute an indispensable adjunct to the first theme. Research aimed at establishing biodiversity evaluation indicators and methods must constitute the principle component in the development of a strategy for the conservation of biodiversity. It is important to evaluate the consequences on biological diversity of all economic activities in the various sectors of production, such as agriculture, forestry, energy, tourism and the construction sector. In addition, networks for pooling information in the field of biodiversity must also be promoted and developed. The implementation of the Fifth Framework Community Programme on Research and Development, and notably the implementation of the action plan on planetary changes, climate and biodiversity and the activities of the European Working Group on Research and Biodiversity (EWGRB) have an important contribution to make in achieving the objectives of this theme.

4. Education, training and awareness

This theme is an indispensable adjunct to the entire strategy, given that any policy, and especially a policy of this type, must be based on education and public awareness and information. One general objective must be to underscore the importance of biodiversity for the future of mankind as a source of wealth - both economic and ecological - and as a component of the quality of life and economic development. There must also be a dissemination of existing knowledge and applications in the field of biodiversity and a dissemination of information to business circles and decision-taking centres regarding the economic benefits to be derived from the conservation of biodiversity.

Policy areas and the individual objectives

As regards the specific objectives in the policy areas proposed by the Commission, these are only partially geared to four themes of the strategy in question. In particular, while the third theme of the strategy concerns research and the judicious monitoring of ecosystems and biodiversity , the specific policy objectives do not state clearly which actions must be taken. A further objective must therefore be added, notably: 'Basic knowledge of biodiversity and the functioning of ecosystems' as regards research into and the development of biodiversity indicators, methods of basic monitoring and assessing the state of species and ecosystems on the planet which constitute the most basic elements of systematic monitoring. In the absence of indicators of this kind it is impossible to measure trends in and pressures inflicted on ecosystems. Attempts must also be made to carry out research into, and systematically record, all forms of life and systematically study the genetic potential of various forms of life. It should be pointed out that efforts so far have been limited to certain species; clearly, these must now be extended to other organisms. Research must also be conducted into the reciprocal effects of various species within a given ecosystem and how they affect the balance of this ecosystem.

Your draftsman is astonished at the failure of the Commission document to recognise the importance of biotechnology which has an important and positive role to play in the field of biodiversity and in developing and implementing the Community strategy in this area. Since all

Community policies must be coordinated and guided by the objective of sustainable development, Community policy on biotechnology must also be used in a suitable manner. Biotechnology could be used to step up the production of various products, thereby reducing the area of land under cultivation. It could also substantially cut the use of herbicides and pesticides which are partly responsible for the reduction in biodiversity. Of course, biotechnology must be used judiciously so that its positive effects are exploited and its negative effects avoided: the development of new, more environmentally-friendly methods of combating insects and weeds, for example organic herbicides and organic insecticides and the development of a new generation of more environmentally-friendly products, for example biodegradable products, which cause much less environmental pollution.

As regards fisheries policy, a further objective could be added, notably the development of methods for renewing the natural wealth of the seas and protecting species that are intensively fished. A further goal might be the proper development of fish farms so as to enable them to cover man's food needs, without damaging the ecosystems. Special actions must also be promoted for regions specialised in traditional methods of fishing.

As regards energy policy, the general recognition that carbon dioxide production must be reduced must lead us to develop and use sustainable sources of energy. The opportunities offered by solar energy and other sources of energy which are more environmentally-friendly and beneficial to man must also be exploited.

Conclusions

The Committee on Research, Technological Development and Energy calls on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following conclusions in its report:

1. Welcomes the Commission's Communication on a European Community biodiversity strategy which constitutes a first step towards incorporating biodiversity in other Community policies and marks the beginning of moves to stem the loss of natural resources;

2. Emphasises that biodiversity plays an important role in ecosystems, since it guarantees the quality of water and air, climate stability and soil quality and ensures the presence of resources that are indispensable for the survival of man on Earth;

3. Stresses the particular need for coordinated initiatives, measures and programmes to promote research into biodiversity at Community, national and international level;

4. Considers indispensable the establishment of a legislative framework to legally safeguard the use and balanced sharing-out of the benefits of biodiversity including to give practical effect to the provisions of Article 8j of the Convention on Biological Diversity;

5. Notes the importance of incorporating the costs arising from the use of biodiversity resources in all stages of the productive process;

6. Expresses its surprise that the Commission document fails to recognise the role that biotechnology can play in promoting the strategy for biodiversity;

7. Calls on the Commission to envisage the adoption of positive economic incentives aimed at conserving biodiversity and legislative measures (fines or taxes) to discourage practices or uses which harm biodiversity;

8. Calls on the Commission to include in the policy sectors it proposes the objective 'Development of basic knowledge of biodiversity and the functioning of ecosystems' in order to promote research into the development of biodiversity indicators, basic monitoring and assessment methods to ascertain the state of individual species and ecosystems, research into and the systematic recording of all forms of life, a systematic study of the genetic wealth of various forms of life and research into the reciprocal effects of different species;

9. Calls on the Commission to incorporate in the proposed objectives of various policy sectors the exploitation of the opportunities offered by biotechnology which can lead to an increase in the resources and products produced, while reducing the amount of land used for this purpose, a reduction in the use of pesticides and herbicides and the development of new forms of cultivation which are more environmentally-friendly;

10. Calls on the Commission to commit itself to a binding Biosafety Protocol to the Convention which safeguards human and animal health, the environment and biological diversity;

11. Calls on the Commission to include in the fisheries policy sector the development of methods for renewing the natural wealth of the seas, particularly as regards species which are subject to intensive fishing, and support for regions which lend themselves to traditional forms of fishing;

12. Calls on the Commission, within the framework of energy policy, to promote the use of environmentally-friendly renewable sources of energy on the basis of the objectives adopted at the Kyoto Conference on climate change;

13. Calls on the Commission and Member States to promote the development of cooperation and technology transfers in the field of research into biodiversity both within the EU and with the developing countries with a view to covering their technical shortcomings.

14. Calls on the Commission to add the following rules for the export of genetically modified organisms (GMOs):
for the export of GMOs and/or products containing GMOs to non-Member States, the exporter or importer must be in possession of
   - approval of the import from the country of destination
   - an export permit from the authority in the competent Member State.

Import authorisation from the country of destination must be submitted for the authority in the competent Member State to grant approval.