



**2015/2137(INI)**

27.10.2015

# **DRAFT REPORT**

on the mid-term review of the EU's biodiversity strategy  
(2015/2137(INI))

Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

Rapporteur: Mark Demesmaeker

## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION .....	3
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT.....	9

## MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

### on the mid-term review of the EU's biodiversity strategy (2015/2137(INI))

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the communication from the Commission, ‘Mid-term review of the EU biodiversity strategy to 2020’ (COM(2015)0478),
- having regard to the Commission report, ‘The State of Nature in the European Union: report on the status of and trends for habitat types and species covered by the Birds and Habitats Directives for the 2007-2012 period as required under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive and Article 12 of the Birds Directive’ (COM(2015)0219),
- having regard to the Commission report, ‘Public consultation as part of the “fitness check” for EU nature legislation (Birds Directive, Habitats Directive)’,
- having regard to the Eurobarometer survey published in October 2015 on the attitudes of people in Europe towards biodiversity (‘Special Eurobarometer 436’),
- having regard to the report of the European Environment Agency, ‘The European Environment – state and outlook 2015 (SOER 2015)’,
- having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on ‘the EU Approach against Wildlife Trafficking’ (COM(2014)064),
- having regard to the final report of the Horizon 2020 group of experts on Nature-Based Solutions and Re-Naturing Cities entitled ‘Towards an EU Research and Innovation Policy Agenda for Nature-Based Solutions and Re-Naturing Cities’, published in 2015,
- having regard to the Natural Capital Financing Facility (NCFF), which forms part of the LIFE financial instrument for the environment and climate measures,
- having regard to the Commission’s consultation on the future EU initiative under the motto ‘no net loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services’,
- having regard to the results of the 12th Conference of the Parties (COP 12) to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), particularly the mid-term review of progress in implementing the strategic biodiversity action plan 2011-2020, including the fourth edition of the Global Diversity Outlook, and measures to improve implementation,
- having regard to the report of the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), ‘Connecting Global Priorities: Biodiversity and Human Health, a State of Knowledge Review’, published in 2015,

- having regard to the motion for a resolution submitted at the 69th session of the UN General Assembly for approval of the post-2015 development agenda, ‘Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’,
- having regard to the reports on The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB), a worldwide initiative geared to ‘making nature's values visible’,
- having regard to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS),
- having regard to the Red List of endangered animal species of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN),
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1143/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2014 on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to the Common Agricultural Policy after 2013 and particularly Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013 establishing rules for direct payments to farmers under support schemes within the framework of the common agricultural policy and Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD),
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2014-2020,
- having regard to its resolution of 20 April 2012 on ‘Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020’<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 December 2013 on ‘Green Infrastructure – Enhancing Europe’s Natural Capital’<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 28 April 2015 on ‘A new EU Forest Strategy: for forests and the forest-based sector’<sup>5</sup>,
- having regard to its Research Service study of April 2015 entitled ‘Safeguarding biological diversity – EU policy and international agreements’<sup>6</sup>,

---

<sup>1</sup> OJ L 317, 4.11.2014, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2012)0146.

<sup>4</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2013)0600.

<sup>5</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2015)0109.

<sup>6</sup> PE 554.175.

- having regard to the study by Policy Department C of the European Parliament (Citizens’ Rights and Constitutional Affairs) of 2009 on national legislation and practices with regard to the implementation of Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, particularly Article 6<sup>1</sup>,
  - having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions adopted at the 115th plenary session of 3-4 December 2015 entitled ‘Contribution to the Fitness Check on the EU Birds and Habitats Directives’,
  - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and the opinion of the Committee on Development (A8-0000/2015),
- A. recalling that biodiversity encompasses the unique variety of ecosystems, habitats, species and genes on Earth, on which human beings are heavily dependent;
  - B. whereas, in addition to its overwhelming intrinsic value, biodiversity also contributes an enormous social and economic value;
  - C. whereas biodiversity is under severe pressure worldwide, which is bringing about irreversible changes that are profoundly detrimental to nature, society and the economy;
  - D. whereas at least eight in every 10 EU citizens regard the impact of biodiversity loss as serious and whereas 552 470 citizens participated in the public consultation on the fitness check of the Nature Directives;

### **General remarks**

1. Welcomes the mid-term review of the biodiversity strategy, the ‘State of Nature’ and ‘SOER 2015’ reports; stresses the strategic importance of these reports for achieving the EU’s biodiversity targets;
2. Notes that the general trend with regard to biodiversity continues to be cause for serious concern, and that the 2020 targets will not be achieved without substantial additional efforts; observes, at the same time, that targeted efforts genuinely produce results and that there is therefore great potential for improvement;
3. Considers political will, implementation, enforcement and further integration of biodiversity into other policy areas to be essential;
4. Deplores the fact that nature and economic development are again in opposition; is convinced of the need to embed nature more in society, the economy and enterprise;
5. Considers it vital to recognise that investing in biodiversity is essential from a

---

<sup>1</sup> PE 410.698.

socioeconomic point of view; welcomes methods to measure the economic value of biodiversity, such as The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB); considers that these instruments, despite possible shortcomings, can raise awareness, improve the use of available resources and result in better decision-making;

## **Mid-term review of the biodiversity strategy**

### *Headline target*

6. Urgently calls on the Commission and Member States to give priority to achieving the 2020 targets; calls for a multi-stakeholder approach and stresses the vital role of regional and local actors in this regard; stresses that greater public awareness of and support for biodiversity are also essential;

### *Target 1*

7. Stresses that the full implementation of the Nature Directives is essential for the strategy as a whole, and calls on all parties concerned to do their utmost to achieve this;
8. Calls on the Commission to improve the guidelines, which should facilitate the optimal application of the directives, in accordance with existing case-law; calls on the Commission to give higher priority to dialogue with Member States and to encourage exchanges of best practices;
9. Urges the Member States to complete the designation of Natura 2000 sites and draw up management plans;
10. Urges the Commission and Member States to continue to enforce the Nature Directives conscientiously; calls, in that context, for additional efforts to halt illegal hunting of protected birds;

### *Target 2*

11. Calls on the Commission to publish without delay a specific proposal on the development of a trans-European network for green infrastructure (TEN-G);
12. Calls on Member States to prioritise the target of restoring 15% of degraded ecosystems by 2020 and to use the appropriations available within the MFF for this purpose;

### *Target 3*

13. Notes and regrets that there has not yet been a measurable improvement of the biodiversity status in agriculture; urges the Commission and Member States to monitor, assess and increase the effectiveness of greening measures and other rural development measures of the CAP; calls on the Commission to take into account its findings in the mid-term review of the CAP;

#### *Target 4*

14. Calls on the Commission and Member States to make every effort to implement the reformed Common Fisheries Policy correctly and promptly so as to achieve the goal of maximum sustainable yield;

#### *Target 5*

15. Urges the Commission to draw up an accurate list of invasive alien species which are of concern to the Union; stresses the importance of regularly updating this list, and of carrying out additional risk assessments for species, so that the legislation on invasive alien species can act as a powerful lever;

#### *Target 6*

16. Calls on the Commission and Member States to phase out environmentally harmful subsidies; urges the Commission and Member States to fully endorse and facilitate the transition to a circular economy; calls on the Commission to submit an ambitious action plan for combating illegal trafficking in wild animals and plants;

#### **Fitness check of the Nature Directives**

17. Stresses that the Nature Directives are milestones for nature policy, not only within the EU but also internationally; considers that, thanks to their concise, coherent and consistent form, these Nature Directives can, so to speak, be regarded as smart regulation *avant la lettre*;
18. Highlights that Natura 2000 is still a relatively young network, whose full potential is far from having been achieved; considers that the Nature Directives remain relevant and that best practices on implementation demonstrate their effectiveness;
19. Is convinced that the problem lies not with the legislation itself but primarily with its incomplete and inadequate implementation; opposes a possible revision of the Nature Directives because this would jeopardise the implementation of the biodiversity strategy, bring about a protracted period of legal uncertainty and possibly weaken the legislation;

#### **The way ahead: additional measures**

20. Regards biodiversity loss outside protected nature areas as a gap in the strategy; encourages the Commission to develop an appropriate framework for preventing the net loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services;
21. Encourages the Member States to ensure, by means of urban planning initiatives, adequate protection of the Natura 2000 network, to preserve open spaces, and to establish a coherent network of blue-green infrastructure from rural to urban areas, while at the same time creating the requisite legal certainty for economic activities; calls on the Commission to produce an overview of best practices in this regard;

22. Considers that, in order to use the available resources more efficiently and in a more targeted manner, it is essential that the Commission draw up specific criteria for the Natural Capital Financing Facility, which should guarantee that projects deliver positive and tangible results for biodiversity;
23. Stresses the importance of research and development, and calls on the Commission and Member States to focus in particular on the links between biodiversity and health;
24. Calls on the Commission and Member States to launch a European initiative on pollinators;
25. Strongly believes that the environment and innovation complement one another, and draws particular attention to nature-based solutions which provide both economically and environmentally smart solutions to address challenges such as climate change, scarcity of raw materials and pollution; calls on the Member States to take up these 'calls' under Horizon 2020;
26. Stresses that the issues relating to biodiversity, climate change and scarcity of raw materials are inseparably linked; calls on the Commission and Member States to take this into account in the further discussions on a new international agreement on climate change;
27. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission, and to the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

## **EXPLANATORY STATEMENT**

### **Biodiversity loss is a loss to nature, humanity and the economy**

Biodiversity, the unique variety of ecosystems, habitats, species and genes on Earth, of which humanity also forms part, has an overwhelming intrinsic value. In addition, human beings are extremely dependent on biodiversity for numerous valuable ecosystem services, such as clean air, clean water, raw materials, pollinators and protection against flooding, to name just a few. Biodiversity is therefore essential for our health and wellbeing and for our economic prosperity.

Biodiversity is under severe pressure, worldwide and also in Europe. Species are becoming extinct at breakneck pace. This is due to human activity. Habitat change, pollution, overexploitation, invasive alien species and climate change are the principal causes of biodiversity loss.

Biodiversity loss is particularly detrimental and means losses for nature, humanity and the economy: it jeopardises necessary ecosystem services and undermines the natural resilience of the Earth for addressing new challenges. In the ‘Global risks perception survey 2014’, the World Economic Forum ranked biodiversity loss and the collapse of ecosystems in the top 10. The limits and capacity of the planet are being exceeded, triggering irreversible changes. Thus biodiversity loss is also inseparably linked to issues such as climate change and scarcity of raw materials, which is also clear from the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### **EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020**

The European aim to halt biodiversity loss failed in 2010. The EU responded by drawing up a new strategy in 2011. Heads of State or Government defined the headline target as being to halt biodiversity loss and the deterioration of ecosystem services, to restore them in so far as feasible by 2020 and to step up EU efforts to avert the degradation of global biodiversity.

Consequently, the strategy was built around six targets, each underpinned by specific actions: (1) full implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives (the Nature Directives); (2) maintaining and restoring ecosystems and ecosystem services; (3) increasing the contribution of agriculture and forestry to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity; (4) ensuring sustainable use of fish stocks; (5) combating invasive alien species and (6) stepping up the EU’s contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.

### **Mid-term review: still far from halfway**

In 2015, the verdict is crystal clear: without substantial additional efforts, the EU will in 2020 again fail to achieve its agreed targets. The figures speak for themselves. The EU-28’s ecological footprint is twice as large as Europe’s biocapacity. Barely 23% of species and 16% of habitats have a favourable status. There is most certainly too little progress to permit the headline target to be achieved. Significant progress has only been made on two targets (Target 4, fisheries, and Target 5, invasive alien species), while results for the other targets are seriously insufficient and give most cause for concern in the case of agriculture and forestry.

Thus the general trend remains extremely bleak and worrying. In this respect, the mid-term review confirms the findings of the ‘SOER 2015’ and ‘The State of Nature’ reports. The international perspective of the Global Biodiversity Outlook Report 2014 conveys a similar message: despite considerable efforts and progress in certain sectors, it is possible that most of the Aichi targets will not be achieved by 2020 unless substantial additional efforts are made.

At the same time, it is promising and encouraging that targeted efforts and investments in nature and biodiversity can indeed result in success stories. The return of certain species is a clear illustration thereof. The rapporteur calls for best practices to be seized as catalysts for change, because, although the successes are so far outweighed by the general negative trend, they demonstrate that the existing legislation works, that the 2020 targets are achievable and that there is still enormous potential for improvement.

### **Political will for implementation, enforcement and integration**

The rapporteur advocates greater political will to genuinely tackle biodiversity loss as a policy priority, and considers a multi-stakeholder approach to be necessary, in which regional and local actors play a special role.

In the rapporteur’s view, better implementation and enforcement of existing legislation are key for progress.

The most obviously relevant legislation consists of the Nature Directives: full implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives is an absolute precondition for achieving the biodiversity strategy as a whole. The Nature Directives are milestones in Europe’s nature conservation policy and, due to their concise, coherent and consistent form, can, so to speak, be regarded as smart regulation *avant la lettre*. It is thanks to the Nature Directives that the EU has a unique network, Natura 2000, which, with 26 000 protected areas, comprises 18% of the land area and 6% of the marine environment. The rapporteur observes that Natura 2000 is a relatively young network, whose full potential is far from having been achieved.

The rapporteur unequivocally opposes a possible revision of the Nature Directives because this would jeopardise the biodiversity strategy itself, bring about a protracted period of legal uncertainty and possibly weaken the legislation. Moreover, the rapporteur is convinced that the problem lies not with the legislation itself but primarily with its incomplete and inadequate implementation and enforcement. The rapporteur therefore considers it far more efficient for both the Commission and the competent authorities in the Member States to pursue better implementation in consultation with each other. Improved guidelines, strict enforcement and exchanges of best practices are crucial in this regard.

The collective and transversal approach which is necessary in order to halt biodiversity loss effectively remains problematic. Integrating biodiversity into the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is a particular challenge. The rapporteur calls for the effectiveness of greening measures and other rural development measures to be monitored, assessed and increased.

### **Investment in nature and biodiversity is socially and economically necessary**

The rapporteur endorses the moral argument that biodiversity should be protected because of its great intrinsic value and as a way of keeping our planet as intact as possible for future generations. Moreover, he strongly believes that investing in nature and biodiversity is also

essential from a socioeconomic point of view. With this in mind, he deplors the fact that nature and economic development are again in opposition. A change of mind-set is imperative. Methods to measure the economic value of biodiversity, such as ‘The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity’ (TEEB), despite possible shortcomings, can play a useful role here and contribute to more awareness, a better use of available resources and better informed decision-making.

The following statistics clearly demonstrate the enormous socioeconomic impact of biodiversity:

- each year, ‘non-action’ causes losses of ecosystem services equivalent to 7% of global GDP;
- the socioeconomic opportunity costs of not reaching the 2020 targets are estimated at €50 billion a year;
- one in six jobs in the EU depends to some extent on nature; 4.5 million jobs in the EU are dependent on ecosystems protected by Natura 2000;
- the value of pollination services provided by insects is estimated at €15 billion a year;
- the damage caused by invasive alien species in the EU is estimated at €12 billion a year;
- the costs of managing Natura 2000 (€5.8 billion a year) are many times less than the added value produced by Natura 2000 (€200-300 billion).

Of course, investing in nature and biodiversity costs money. But these costs are far outweighed by the added value which nature and biodiversity have to offer, and the loss of value resulting from ‘non-action’.

### **The voice of the citizens**

Citizens regard nature and biodiversity as important. According to the Eurobarometer survey (No 436) on biodiversity, at least eight out of 10 EU citizens regard the impact of biodiversity loss as serious. Citizens also responded loud and clear during the recent public internet consultation concerning the fitness check of the Nature Directives. This consultation drew in a record number of participants, namely 552 470 (by way of comparison, this is three times as many as for TTIP). The ‘Nature Alert!’ campaign played a decisive role in this regard.

On the other hand, the Eurobarometer survey revealed that citizens wished to receive more information about biodiversity loss and that most people are not familiar with Natura 2000. What remains unknown can hardly be expected to generate enthusiasm. In order to generate greater public support for investment in nature and biodiversity, the rapporteur considers it essential to persuade more people of the importance of biodiversity. In order to do so, attention should be drawn to the socioeconomic value of biodiversity and the impact of biodiversity loss on health, wellbeing and welfare. Policy-makers at all levels have an important task to fulfil here.

### **Additional actions are needed**

The rapporteur considers that additional, innovative solutions are necessary in order to halt biodiversity loss, and he proposes a number of specific actions to this end:

- the development of a trans-European network for green infrastructure (TEN-G) could

- create a win-win situation for nature and the economy;
- nature should not be restricted to nature in protected areas. Guaranteeing access for all to quality nature and prevention of biodiversity loss outside these protected areas constitutes a gap in the existing strategy. A European framework for preventing the net loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services could address this shortcoming;
  - in order to use available resources more efficiently and in a more targeted manner, specific criteria for the Natural Capital Financing Facility are needed, which should guarantee that projects deliver positive and tangible results for biodiversity;
  - it remains necessary to gather reliable and comparable data: in particular, the links between health and biodiversity and the pollinator decline require more research and further action;
  - nature-based solutions can significantly contribute to tackling challenges such as climate change: for example, a tailored plan to introduce more nature into towns can significantly lower the temperature there. The rapporteur considers it vital that individual members of the public are also able to contribute, good examples being the revival of allotments and the increasing success of the concept of the ‘living garden’.

## **Conclusion**

Nature is making a cry for help. The question is whether it will rouse us from our torpor and spur us on to further action. The rapporteur is convinced that biodiversity and nature must be central in a smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe, and calls for greater political will to genuinely halt biodiversity loss. This is essential both for nature itself and for the health, wellbeing and welfare of our children and our grandchildren.