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## **European bees: new report shows nearly one in ten wild bee species face extinction**

Europe's wild bees are in decline, according to new research published today. The assessment, published as part of the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) European Red List of Bees and the Status and Trends of European Pollinators (STEP) project, found that 9.2% of European wild bee species are threatened with extinction, while 5.2% are considered likely to be threatened in the near future.

The report, which was co-funded by the European Commission, provides for the first time information on all 1,965 wild bee species in Europe, including their status, distribution, population trends and threats. At the same time, it stresses the need for further research to guide effective conservation action and reverse their decline. More than half of all species are classified as "Data Deficient", as lack of experts, data and funding has made it impossible to evaluate their extinction risk.

European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Karmenu Vella said:

*"Our quality of life – and our future – depends on the many services that nature provides for free. Pollination is one of these services, so it is very worrying to learn that some of our top pollinators are at risk! If we don't address the reasons behind this decline in wild bees, and act urgently to stop it, we could pay a very heavy price indeed."*

Europe has an ambitious strategy to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restore them so far as feasible. The strategy, which is currently under review, addresses the main threats – habitat fragmentation and loss, intensive agriculture and invasive alien species. This report will feed into the review, helping to ensure that the EU is on track to achieve its biodiversity objectives by 2020.

*"This assessment is the best understanding we have had so far on wild bees in Europe," says Jean-Christophe Vié, Deputy Director, IUCN Global Species Programme. "However, our knowledge about them is incomplete as we are faced with an alarming lack of expertise and resources. Bees play an essential role in the pollination of our crops. We must urgently invest in further research in order to provide the best possible recommendations on how to reverse their decline."*

Bees provide crop pollination worth some €153 billion globally and €22 billion in Europe every year. Pollinators like bees support crops accounting for 35% of global agricultural production volumes. Some 84% of the main crops grown for human consumption in Europe require insect pollination to enhance product quality and yields.

According to the report, large-scale loss and degradation of bee habitats is one of the main threats to their survival. This is mostly caused by intensive agriculture and changing farming practices, such as a concentration on silage production at the expense of hay-cropping, and the extensive use of insecticides and fertilisers. Climate change is another important driver of extinction risk for most species of bees, and particularly bumblebees.

## **Background**

The IUCN European Red List – compiled using the same criteria as the global IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™, but limited to Europe – is a review of the conservation status of more than 8,400 European species (mammals, reptiles, amphibians, freshwater fishes, butterflies, dragonflies, and selected groups of beetles, molluscs, and vascular plants). It identifies species that are threatened with extinction at the regional level so that conservation action can be taken to improve their status. The European Red List is primarily funded by the European Commission. Species are assigned to one of eight categories of threat. Species listed as Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable are collectively described as ‘Threatened’.

IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ is the world’s most comprehensive information source on the global conservation status of plant and animal species. It is based on an objective system for assessing the risk of extinction of a species.

- [Download IUCN Red List report on Bees](#)
- More information:  
<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/redlist/bees/introduction.htm>