

Mid-term review of the EU's biodiversity strategy

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The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted an own-initiative report by Mark DEMESMAEKER (ECR, BE) on the mid-term review of the EU's biodiversity strategy.

It welcomed the Commission report of mid-term review of 2 October entitled [Mid-term review of the EU biodiversity strategy to 2020](#), Members were extremely concerned about the constant loss of biodiversity. They noted that the 2020 targets will not be achieved without substantial additional efforts, and that there is great potential for improvement.

The report noted that habitat fragmentation, degradation and destruction as a result of land-use change, climate change, unsustainable consumption patterns and the use of the seas are some of the main pressures and drivers causing biodiversity loss in the EU and beyond its borders.

Accordingly, Members stressed the crucial importance of increased political will at the highest level to safeguard biodiversity and halt biodiversity loss, particularly through the implementation of existing legislation, enforcement and further integration of biodiversity protection into other policy areas and action by regional and local authorities to provide information about, and raise awareness of, biodiversity.

The Commission was urged to enhance the role that biodiversity and ecosystems play in economic affairs, with a view to moving to a green economy and to step up the measures taken in support of the greening of the European Semester.

Headline targets: the report called on the Commission and Member States, as a matter of urgency, to give higher priority to achieving the 2020 targets and or the EU to reduce its biodiversity footprint worldwide:

Target 1: deploring the slow progress made by Member States in implementing EU environmental legislation, Members stressed that full implementation and enforcement, and adequate financing, of the nature directives are a vital prerequisite for ensuring the success of the strategy as a whole and meeting its headline target. They called on the Commission to improve the guidelines, which should facilitate the full implementation and enforcement of the directives. They also urged Member States to complete the designation of terrestrial and marine Natura 2000 sites and draw up management plans, in consultation with all stakeholders. They reiterated their previous calls for EU co-funding for the management of Natura 2000 sites. Target 2: the report called on the Commission to come forward with a specific proposal for the development of a trans-European network for green infrastructure (TEN-G) by 2017. It encouraged the joint development, in conjunction with the Member States, of a strategy for European wildlife corridors for targeted species.

Member States were called upon to: (i) develop and implement ecosystem restoration prioritisation frameworks immediately; (ii) 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: incorporating nature conservation into other policy areas remains of paramount importance, and Members stressed the crucial role of agriculture and forestry in this connection. They pointed out that restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry, including in Natura 2000 areas, is highlighted as one of six key priorities for rural development in the EU.

Member States were asked to make better use of existing CAP and cohesion policy instruments to assist farmers and forestry operators in achieving biodiversity targets.

The Commission was called upon to: (i) promote the sustainable management of the world's forests by ensuring ecological processes by respecting the rights of indigenous people to sustain forest resources; (ii) prohibit the destruction of natural forests; (iii) safeguard endangered species and (iv) ban toxic pesticides and the planting of genetically modified trees.

Target 4: the report called on the Commission and Member States to implement the reformed Common Fisheries Policy correctly and promptly, applying ecosystem-based fisheries management by, inter alia, promoting sustainable and innovative catch methods. It stressed the importance of reducing pollution in order to safeguard marine biodiversity and stocks.

Target 5: the Commission was urged to establish, in accordance with Article 4 of Regulation (EU) No 1143/2014, an accurate and comprehensive list of invasive alien species which are of concern to the Union. Such a list should not be limited to a fixed number of species and should include complete and coherent implementation actions underpinned by appropriate resources aimed at achieving the targets.

Target 6: the Commission and Member States were urged to fully endorse and facilitate the transition to a circular economy, and to phase out environmentally harmful subsidies by 2020 ensuring that evaluations of such subsidies are completed by 2016 and that reporting requirements are incorporated into relevant EU sectoral policy areas.

The way ahead: additional measures: the report encourages the Commission and Member States to gather information and to develop appropriate frameworks to prevent habitat fragmentation and the net loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services by working with local authorities and civil society. Such a framework must comprise a bundle of complementary measures that address the root causes of biodiversity loss and improve the integration of biodiversity in sectoral policies, including agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy and transport.

In order to use the available resources more efficiently and in a more targeted manner, the Commission should draw up specific criteria for the Natural Capital Financing Facility, which must guarantee that projects deliver appropriate, positive and scientifically tangible results for biodiversity.

The report also stressed the importance of:

- innovation, research and development in order to achieve the objectives of the nature directives;
- expanding the multi-fund approach to biodiversity financing;
- improving coherence across relevant sectoral policies with a view to incorporating biodiversity goals;
- establishing an EU framework for environmental inspections;

- launching a European initiative on pollinators;
- fully applying the precautionary principle when authorising the use and the environmental release of living modified organisms;
- including matters relating to the environment and climate change in international agreements;
- not authorising any new hydraulic fracturing operations in the EU on the basis of the precautionary principle and the principle that preventive action should be taken.

In view of the failure to meet the biodiversity targets for 2020, the Commission was asked to provide Parliament with two-yearly reports in which the Council and the Commission elaborate on the state of play, reasons for non-achievement and the strategy for ensuring future compliance.