



'We are all in this together'* -

The European Commission's Biodiversity Campaign

Protecting biodiversity is in our self-interest. Biological resources are the pillars upon which our civilisations are built. Nature's products support industries as diverse as agriculture and pharmaceuticals. The loss of biodiversity threatens our food supplies, opportunities for recreation, sources of wood, medicines and energy and thus endangers both human and environmental health.

Therefore in 2001 the EU undertook to halt the decline of biodiversity in the EU by 2010 and to restore habitats and ecosystems. In 2006, the European Commission adopted the 'EU Action Plan to 2010 and Beyond'. In line with this plan, the European Commission will launch an EU-wide awareness raising campaign in 2010, the International Year of Biodiversity (see box on the next page).

* the slogan chosen for the campaign

Biodiversity. We're all in this together.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity is often defined as the variety of all forms of life, from genes to species, through to the broad scale of ecosystems. The term Biodiversity was coined as a contraction of 'biological diversity' in 1985, but the new term arguably has taken on its own meaning and is now widely used¹. Biodiversity is often used as a measure of the health of biological systems. Today, the biodiversity found on Earth consists of many millions of distinct biological species.

¹Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

'Biodiversity is the sheer variety of life on Earth'

The goal of the campaign is two-fold: its aim is to raise awareness on the loss of biodiversity but also to show how to slow it down and turn the loss around. To get insights into what European citizens think and feel about the subject of biodiversity, a Flash Eurobarometer survey was conducted. The results showed that Europeans do not feel well informed about the issue - only 35% of Europeans actually say they know what biodiversity means. 43% see biodiversity loss as a problem in their own country, but it is seen as more important at a global level. Many people see no immediate personal impact of biodiversity loss but they consider that it will be a problem in the future, especially for their children. In-depth qualitative research was also carried out in several countries – it confirmed that the concept of biodiversity is unfamiliar, or associated with distant wild life – not with humans and civilisation. Very little importance is attached to this concept in an everyday urban context. However, when people realize how much they depend on biodiversity and ecosystem services, they agree on the need to preserve it and express the wish to behave better and to do something about it. The conclusive recommendation for the campaign was therefore to introduce biodiversity in a way that is relevant to people's daily life and concerns.

'The world would be a better place if people would see nature as part of the future instead of the past.'

Agilvy





International Year of Biodiversity

The United Nations declared 2010 to be the International Year of Biodiversity. It is a unique opportunity to increase understanding of the vital role that biodiversity plays in sustaining life on Earth. National celebrations to promote biodiversity will take place around the world, many countries will launch national communication campaigns, organise events, conferences and other activities on the issue of biodiversity. Please visit the website of the [Convention on Biological Diversity](http://www.biodiv.org/) to learn more about the International Year of Biodiversity.

The target group of the campaign will be European citizens in general, but tailored to families caring about the future of their children and young urban people aware of their personal and civic responsibility. To efficiently impact their behavior, the campaign will be composed of two phases. It will initially try to introduce European citizens to the concept of biodiversity. People will be made aware of biodiversity, what it represents, what role humans play in it and how it exists in our modern world, how essential it is for humanity as well as the dangers we contribute to it and thus to our own existence. The urgency of the situation and the need to act now will be underlined. In this phase, provocative images and messages that people cannot ignore will be used (see 5 visual examples in this newsflash) - the desired effect is to create attention, raise eyebrows and get on the news. This would be a way to add the word 'Biodiversity' into the vocabulary of the citizens of the EU.

During the second phase, emphasis will be put on activation and education: by making an emotional connection with what matters to people in life and by showing them how biodiversity and its preservation can offer them benefits, people will be motivated to act. Suggestions, tips and instructions will be given on how they can act and contribute to preservation as 'small' individuals – within a larger, more structural scope of EU regulations, measures and projects.

To fulfil this double objective, creating awareness and stimulating action, the campaign will resort to both verbal and graphic means to communicate biodiversity. It will use creative means including online viral films and online social networks such as Facebook. In the latter, users will be able to become a friend of an endangered species. In the course of the campaign, further material such as toolkits for national implementation will be provided to spread the campaign all over Europe.

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DG Environment of the European Commission has charged the communication agency Ogilvy with the development of the Biodiversity Campaign. The campaign will be officially launched on January 26th 2010 in Madrid during the meeting 'Delivering Biodiversity Targets: 2010 and Beyond / Protected Areas and Ecological Networks in Europe'. For more information, contact Natasza.HOFFMANN@ec.europa.eu.

For further information on biodiversity, please visit the dedicated section on the [Europa website](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/) where different [factsheets](#) are available ('Ecosystem Goods and Services', 'Nature's role in climate change', 'Invasive Alien Species') as well as a leaflet ('The Message from Athens') that deals with policy challenges.

This newsflash is issued by the EECN which is DG Environment's support structure for European Environmental Communication Networks.

Visit the website of the EECN on:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/networks/index_en.htm to learn more about the activities of the networks and read newsflashes previously released.

