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## TEXTS ADOPTED

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### **P9\_TA(2019)0104**

#### **EU Pollinators Initiative**

#### **European Parliament resolution of 18 December 2019 on the EU Pollinators Initiative (2019/2803(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Commission communication of 1 June 2018 on the EU Pollinators Initiative (COM(2018)0395),
  - having regard to its resolution of 2 February 2016 on the mid-term review of the EU's Biodiversity Strategy<sup>1</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 15 November 2017 on an Action Plan for nature, people and the economy<sup>2</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 16 January 2019 on the Union's authorisation procedure for pesticides<sup>3</sup>,
  - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the motion for a resolution of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety,
- A. whereas the Commission launched the EU Pollinators Initiative on 1 June 2018 in response to calls from Parliament and the Council to address the decline of pollinators;
- B. whereas much research has already been carried out into the reasons for pollinator decline; whereas the implementation of the findings of this research leaves much to be desired;
- C. whereas wild pollinators play a vital role in crop pollination; whereas honeybees support this contribution;

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 35, 31.1.2018, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 356, 4.10.2018, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2019)0023.

- D. whereas pollination by honeybees merely supplements, rather than substitutes, pollination by a broad array of insect species<sup>1</sup> including solitary bees, butterflies, hoverflies and beetles;
- E. whereas on 11 October 2019 the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) issued an urgent call to massively scale up species conservation action in response to the escalating biodiversity crisis; whereas the IUCN appealed to the world's governments to halt species decline and prevent human-driven extinctions by 2030 and to improve the conservation status of threatened species with a view to bringing about widespread recovery by 2050;
- F. whereas pollinators provide essential direct and indirect ecosystem services such as pollination, pest control, maintaining soil and water quality, and landscape aesthetics;
- G. whereas continuous efforts are needed to secure recognition of the importance of pollinators for agricultural productivity;
- H. whereas in the Union alone, 78 % of wild flower species depend, at least in part, on animal pollination<sup>2</sup>;
- I. whereas there is inadequate data and information about insect pollinators other than bees and butterflies;
- J. whereas pollinators include insects such as bees, hoverflies, butterflies, moths, beetles, wasps, thrips, and mammals such as bats and birds;
- K. whereas healthy pollinators are essential for agricultural activity in the Union, given that 84 % of crop species<sup>3</sup> and 76 % of European food production depend on insect pollination; whereas up to EUR 15 billion of the EU's annual agricultural output can be directly attributed to pollinators<sup>4</sup>;
- L. whereas pollinators represent one of the most important indicators of the health of our environment; whereas statistics and trends from across Europe, while sometimes partial, all point to a worrisome decline in pollinator populations;
- M. whereas it is clear that the conservation status of butterflies and their semi-natural grassland habitats is poor and a good indicator of the situation of wild bees, hoverflies, moths and other pollinators;
- N. whereas only 56 pollinators species are protected by Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (Habitats Directive)<sup>5</sup> of which 67 % of the assessments are unfavourable;

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<sup>1</sup> Garibaldi, L. A. et al, *Wild Pollinators Enhance Fruit Set of Crops Regardless of Honey Bee Abundance*, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Potts, S. et al., *Status and Trends of European Pollinators. Key Findings of the STEP Project*, Pensoft Publishers, Sofia, 72 pp.

<sup>3</sup> Potts, S. et al., *Status and Trends of European Pollinators. Key Findings of the STEP Project*, Pensoft Publishers, Sofia, 72 pp.

<sup>4</sup> Gallai, N. et al., *Economic Valuation of the Vulnerability of World Agriculture Confronted with Pollinator Decline*, *Ecological Economics*, 68:3, pp. 810-821.

<sup>5</sup> OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7.

- O. whereas Parliament has initiated several pilot projects and preparatory actions to further study the decline of pollinators and develop concrete solutions to mitigate the worrisome decline in pollinator populations<sup>1</sup>;
- P. whereas in order to adequately protect and restore pollinators, the use of pesticides that harm pollinators and their food will need to be greatly reduced;
- Q. whereas the use of some pesticides has been linked to adverse ecological effects, including high risks to both domestic and wild bees responsible for pollinating most crops worldwide;
- R. whereas pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 of 21 October 2009 concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market<sup>2</sup>, professional users of pesticides must keep records of pesticide use for at least three years, containing the name of the plant protection product, the time and the dose of application, and the area and the crop where the product was used;
- S. whereas, in April 2018, the Union agreed to fully ban outdoor use of imidacloprid, clothianidin and thiamethoxam, known as neonicotinoids;
- T. whereas several Member States reported emergency derogations regarding the use of these neonicotinoids on their territory; whereas such notifications should be of good quality and made public; whereas the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) concluded that for about one third of the products for which emergency authorisations were granted, alternatives were available; whereas EFSA can play a role in examining emergency authorisations<sup>3</sup>;
- U. whereas glyphosate use has been shown to damage the bacteria of honeybees, thus contributing to pollinator decline and loss of habitat; whereas certain fungicides can double the acute toxicity of insecticides<sup>4</sup>;
- V. whereas EFSA's Guidance Document on the risk assessment of plant protection products on bees (2013 EFSA bee guidance), approved in 2013 and representing the most updated scientific methodology of the risks of pesticides to *Apis mellifera*, *Bombus spp.* and solitary bees, has not been fully endorsed by the Member States; whereas this situation undermines the proper application of the approval criteria of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 and, therefore, better protection of these species;

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<sup>1</sup> Notably the EU pollinators monitoring scheme and indicators; the environmental monitoring of pesticide use through honeybees; measuring the pulse of biodiversity using the Red List Index (RLI); and developing a farmer's toolbox for integrated pest management practices from across the European Union.

<sup>2</sup> Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market and repealing Council Directives 79/117/EEC and 91/414/EEC (OJ L 309, 24.11.2009, p. 1).

<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/pesticides/approval\\_active\\_substances/approval\\_renewal/neonicotinoids\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/pesticides/approval_active_substances/approval_renewal/neonicotinoids_en)

<sup>4</sup> Tsvetkov, N., Samson-Robert, O., Sood, K., Patel, H. S., Malena, D. A., Gajiwala, P. H., Maciukiewicz, P., Fournier, V., Zayed, A. (2017): 'Chronic exposure to neonicotinoids reduces honey bee health near corn crops', *Science*, Vol. 356, Issue 6345, pp. 1395–1397 (<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aam7470>).

- W. whereas aside from the impact of insecticides on pollinators, wide-spectrum herbicides used on landscape scale, as pre-emergent weed killers or desiccants, for example, destroy the food sources of pollinators outside the main crop flowering periods and contribute to population crashes;
- X. whereas even full application of the 2013 EFSA bee guidance would leave butterflies, moths and hoverflies unprotected by the pesticide approval regime;
- Y. whereas connected pollinator habitats, such as buffer strips, hedgerows and grassy waterways, can contribute to soil erosion control and, in general, to the improvement of biodiversity, and are potentially useful for improving the quality of the food available for both domestic bees and wild pollinators;
- Z. whereas many pollinator habitats have become highly fragmented and specialist species are under increasing threat from habitat mismanagement and climate change;
- AA. whereas the occurrence, conservation and restoration of areas of indigenous flowers, also in urban areas, are essential for healthy populations of wild pollinators;
- AB. whereas wild pollinators and beekeepers in Europe provide pollination services almost entirely for free; whereas this is in stark contrast to other parts of the world, where the cost of pollination is consistent with other farm inputs such as seeds, fertilisers, and pesticides;
- AC. whereas pollinators bring social and cultural benefit in the form of remedies, products, art and traditions;
- AD. whereas this largely free pollination service supplements that of wild pollinators and is only possible because the main revenue source for beekeepers is the sale of honey and other bee products; whereas imports of adulterated honey threaten the economic basis of beekeeping in the EU;
- AE. whereas agri-environmental measures have not been implemented on a sufficient scale across the EU to compensate for the loss of pollinator habitats and the decline in habitat quality; whereas greening has failed to provide significant improvement;
- AF. whereas the introduction of a pollinator impact indicator was requested in the positions of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development in the context of the proposal for a regulation on the CAP Strategic Plans (COM(2018)0392);
- AG. whereas the introduction of a pollinator indicator can contribute to optimal decision-making processes, more effective public spending, increased accountability and understanding of the impact of policies and legislation;
- AH. whereas over-fertilisation of crops contributes to a decline in the occurrence of flowering plants which represent a potential food basis for pollinators;
- AI. whereas nitrate emissions cause eutrophication and the growth of rank grasses, which crowd out the herbs and flowers in the sward, cover bare ground used as a nesting habitat by many pollinators, and cause low-level shading that creates a cool microclimate unsuitable for many indigenous species;

## ***General remarks***

1. Recognises the added value of the EU Pollinators Initiative in setting strategic objectives and a series of urgent actions to be taken by the EU and its Member States to protect pollinators; applauds the work already being carried out at local level to protect pollinator habitats;
2. Considers, however, that the initiative fails to sufficiently address the many causes of pollinator decline, which include land-use changes, loss of habitats and their connectedness, intensive agricultural management practices, plant protection products, environmental pollution, the effects of pathogens and parasites such as the Varroa destructor mite, climate change and invasive alien species<sup>1</sup>; considers that the implementation of ‘Priority II: Tackling the causes of pollinator decline’ is of the utmost urgency;
3. Considers that pollinators are an essential component of biodiversity and are indispensable for the reproduction of a majority of plant species; acknowledges that a decreasing pollinator population affects the quality and quantity of agricultural yields and the economic returns for farmers;
4. Highlights the importance of pollinators to agriculture, the threat to food production posed by current declines and the need to take urgent and transformative action to protect and restore pollinators and their services;
5. Highlights the importance of adopting a holistic approach and of evaluating the impact of existing policy measures in order to effectively tackle the decline of pollinators in the Union; stresses the need to apply the precautionary principle to protect pollinators in general, both domestic and wild;
6. Stresses the need to protect the diversity of pollinator species in Europe – including approximately 2 000 wild bee species and other insects, including flies, beetles, moths and butterflies – and worldwide;
7. Stresses the importance of promoting measures to encourage biodiversity, in both rural and urban areas, given that pollinator health and survival depend on species-rich habitats providing diverse and continuous food, such as nectar and pollen, in sufficient quantity, as well as habitats for nesting, mating and overwintering;
8. Urges the Commission to integrate the EU Pollinators Initiative and its results into the development of the post-2020 EU Biodiversity Strategy, and to transform the aims of the initiative into a full-scale action programme for pollinators, earmarking sufficient resources to this end;
9. Asks the Commission to address the decline of pollinators at international level and to advocate strong measures to protect pollinators and their habitats worldwide;

## ***Biodiversity and agricultural practices***

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<sup>1</sup> Potts, S.G., et al., (2016), The Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services on Pollinators, Pollination and Food Production, Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, Bonn, Germany. 552 pp.

10. Stresses that boosting biodiversity and thereby fostering the occurrence and quality of pollinators' habitats on agricultural land must become a key aim in the development of the future common agricultural policy (CAP), which must in particular support the preservation of high nature value (HNV) farming areas, the creation of set-asides for nature and the reduction of pesticide and mineral fertiliser use, and encourage polycultures and crop rotation;
11. Notes that reducing pesticide dependency is a key objective of Directive 2009/128/EC on the sustainable use of pesticides<sup>1</sup>; stresses that a pesticide reduction plan, with clear targets, milestones and timelines, should be set out in each Member State's National Action Plan adopted under this directive, and that pesticide reduction should be set as a 'common indicator' with which to monitor success; believes that EU-wide mandatory reduction targets should be included in the upcoming revision of Directive 2009/128/EC following an appropriate impact assessment;
12. Calls on the Commission to review the revised National Action Plans adopted under Directive 2009/128/EC and to take all possible measures to ensure that Member States adequately commit to pesticide use reduction targets and the necessary monitoring thereof;
13. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure the provision of high-quality advice to farmers, through national and regional farm advisory systems, on how to promote and protect biodiversity and pollinators;
14. Reiterates that pollination is crucial for agricultural production and therefore that support under the first pillar of the CAP should not lead to weakened or lost pollination services; calls on the Commission to approve only strategic plans in which this factor is addressed properly by the relevant conditionality elements and eco-schemes under the first pillar;
15. Stresses that numerous national rural development programmes already include measures to promote biodiversity and assist pollinators; observes that in order for such programmes and measures to be continued and further expanded, it is primarily necessary to provide adequate funding for the second pillar of the CAP; stresses that, in so doing, the diversity of regions and habitats, as well as the many different pollinators that exist, must be taken into account, which necessitates a national and regional approach;
16. Asks the Commission and the Member States to accept Parliament's call for a pollinators indicator in the CAP;
17. Stresses that in 2017, insecticide<sup>2</sup> sales increased in 18 EU countries compared to 2016; expresses its concern about the fact that in the category of other insecticides<sup>3</sup>, sales in

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<sup>1</sup> Directive 2009/128/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 establishing a framework for Community action to achieve the sustainable use of pesticides (OJ L 309, 24.11.2009, p. 71).

<sup>2</sup> Eurostat data exist for the category of insecticides and acaricides; further data exist for different categories of insecticides (pyrethroids, chlorinated hydrocarbons, organophosphates, carbamates and oximo-carbamates, and other insecticides); available at <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>

<sup>3</sup> Also including neonicotinoids.

2017 were up from 2016 in 9 out of 13 countries for which this disaggregate was available and that the Pollinators Initiative does not consider this trend relevant;

18. Stresses that biodiversity measures and the reduction of pesticide use should also be set as a target in Member States' strategic plans within the CAP, and that pesticide reduction and an increase in biodiversity should be set as 'common indicators' with which to monitor success;
19. Stresses that the indicator measuring pollinator diversity and abundance that is under development will allow for evaluation of the CAP's performance in this area;
20. Stresses that under Directive 2009/128/EC on the sustainable use of pesticides, non-chemical methods of pest control must first be used in place of pesticides, with the aim of protecting pollinators;
21. Calls on the Commission to extend the ban imposed on imidacloprid, clothianidin and thiamethoxam to all neonicotinoid-based pesticides;
22. Calls on the Commission to systematically request the opinion of EFSA in the event that Member States issue an emergency authorisation for a pesticide, on the basis of Article 53 of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009; considers it important that EFSA also investigate the effect of substitution, as well as the availability of non-chemical methods;
23. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the provisions of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 are properly applied and thereby guarantee, inter alia, a minimum standard of notifications on emergency authorisations of pesticides, including the need for Member States to provide complete and detailed explanations, and to make those notifications public; welcomes the role of EFSA in examining these derogations;
24. Stresses that professional users of plant protection products should, for at least three years, keep detailed records of the use, area, timing and dose of application of the products; notes that the relevant information recorded should be available to the competent authority on request, in order to monitor adherence to the cross-compliance rules and to track the performance of the CAP in terms of reductions in pesticide use across the EU;
25. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to raise awareness and promote funding opportunities in this area; points out that common instruments and models for the development of strategies and plans for pollinators based on existing best practices will encourage the adoption of additional measures at national, regional and local level;
26. Calls on the Commission and Member States to ensure the full adoption of the 2013 EFSA bee guidance as a matter of urgency, including the requirements relating to chronic and larvae toxicity as well as species other than honeybees;
27. Pending the full adoption of the EFSA bee guidance at EU level, calls on Member States to align their assessments of pesticides accordingly;
28. Calls on the Commission to request from EFSA a pesticide guidance document setting out pre-approval tests to provide protection for butterflies, moths and hoverflies;
29. Stresses that the presence of pollinator habitats increases the productivity of land;

30. Calls on the Commission to establish limits on the CAP objective of increasing productivity, to regulate intensive farming practices, and to encourage the use of greening measures which qualitatively and quantitatively improve the habitat and forage space for pollinators and fight the homogenisation of European landscapes;
31. Calls on the Commission and Member States to promote the use of pasture and pastoral habitats, including wooded pastures and other agroforestry systems, as a critical precondition for creating nesting, breeding and overwintering substrates for pollinators, in synergy with the maintenance of HNV grassland communities reserved for grazing and traditional forms of extensive farming;
32. Stresses, in this regard, that crop rotation, the use of strong varieties and mechanical weeding/biological pest control will help to restore pollinator habitats, while large fields with monocultures contribute to pollinator decline;
33. Calls on the Commission and Member States to support green infrastructure that recreates and restores mosaics of habitats and functional connectivity for pollinators in rural and urban landscapes;
34. Calls on the Commission and Member States to promote the maintenance of well-managed hedgerows as well as the concept of buffer strips, including grassy/flowering strips along water courses and perennial flowering areas, as measures to encourage biodiversity in order to protect foraging opportunities and habitats for pollinators and biocontrol agents, as well as to provide better erosion control in rural, semi-urban, and urban areas;
35. Calls on the Member States to support early listing on the EU list of species that present a risk to pollinators, to respond quickly to control and eliminate such species, to increase vigilance, and to take restrictive action when pathways are identified;
36. Calls on the Commission to propose measures to help tackle pressure on pollinators that may stem from farmland abandonment;
37. Stresses that effective biosecurity measures need to be introduced for potted plants and soil before moving significant distances and encourages public bodies responsible for the management of green areas to use local plants, thereby maximising benefits for local pollinators and minimising the spread of invasive alien species;
38. Calls on the Commission to set out the criteria needed to establish an EU Ecolabel for pollinator-friendly potted plants which display their place of origin, are placed in a sustainable container, do not use peat and do not contain insecticides;
39. Calls on the Commission and Member States to support the beekeeping sector by reinforcing import inspections in order to avoid imports of adulterated honey and by adopting compulsory honey origin labelling (with each country's name) for honey mixtures;
40. Calls for the promotion and development of pollinator habitats in urban areas;

***Research, training and surveillance***



41. Insists, in particular, with regard to honeybees (*Apis mellifera*), on the role of research into the causes of the reduction in the life expectancy of queen bees, which is a worrying phenomenon;
42. Considers it crucial to support the development of those test guidelines that are not yet available, especially on acute and chronic toxicity on solitary bees, chronic toxicity on bumblebees, sub lethal effects, co exposure to multiple compounds (cumulative and synergistic effects), as well as tests for other species of pollinators;
43. Underlines that the research heading of the initiative fails to consider the result-based schemes which have monitoring embedded in them and which could prove useful, partly by covering monitoring needs, and provide relevant incentives to farmers; highlights that such schemes can be piloted and scaled up under various EU financial instruments and policies, including the CAP;
44. Calls on the Commission and Member States to increase funding for basic and applied research on pollinators and the development of treatments against new diseases, parasites and viruses affecting them, and to invest in strengthening and expanding the pool of taxonomic expertise, including through the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation; calls for more emphasis to be placed on field research and pollinators other than honeybees and butterflies;
45. Calls on the Commission and Member States to establish systematic and standardised monitoring in real-life conditions of wild pollinators and the main pressures they face, in order to gauge the extent of pollinator decline and its causes and to enable a full evaluation of the effectiveness of relevant EU and national policies;
46. Calls on the Commission and Member States to ensure that funding needs for the monitoring of wild pollinators are included in the CAP strategic plans, in order to secure robust data for building a CAP indicator on pollinators as per the commitment made in the EU Pollinators Initiative;
47. Considers it appropriate to support eco-innovation<sup>1</sup> in agriculture and to encourage partnership arrangements with academic circles and cooperation with researchers in different fields to support the development of low-risk pesticides that are harmless to pollinators;
48. Deems it necessary to support research regarding the agro-ecological transition of agriculture and the further development of methods of pest management which are harmless to pollinators, such as adequate cultivation techniques, crop rotation and balanced fertilisation;
49. Calls on the Commission and Member States to support citizens' science focusing on recording and monitoring pollinators and the training of beekeepers to promote non-intrusive Union surveillance of bees through the development of indicators of colony vitality;

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<sup>1</sup> Defined by the Commission as any innovation resulting in significant progress towards the goal of sustainable development, by reducing the impacts of our production modes on the environment, enhancing nature's resilience to environmental pressures, or achieving a more efficient and responsible use of natural resources.

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