

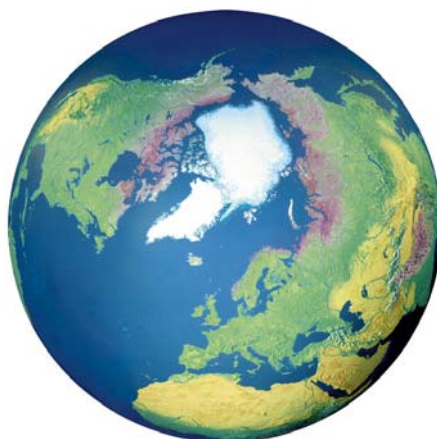


EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL ENVIRONMENT

Brussels, 15 January 2008

PROGRESS TOWARDS HALTING THE LOSS OF BIODIVERSITY BY 2010

**A FIRST ASSESSMENT OF IMPLEMENTING THE
EC BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN**



linked to

Communication on halting the loss of biodiversity to 2010 – and beyond

Sustaining ecosystem services for human well-being

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The EC Biodiversity Communication¹, adopted by the European Commission on 22 May 2006, provides a strategic framework for EU action to meet the target set by Heads of State and Government of halting biodiversity loss by 2010 and to also support achieving the global target of significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. There has been a positive response from other EC institutions² to the Communication and its associated detailed Action Plan. They recognise that it provides a comprehensive approach to achieving the 2010 targets. However, this will not be achieved in a business as usual scenario and requires increased action at Community and Member State levels.

The European Commission is committed to ensuring timely assessment of progress towards meeting the 2010 targets. This first progress evaluation on implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan covers the period up to the end of 2007 and focuses on action at Community level. It aims to highlight key elements of progress in relation to the objectives and targets of the action plan. A more detailed summary of progress for each action under the Biodiversity Action Plan is attached as an Annex I. An update on EU biodiversity indicators (SEBI) is attached as Annex II (http://biodiversity-chm.eea.europa.eu/information/indicator/F10902459_95/fo1591978/Tech_11_2007_SEBI_1.pdf). The evaluation outlines key activities and measures being put in place since adoption of the Communication.

This evaluation shows that some progress is being made in relation to different objectives, targets and actions of the EU Biodiversity Action Plan. However, much of the observed progress relates to existing commitments, especially in implementation of nature and other environmental legislation. Most significant in this regard is the continued establishment of the Natura 2000 Network of conservation areas. Now covering almost 20 % of the EU's terrestrial territory and also embracing significant marine areas Natura 2000 is at the core of EU biodiversity policy. Important new initiatives identified in the Action Plan are under preparation including work towards development of an EU framework on invasive alien species, strengthening partnerships on business and biodiversity, communicating biodiversity and launching of a review of the economics of biodiversity loss. However, despite increased opportunities, it is at present difficult to demonstrate significant progress in the integration of biodiversity into other sectoral policies relating to the conservation and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the wider EU countryside and marine environments and in reinforcing the compatibility of regional and territorial development with biodiversity in the EU. As these are important objectives of the overall biodiversity communication it will be essential to further examine ways in which this can be attained. Also, there is a need to strengthen synergies between climate change and biodiversity objectives. While good progress has been made in enhancing global governance and addressing trade in illegal timber through the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan, the mainstreaming of biodiversity in bilateral development cooperation and in EU trade policies remains an important challenge.

¹ COM (2006) 216 Final

² The inter-institutional responses are available on the web site of the Commission at http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/index_en.htm

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS IN DELIVERY OF OBJECTIVES OF EU BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

A. POLICY AREA 1: Biodiversity in the EU

Objectives

1. To safeguard the EU's most important habitats and species.

This is a core objective of EU biodiversity policy, mainly achieved through implementation of the nature directives. Work on the establishment of NATURA 2000 has proceeded according to schedule with 4251 areas covering a total surface area of approximately 90,000 km², equivalent in size to Portugal, being added to the network protected under the Habitats Directive. A Commission Decision of 13 November 2007 updated and extended the list of protected sites for the Atlantic, Continental and Boreal biogeographical regions and provided a first list for the Pannonian region, thus extending the network for the first time to new Member States (EU 10). Updated lists of sites for the Alpine, Macaronesian and Mediterranean regions are expected to be adopted by Commission Decision early in 2008³.

The Commission has continued to assess the completeness of the NATURA 2000 network for different Member States as well as of their legal transposition of the Birds and Habitats Directives. On the basis of checking the national measures transposing the Birds and Habitats Directive in EU 25, the Commission has initiated non-conformity cases where gaps have been detected⁴. The Commission has also continued to pursue cases of bad application of the nature directives in 2007⁵. A summary of existing important case law on the nature directives provided by the EU Court of Justice has been published⁶.

With regard to pro-active measures a new EU network of practitioners called 'GreenForce', dealing with nature conservation and forestry policies and laws in the Member States, has been set up to facilitate communication and the sharing of experience on practical implementation, compliance and enforcement⁷. Several important guidance documents have also been published by the Commission in 2007, to facilitate the implementation of EC nature legislation. A guide on establishing NATURA 2000 in the marine environment will assist Member States in the selection of marine NATURA 2000 sites by 2008⁸. A guide on the implementation of Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, focusing on compensatory measures to offset loss or damage to NATURA 2000 sites⁹, complements earlier guidance on this subject. First guidelines on how to manage landscape features of major importance for wild

³ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/sites_hab/biogeog_regions/index_en.htm

⁴ As regards the Birds Directive, infringement procedures related to non-conformity issues are ongoing against 16 Member States (AT, IE, ES, DK, UK, EL, IT, LU, CZ, EE, HU, LT, LV, PL, SK, BG). As regards the Habitats Directive infringement procedures related to non-conformity issues are ongoing against 17 Member States (AT, DE, UK, FR, IE, ES, DK, NL, EL, LU, CZ, EE, MT, PL, SI, SK, BG)

⁵ There were important rulings of the EU Court of Justice against Greece, Ireland and Spain for their failures to comply with the Birds Directive, especially in relation to completing the designation of Special Protection Areas. A first assessment of the Special Protection Area networks under the Birds Directive for EU 10 has been finalised, and having identified gaps legal actions have been launched against 8 new Member States (Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta and Slovenia).

⁶ Nature and Biodiversity Cases - Ruling of the European Court of Justice
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/info/pubs/docs/others/ecj_rulings_en.pdf

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/greenforce/index_en.htm

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/marine/index_en.htm

⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/guidance_en.htm

flora and fauna have been prepared with a view to identifying ways of supporting the ecological coherence of the NATURA network¹⁰. A guide on the strict protection of animal species listed in Annex IV of Habitats Directive also covers the relevant derogation provisions of the Directive¹¹. The guide on sustainable hunting under the Birds Directive¹², has been updated to take account of recent case-law from the European Court of Justice. Work on the preparation of guidelines for population level management plans for large carnivores is at an advanced stage.

Preparations are also advanced for the first complete major 'health check' of the conservation status of species and habitats of Community interest under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive. On the basis of national reports the Commission and the European Environment Agency will complete an EU level assessment by early-2009. This will help identify the extent to which additional measures for the management and restoration of species populations and habitats are needed¹³. A red data list for mammals has been published providing the first comprehensive assessment at the European scale¹⁴. This shows that nearly one in six (15 %) of Europe's mammal species are threatened, and a further 9 % are close to qualifying for threatened status. The Iberian lynx is now the most threatened wildcat species in the world¹⁵. European Red data lists are to be prepared for other taxonomic groups.

2. To conserve and restore biodiversity and ecosystem services in the wider EU countryside.

The new Rural Development Programmes for 2007-2013 provide a major opportunity to strengthen the integration of nature and biodiversity considerations into agricultural policy. However, there have been delays in their submission by Member States¹⁶. It is therefore too early to assess the extent to which biodiversity objectives are prioritised and promoted in these plans. The implementation of cross-compliance provisions related to nature and biodiversity still need to be evaluated. A Commission report on the implementation of cross-compliance states that "it is too early to contemplate changes to the scope of cross-compliance but these will be addressed in the context of the [Common Agricultural Policy] "health check"¹⁷.

Action aiming at strengthening measures to conserve genetic diversity in agriculture has led to the co-financing of 17 projects for a budget of € million¹⁸. A map of High Nature Value farmland is currently being updated by the European Environment Agency and the Joint Research Centre¹⁹. A study for DG Agriculture has developed indicators to monitor HNV

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/ecosystems/index_en.htm

¹¹ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/guidance/index_en.htm

¹² http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/wildbirds/hunting/guide_en.htm, available in 23 EU languages.

¹³ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/knowledge/rep_habitats/index_en.htm

¹⁴ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/ema/index.htm>

¹⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/info/pubs/docs/nat2000newsl/nat21_en.pdf

¹⁶ By August 2007, out of 94 national and regional programmes, 87 had been sent to the Commission and 18 approved by the management committee.

¹⁷ COM (2007) 147 final

¹⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/envir/biodiv/genres/index_en.htm

¹⁹ A preliminary updated map was published in "Europe's Environment – the fourth assessment EEA State of the environment report No 1/2007.

http://reports.eea.europa.eu/state_of_environment_report_2007_1/en/chapter4.pdf

farming, set out in a Guidance Document for Member States. This identifies and characterises HNV farming, and assesses the effectiveness of policy measures for its maintenance²⁰.

A key development in relation to forestry has been the adoption of the EU forest action plan in June 2006 for which a work programme is being developed with Member States²¹. Also of note are the adoption of the EC soil thematic strategy²² and of the Directive on the assessment and management of flood risks²³.

3. To conserve and restore biodiversity and ecosystem services in the wider EU marine environment.

Negotiations for the adoption of a marine strategy directive have significantly advanced during 2007. The European Parliament and the Council reached provisional agreement on the final content of the directive, which was approved by the Parliament on 11 December 2007. This directive will provide a basis for achieving good environmental status in the marine environment and includes provision for the further development of marine protected areas. Adaptive management on the basis of the ecosystem approach will be applied to attain good environmental status. The marine strategy directive will form the main environmental component of a new EU maritime policy launched in October 2007²⁴.

In the framework of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) a policy has been developed to reduce the exploitation of marine fish populations to Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) levels. The Commission is also working on a 'discards' policy aimed at reducing and eventually eliminating unwanted by-catch. A series of fisheries regulatory measures are also being put in place for the long-term and sustainable management of stocks and with a view to minimising the impact of fisheries on non-target species and habitats. This has included the protection of deep water coral reefs proposed by Ireland for protection in NATURA 2000.

It is still too early to determine to what extent the new European Fisheries Fund is being used to benefit biodiversity. The collection of basic scientific information to support periodic assessments of the progress of the CFP in incorporating environmental protection requirements, in particular biodiversity, should be covered under the Data Collection Regulation, currently under revision.

4. To reinforce compatibility of regional and territorial development with biodiversity in the EU.

The evaluation of the new structural funds programmes for 2007-2013 is largely complete. In relation to EU Cohesion policy the Community Strategic Guidelines and the relevant fund regulations include clear references to the importance of nature protection in developing infrastructure and in relation to economic diversification. Resulting from the negotiations of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Cohesion Fund operational programmes for 2007-2013²⁵ the Member states have reported an allocation of sums of

²⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/analysis/external/evaluation/index_en.htm

²¹ COM (2006) 302 final

²² COM(2006) 231 and COM(2006)232 of 22.9.2006

²³ Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23.10.2007 (OJ L 288, 6.11.2007, p. 27).

²⁴ COM (2007) 575 final

²⁵ Source DG REGIO: Based on data from member states as at 12/11/2007. Data represents allocations within draft and adopted ERDF and CF programmes.

€700 million and €1090 million for spending on measures to promote biodiversity and nature protection (including Natura 2000) and for the protection of natural assets respectively. Around 80 % of these allocations are available in those regions benefiting from convergence status.

Experience with application of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to Structural Funds for 2007-2013 is progressing. Studies on the application of the Environmental Impact Assessment and SEA Directives have been launched in 2007 and will include examination of the relationship between these directives and the EU Biodiversity Action Plan and the Habitats Directive.

5. *To substantially reduce the impact on EU biodiversity of invasive alien species and alien genotypes.*

A gap assessment of the current legal and policy framework applying to invasive alien species (IAS) was completed in July 2006²⁶. The Commission is preparing a Communication for 2008 on policy options to tackle IAS in the European Union. This Communication will identify a future EU framework for IAS. A new study for the Commission will assess environmental, economic, and social impacts of IAS, assisting with the development of this policy.

There are currently several strategic projects to help inform EU policy development on IAS, funded under EU Research and Technological Development programmes²⁷. There are also ongoing discussions with the European Environment Agency on the feasibility of developing an EU Early warning and information system for IAS. An evaluation of the impacts of alien invasive species on the functioning of aquatic ecosystems, and how these species should be considered in the definition of the good ecological quality of waters, is being carried out under the coordination of the Joint Research Centre. A Council Regulation dealing specifically with alien species in aquaculture was agreed on 11 June 2007²⁸ and a new permit system will enter into force for this sector no later than 1 January 2009.

B. *POLICY AREA 2: The EU and global biodiversity*

Objectives

6. *To substantially strengthen effectiveness of international governance for biodiversity and ecosystem services.*

During 2007 the European Community has continued to strongly promote the implementation of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the strengthening of its effectiveness in international meetings. Preparations are already well advanced for the Ninth Conference of the Parties to the CBD (COP9) which takes place in Bonn, Germany in May 2008. On 28 June 2007, the Environment Council adopted the EC's preliminary priorities for COP9²⁹. G8 Environment Ministers also launched the so-called Potsdam Initiative which contains specific actions to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target. At the G8 Summit in

²⁶ See http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/invasivealien/index_en.htm

²⁷ See for example DASIE (<http://www.daisie.se/>)

²⁸ Council Regulation 708/2007

²⁹ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/envir/95033.pdf

Heiligendamm Heads of States and Governments acknowledged the Potsdam Initiative and committed to enhancing their efforts for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

There has been little progress in efforts to negotiate international rules under the UN General Assembly (UNGA) to guide and facilitate the establishment of marine protected areas in areas beyond national jurisdiction. Nevertheless, in October 2007 two important proposals were adopted by the Commission. A proposal was made for a regulation to protect fragile deep-water ecosystems from bottom trawling in the high seas³⁰, in line with recommendations issued by the UNGA. The EU will continue to promote initiatives to strengthen international action in the UN, Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) and relevant international conventions to protect vulnerable marine habitats. The second proposal aims at improving the fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing³¹. Proposed measures would only allow access to the EU market of fisheries products that have been certified as legal by the flag state or the exporting state concerned. A European black list of vessels and states would be set up as would deterrent sanctions against IUU fishing in EU waters and against EU operators engaged in IUU fishing anywhere in the world.

7. *To substantially strengthen support for biodiversity and ecosystem services in EU external assistance.*

A total of €30.6 million has been allocated to biodiversity for the four year period from 2007-2010 under the EC Thematic Programme for Environment and Natural Resources (ENRTP). Preparations are now underway for projects using these funds. Furthermore, some other headings of ENRTP are strongly linked to biodiversity. A total of €72 million is earmarked for the promotion of Sustainable Forest Management. €34 million is available for implementation of the initiative on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT). €6.4 million is earmarked for fisheries & marine/coastal resources. Approximately €6.5 million is earmarked under the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument ENPI and €13 million is allocated to Climate change and Biodiversity. In total, approximately €120 million will be available for biodiversity related matters under 2007-2010 ENRTP. This represents an annual average of €37.5 million, more or less equivalent to the amount of funding earmarked in the 2000-2006 period.

In 2007, the European Commission's Directorate General for Development carried out a data collection exercise on all environmental projects funded in the context of development cooperation from 2000-2006. Preliminary results demonstrate that for all geographical regions combined disbursements for biodiversity in this period amounted to about €50 million/year with considerable annual fluctuations. Both commitments and disbursements tended to be concentrated in certain years as they were linked to a certain extent to the different programming cycles. A trend analysis at this stage would therefore not provide a reliable insight. This figure includes all 286 projects which have been marked as being relevant for biodiversity³². These data include projects funded from the Environment and tropical forests budget line as well as projects funded from the geographical instruments.

For the next programming exercise of 2006-2013 or 2007-2013 for the European Development Fund (EDF), which took place after the adoption of the EU Action Plan, the

³⁰ COM(2007) 605 final (See also http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/press_corner/press_releases/com07_68_en.htm)

³¹ COM(2007) 602 final (See also http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/press_corner/press_releases/com07_67_en.htm)

³² OECD/DAC Rio marker, and/or biodiversity as DAC sector code, or biodiversity as keyword.

first estimates realised by AIDCO indicate that funding for specific biodiversity or protected areas projects will slightly increase in real terms in the ACP region, but decrease in Asia.

- In the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP), the comparison of the commitments for the major programmes in that field shows, excluding biodiversity activities within rural development programmes, that annual flow will reach around €19 million compared with €14 million for the 2000-2006 period. In absolute terms however, this increase should be put in perspective, as the annual EDF allocation has been approximately doubled between the 9th & 10th EDF.
- In Asia, apart from a €0.315 million project in Malaysia, €10 million for forest sector in Indonesia and some €6 million regional funds for the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) initiative, few funds appear to be specifically ear-marked for biodiversity compared with the preceding period under major programmes. The geographic range of cooperation in the field of biodiversity tends to narrow in the future programming, even if some opportunities exist under certain regional programmes or, in National Indicative Programmes (NIPs) under the chapters governance, support to civil society, rural development. The general trend is of a significant decrease in the field of biodiversity in the region, either in relative or absolute terms.
- In Latin America, important projects will continue in Brazil and Honduras. A €33 million project for river Basin management in Bolivia provides a good opportunity to strengthen support for biodiversity in that region compared with the preceding period, but still very few countries are concerned in that region.

As regards the mainstreaming of biodiversity in development cooperation, Country Environmental Profiles have been identified for most partner countries that stress the important role of biodiversity. Some projects, notably in rural development, include some components related to the conservation of biodiversity. However, very few countries have identified biodiversity as a priority sector for cooperation in their Country Strategy Papers. This is a major impediment to enhancing Community funding for biodiversity in development cooperation. On the other hand, almost all draft Country Strategy Papers include a commitment to undertake Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA), which will be essential in helping avoid negative impacts on environment and biodiversity.

The EU Council of both Environment and Development Cooperation Ministers welcomed the "Message from Paris - Integrating biodiversity into European development cooperation" adopted at a Conference on Biodiversity in European Development Cooperation (19-21 September 2006 in Paris)³³.

8. *To substantially reduce the impact of international trade on global biodiversity and ecosystem services.*

The EC has actively prepared for and participated in the 14th Conference of the Parties (COP14) of the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), which took place in the Hague, June 2007. A Commission recommendation was also adopted in June 2007³⁴ identifying a set of actions to strengthen enforcement of the Community Regulation (338/97) on CITES. CITES COP14 adopted some important decisions such as on ivory trade and the CITES Strategic Plan, which were supported by the EU.

³³ http://ec.europa.eu/development/Policies/9Interventionareas/Environment/biodiversity/biodiversity_en.cfm

³⁴ Commission Recommendation No 2007/425/EC

As part of its trade-related Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) Programme, the Commission is in the process of conducting SIAs for all its planned regional and bilateral free trade and partnership agreements, be they in Asia, Africa or Latin-America. These studies will include an assessment of potential impacts on biodiversity (e.g. as a result of trade liberalisation in biofuels) and will identify possible preventive or mitigation measures. A case in point is the SIA that is being conducted for the planned EC-Mercosur Free Trade Agreement. This will cover case studies in relation to the effects of trade liberalisation in agricultural products and biofuels. In all cases, a key challenge will be to ensure that the recommendations made in these studies inform the negotiations, i.e. that they are translated into concrete policy measures, be they trade or non-trade related.

The Commission has significantly shaped the EU position in ongoing negotiations of an International Regime on Access and Benefit Sharing, particularly through the organisation of a series of expert meetings. Significant progress has been made in implementing the EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan. Negotiations of Voluntary Partnership Agreements on FLEGT have started with Malaysia, Indonesia and Ghana. Negotiations are expected to start soon with several other developing countries. Consideration on further FLEGT measures is ongoing.

C. POLICY AREA 3: Biodiversity and climate change

Objective

9. To support biodiversity adaptation to climate change.

Tackling climate change has been a major development area of EU activity over the past year with proposals and options presented by Commission for measures to meet the target to limit global climate change to 2°C³⁵. The issue of climate change adaptation was also addressed during 2007 with the Commission producing a Green Paper on this subject³⁶. This recognises the central importance of maintaining healthy functioning ecosystems and emphasises the need for practical and early implementation of the EU Biodiversity Action Plan.

Climate change adaptation and mitigation measures may pose risks to biodiversity, including risks to the Natura 2000 network. However, adaptation options also include activities aimed at conserving and restoring native ecosystems, managing habitats for rare, threatened and endangered species, and protecting and enhancing ecosystem services. A Commission study contract has been launched to investigate biodiversity and climate change in relation to the Natura 2000 network. This will include the preparation of guidelines on relevant renewable energies focusing on wind, hydro & tidal barrages.

An INTERREG IIIB funded project examining spatial planning issues in relation to biodiversity adaptation to climate change has been completed in 2007³⁷. Ongoing projects funded under the Community Research and Technological Development programmes aim to

³⁵ COM(2007) 2 final

³⁶ COM(2007) 354 final

³⁷ BRANCH (see <http://www.branchproject.org/>)

provide a better understanding of the large scale environmental risks to biodiversity from climate change³⁸.

D. POLICY AREA 4: The knowledge base

Objective

10. To substantially strengthen the knowledge base for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, in the EU and globally.

There has been European consultation on an International mechanism for scientific advice on biodiversity (IMoSEB). A review of the economics of biodiversity loss has been jointly initiated by the European Commission and Germany in collaboration with the European Environment Agency. The first results of this assessment of the global economic benefit of biological diversity, the costs of the loss of biodiversity and the failure to take protective measures versus the costs of effective conservation shall be presented at CBD COP9 in May 2008.

A first call for proposals under the Community 7th Framework programme on research and technological development has included 3 biodiversity topics. These are related to the development of the ecosystem services concept. At present six successful proposals are currently under negotiation³⁹ as well as the LIFE WATCH plan for a new infrastructure for biodiversity and observatories⁴⁰.

The European Platform for Biodiversity Research Strategy (EPBRS) has developed a set of priorities for biodiversity research in response to the EU Action Plan to 2010 and Beyond and continues to help orient biodiversity research towards policy needs. In 2007 the EEA started the EURECA project on ecosystem assessment. This will contribute to a Millennium Ecosystem type Assessment of approaches and research work on modelling future trends for biodiversity & ecosystems in Europe and at the global level. This assessment is scheduled for publication in 2012.

E. THE FOUR KEY SUPPORTING MEASURES

1. Ensuring adequate financing

Comprehensive opportunities to co-fund Natura 2000 costs have been provided in each appropriate EC funding regulation for 2007-2013. Guidelines⁴¹ & training under an EC contract have been provided to assist Member States in applying these funds. An Information Technology Tool on financing Natura 2000 has been developed to assist potential beneficiaries on how individual measures for Natura 2000 might be funded by the different major EU sources⁴². Concerns have been expressed about poor uptake of funding opportunities in different Member States but it is too early to assess this. The Commission is

³⁸ COCONUT (see <http://coconut-project.net/>), MACIS (see <http://macis-project.net/>) and ALARM (see <http://www.alarmproject.net/alarm/>)

³⁹ HUNT, SOILSERVICE, HIGHARCS, LIVEDIVERSE, PALMS, VIVACE and EBONE

⁴⁰ LIFE WATCH is a <http://www.lifewatch.eu/index.php?id=411>
⁴¹ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/financing/index_en.htm

⁴² <http://www.financing-natura2000.mocccu.com/pub/index.html>

currently checking relevant funding programmes submitted by Member States. A new Commission study contract aims to further support linkages between financing and management of Natura 2000. The new LIFE+ programme (2007-2013) now provides possibilities to finance specific innovative or demonstration projects that contribute to the implementation of the objectives of the EU biodiversity action plan in addition to continuing support for best practice and demonstration conservation project that help implement Natura 2000 and the nature directives⁴³.

2. *Strengthening EU decision-making*

There have been discussions with Nature Directors of the Member States (both in Germany, May 2007 and Portugal, November 2007) on improving the EU governance structure for implementation of nature and biodiversity policy, having particular regard to delivery of the EU Biodiversity Action Plan. The Commission will continue its discussions with Member States and other stakeholders with a view to finalising a position on governance by early 2008.

3. *Building partnerships*

Work on developing an EU Business & Biodiversity initiative has involved consultations with businesses, NGOs and Member States. Business and Biodiversity was one of environmental priorities of the Portuguese Presidency during the second half of 2007 and a major conference on this subject, organised by the Presidency, took place in Lisbon on 12-13 November 2007. The Message from Lisbon, a consensus document from over 400 conference participants, half of them representing businesses, stressed the importance of engaging business in meeting the 2010 target, underlined the need for concerted action at the EU level⁴⁴. Building on the experience of the Lisbon conference the Commission will establish an EU business and biodiversity technical support platform in 2008.

An ongoing EU funded pilot study establishing biodiversity technical assistance units in three selected new Member States (Bulgaria, Hungary & Poland) aims to facilitate the creation of a new pro-biodiversity investment markets for businesses, especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and the banking sector, with a view to helping prepare bankable projects for future investment loans.

In 2008 the Commission will launch several initiatives aiming at the development and rewarding of Partnerships in the context of the management of the Natura 2000 network⁴⁵.

The Commission will also promote greater engagement of the hunting community in the implementation of the birds' directive and the habitats' directive and to further engage the community of wildlife recreational users in conservation and management of Natura 2000, including the angling community, with particular attention to the beneficial consequences that these activities bring for Natura 2000.

⁴³ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/funding/lifeplus.htm>

⁴⁴ <http://www.countdown2010.net/business>

⁴⁵ The first initiative will include the establishment of a web-based 'Natura 2000 communication platform'. This will allow different socio-economic sectors to become actively involved on their own initiative in the exchange of good practice and the preparation of sector-specific guidance and recommendations for good conduct. The second initiative will be the 'Natura 2000 Partner Reward Scheme'. This will reward individuals, organizations and public institutions that show particular merit in promoting the management of and the communication on Natura 2000.

4. Building public education, awareness and participation

Work has commenced on developing an EU Biodiversity Communication Campaign aimed at creating awareness about and support for the 2010 target and long-term protection of biodiversity. Key messages for key target groups will be identified, and a variety of tools will be taken into account. A scoping study was initiated in September 2007 to carry out market research on campaigns and to provide questions for a Eurobarometer opinion poll on the attitudes of Europeans towards the issue of biodiversity. The main findings of this poll, which took place in November 2007, reveal that 90 % of Europeans believe that the loss of biodiversity is a serious problem. A majority of EU citizens have heard of the term biodiversity, but only 20 % of respondents said that they had heard of the Natura 2000 network. This feedback underlines the need for communication to explain what the EU is doing and harness public support for EU action to halt biodiversity loss.

The Commission is already working on providing informative material to explain the EU Biodiversity Action Plan to halt biodiversity loss by 2010. A major publication to celebrate the Natura 2000 Network in Europe is also under preparation⁴⁶.

EU support for the Countdown 2010 Initiative has assisted a range of activities including events under EU Presidencies, with regions and local authorities and with the European Parliament⁴⁷.

F. MONITORING

The first set of 26 EU Headline Biodiversity Indicators to monitor the 2010 biodiversity target were published in October 2007 in the EEA Technical Report on Streamlining European biodiversity indicators (SEBI) 2010⁴⁸. This is provided as Annex II to this report. The SEBI initiative represents major progress in providing an objective EU-scale summary information from a wide range of experts. Promising work is under development, including that by the Joint Research Centre on habitat fragmentation and connectivity⁴⁹. The SEBI process has also highlighted major data gaps (IAS, genetic diversity, biodiversity & climate change impacts and adaptation links, sustainable use, governance, communication). SEBI will continue to provide a major input for future assessment of the 2010 biodiversity target.

A biodiversity state indicator - the 'Common bird index' – has been included in the 2007 Sustainable Development Indicators (SDI) reviewed set⁵⁰ (cf. final list of indicators adopted as an annex to the European Commission 2007 progress report on the sustainable development strategy). Further biodiversity-related indicators, such as the sufficiency of Member States proposals for protected sites under the Habitats Directive, are being included in the SDI process depending on the expected availability of data with sufficient quality and coverage.

⁴⁶ See also the Natura 2000 Newsletter at http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/index_en.htm

⁴⁷ <http://www.countdown2010.net/>

⁴⁸ <http://biodiversity-chm.eea.europa.eu/information/indicator/F1090245995>

⁴⁹ See MCPFE report at <http://www.mcpfe.org/node/135>

⁵⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/sustainable/docs/estat_2007_sds_en.pdf

The Commission is working with EEA, Eurostat and JRC within the framework of the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) on developing a common approach for the establishment of a Europe wide shared information system to inform biodiversity policy in Europe. This will be undertaken jointly with Member States.

G. EVALUATION AND REVIEW

This assessment is a response of the commitment of the European Commission to provide annual reporting to 2010 on progress in delivery of the EU Biodiversity Action Plan. It covers the period from adoption of the Biodiversity Communication up to end of 2007 and focuses on Community level action.

Preparation of the report has involved consultations within the European Commission in the framework of the Interdepartmental Biodiversity Co-ordination Group. There have also been discussions with Member States both within the framework of meetings of the Nature Directors and of the Biodiversity Expert Group.

The Commission will be assisted in further evaluations by a service contract launched in 2007. This will help with preparation of the second report covering the period up to the end of 2008, which will be a concise mid-term evaluation of progress towards the 2010 targets at both Community and also involve Member States, supported by an indicator-based assessment of progress in reaching the 2010 biodiversity target by the EEA.