

Draft Minutes

22nd Meeting of the Co-ordination Group for Biodiversity and Nature (CGBN)
Wednesday 15 March 2017, 09:30-17:30
European Commission Conference Centre "Albert Borschette" – Room 2.A
36, rue Froissart - B-1040 Brussels (Schuman metro station)

Co-Chairs:

Jana Durkošová, Slovak Republic

Stefan Leiner, European Commission, Head of Unit ENV.D.2 (Biodiversity)

Nicola Notaro, European Commission, Head of Unit ENV.D.3 (Nature Protection)

Documents: See CIRCABC internet site

Nature of the meeting: Open for CGBN stakeholder members, no web-streaming.

1. Approval of agenda and minutes of previous meetings

The agenda was approved. The minutes of the 21st CGBN meeting (22 September 2016) and of the Extraordinary CGBN meeting (26 January 2017) were approved without modification.

The Netherlands requested scheduling a discussion on the climate change mitigation and adaptation agenda (Member States' report on national plans under the Paris Agreement), either at the next Nature Directors' Meeting (NDM) in May 2017, or at the next CGBN meeting in September 2017. The Commission confirmed the topic's relevance to ongoing developments and agreed to consider it, in consultation with the Maltese Presidency.

- **Update from the NDM on 10-12/10/2016 under the Slovak Presidency**

The Slovak representative reported from the last NDM, noting good representation of MS and civil society stakeholders, and outlining the main discussion points and conclusions (inter alia on the CGBN Roadmap and a proposal for a joint meeting with Agriculture Directors). The Conclusions and the CGBN Roadmap were sent out to the CGBN on 17 October (*see PPT presentation on CIRCA.*) The chair thanked the Presidency for the hospitality and the excellent organisation.

The Netherlands referred to the NDM discussion on the Nature Outlook (final report to be launched on 23 March in Brussels¹).

- **Information on the next NDM / Conference on 29-30/05/2017 under the Maltese Presidency**

The Maltese representative provided an update of the plans for the next NDM in Malta, the main topics on the agenda and field visits (including possibly a release of several sea turtles into the wild) (*see PPT presentation on CIRCA:* <https://circabc.europa.eu/w/browse/e74ace96-c35b-46f7-8fee-cfd767542c3a>).

IUCN informed the CGBN of a planned meeting on marine issues, following the NDM in Malta.

Estonia announced the date of the following NDM under its Presidency: 28-29 September 2017.

¹ <http://www.pbl.nl/en/news/newsitems/2017/launch-nature-outlook>

2. Points discussed

2.1. Nature Action Plan

Ideas that had emerged from the Nature Fitness Check exercise were presented at the NDM in Slovakia on 11/10/2016, and were discussed further at a dedicated extraordinary CGBN meeting on 26/01/2017 (without prejudice to the content of the Commission's upcoming proposal). A [Roadmap for the development of an "Action Plan for nature, people and the economy" to follow-up on the Nature Fitness Check](#) was published on 10/02/2017 and posted on the CGBN CIRCA page.

The Commission provided an update on the developments since the extraordinary CGBN meeting. There were 48 further submissions from Member States and stakeholders in 2017. The Commission has continued internal discussions to further refine the **four main areas and possible actions**:

- More/better guidance and policy coherence;
- More political ownership and better compliance;
- Strengthening investment in Natura 2000 and EU funding;
- Communication and stakeholder engagement activities, including strengthened links between natural and cultural heritage (2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage), working with local authorities (Committee of the Regions) and young people (Solidarity Corps).

The Commission noted that some proposed actions could not be reflected as they would pre-empt discussions on the next MFF and on the future of the CAP. All actions should have an implementation timeline within this Commission's mandate (i.e. by the end of 2019). Factsheets for each of the agreed concrete actions will be prepared and published together with the Nature Action Plan.

The timeline for the next steps is as follows:

- Nature Action Plan adoption by the end of April 2017,
- Launch of the Natura 2000 Day on 15 May (including an official high-level signing event in Brussels)
- Nature Action Plan Conference on 6 June in Brussels
- Possible Council Conclusions on 19 June under the Maltese Presidency.

The following main points were made in the discussion:

- The definitive timetable for Council Conclusions on the Nature Action Plan would depend on the adoption schedule for the plan itself. The Nature Conference will not be part of the process to develop Council Conclusions, but a forum for broader discussions with stakeholders, in order to test the level of ownership and focus resources on what has a chance to succeed.
- Bilateral dialogues are foreseen in the framework of the follow-up to the Environmental Implementation Review (EIR), based on interest indicated by the Member States and the priority topics which they request. This is a rather ambitious and resource-intensive process.
- It was discussed that, following the Nature Action Plan and the Member States' political reaction in Council, the Commission and the CGBN should take a fresher look at the Roadmap for enhanced implementation of the Biodiversity Strategy, and update it as necessary for endorsement at the NDM in Estonia in September 2017.
- Several stakeholder organisations called for more flexibility in the application of the Annexes. The Commission clarified that while the political decision not to open the Directives applies to the Annexes as well, good practice exists in the Member States and the guidance documents will be updated in this regard, in consultation with stakeholders and the Member States.

- An action was suggested to exchange good practice in local stakeholder involvement in the Member States. It was noted that several of the proposed actions in the Plan are relevant for best practice collection and exchange, and they could include also stakeholder engagement experience.
- In response to calls for informing stakeholders on developments on the next MFF, the Commission noted that it was still at the stage of internal reflections. Several Member States expressed regret about the lack of links to the next MFF in the Nature Action Plan. As Member States are reflecting on their environmental funding needs for the next period, it would be useful to exchange information and to discuss the European Court of Auditors' recommendations on tracking and on improved needs assessment for Natura 2000. The Commission outlined opportunities for information exchange, starting with an agenda point at the NDM in Malta (May 2017) to explore ideas. The outcomes of a study looking at different options and avenues for the next MFF could also be shared, not precluding the Commission's eventual proposal.
- Expenditure under the current MFF would continue until 2022-2023. It was emphasized that the use of these existing funds over the next years needs to be clarified as priority. The ECA report had identified issues in that the tracking system does not distinguish between funding for biodiversity and funding for Natura 2000; the report referred to similar issues in relation to Member States' funding. This is a challenge to address at both levels. The Commission noted that there is also double responsibility in implementation (Member States' authorities proposing Operational and Rural Development Programmes, and the Commission making suggestions for improvement). There are sometimes inconsistencies between the submitted Operational Programmes and RDPs on the one hand and PAFs on the other. Member States also have the task to engage stakeholders in the programming process. In terms of compensation, Natura 2000 payments and RDP are not sufficiently used. The Commission is reflecting on why this is happening and how to address it in the current MFF and in the internal debate on the next MFF.
- Communication and awareness-raising were highlighted as priorities for action. The Nature Action Plan has a specific action dedicated to communication, which is still being shaped. It was noted that reaching out to large audiences may need the involvement of actors from other sectors. Several CGBN members inquired about plans and ideas for the World Environment Day (this year under the theme of nature, 5 June) and for the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018. Plans are currently being developed and should link to cultural capitals. The 2018 Capitals of Culture Leeuwarden (Netherlands) and Valletta (Malta) intend to bring attention to nature in combination with cultural heritage. Synergies will be considered with the World Environment (activities can be linked to the Nature Conference on 6 June).
- On being asked to clarify its plans for a NNL initiative, the Commission explained that the proposed action on ecosystem services would be relevant but would have a wider scope, and noted that possible actions on green infrastructure, ecosystem services and pollinators were currently under discussion, along with other actions.
- The discussions highlighted further issues of importance to address in the Action Plan, such as habitat definition, updating the jurisprudence guidance, strengthening field monitoring (in addition to the use of satellite technologies); guidance on favourable conservation status (to address inconsistencies), compensation to land owners for income foregone, as well as action to address coherence with energy policy, in particular with the strategic planning of renewables. The Commission referred to actions within and beyond the Nature Action Plan to improve policy coherence, including the guidance on Natura 2000 and hydropower, and an updated guidance on wind energy. An EP pilot, to be launched in the coming months, will look in particular at the impacts of renewable energy sources and sensitivity maps.

2.2. Final evaluation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020

A background note was available on CIRCA: <https://circabc.europa.eu/w/browse/c06de188-b9d8-4afe-a039-d54aa2cc3ad7> in advance of the meeting

The Commission presented the EU and international reporting timelines on biodiversity commitments, and first ideas on the possible framework for the final evaluation. Progress under MAES will help to make a more detailed assessment of ecosystem condition and trends. The agenda for 2020 is very heavy, with a number of major deliverables scheduled: the next EEA European Environment State and Outlook Report (SOER), the State of Nature Report (SON) and the final evaluation of the Biodiversity Strategy. These will depend on Member States' inputs, including in the MAES integrated assessment at the end of 2019 and reporting under Art. 12 BD / Art.17 HD. It is therefore important to coordinate at an early stage and keep the reporting timelines.

The following main points were made in the discussion:

- There was acknowledgement that keeping with the timetable would require significant effort on all sides and careful orchestration. The European Environment Agency (EEA) will have a very tight schedule (2-3 months) to carry out quality assurance of the national Habitats Directive Art 17 and Birds Directive Art 12 reporting data, processing and EU assessment for the State of Nature Report. A lot will depend on the timely delivery by the Member States. **The CGBN national representatives will share the overview and schedule with their offices to make colleagues aware of expectations and timing.**
- Links with the MAES assessment and reporting on the State of Nature were discussed. The EEA is involved in the MAES assessment and will update it with the SoN assessments. The methodology for using Art.17 data for ecosystem condition assessment in MAES is currently being improved. MAES will provide a policy relevant assessment related to the biodiversity targets, and will also give a more integrated picture of what is happening within and outside of Natura 2000.
- Reporting from all other relevant areas will be taken into account. More attention was requested to synergies with marine/water in particular. It was further suggested that proposed indicators under the Convention on Migratory Species could also be taken into account.
- A positive aspect noted was that a lot of data would become available at the same time to feed into the analysis.
- **The final evaluation process should provide sufficient room for stakeholder contributions.** ELO is about to launch a survey on cultural ecosystem services. The results will be shared.
- **The links from the final evaluation to the development of the post-2020 framework** should be made more visible.

2.3. Planned Commission report to review progress in implementing the EU Green Infrastructure Strategy

A background note was available on CIRCA: <https://circabc.europa.eu/w/browse/c06de188-b9d8-4afe-a039-d54aa2cc3ad7> in advance of the meeting

The Commission recalled that the Green Infrastructure strategy foresees a review in 2017 to take stock of implementation and draw lessons for the future. In order to minimise the burden for the Member States, the Commission has started work (with the support of a contractor) on draft country fiches consolidating information from BISE, the Environmental Implementation Review or other

sources. The Commission intends to circulate the draft country fiches by end April for fact-checking and comments by the national authorities. In parallel, The Commission will review the actions it has developed at EU level, as regards the 4 work streams identified in the Strategy, and progress in their implementation. A point in the agenda of the Green Infrastructure and Restoration WG is envisaged at its meeting on 29 June. A draft synthesis report, which will build on the review of progress made at EU level as well as at Member States' level, will be presented for discussion at the CGBN in September 2017. The final report will be made available on BISE.

The following points were made in the discussion:

- Tensions with land managers were highlighted by stakeholders, in that green infrastructure is sometimes seen as a zoning exercise that puts new land use restrictions or additional requirements e.g. on farmers. The Commission took note of the concern.
- The level of information available for the review is very different from one Member State to another. The questions for the draft fiches were considered challenging to answer by a few MS, since the concept of green infrastructure is interpreted differently and is not fixed in law. The Commission referred to the definition of green infrastructure offered by the strategy, noted that in some MS, green infrastructure concepts had been cast into national legislation, and reflected on the positive potential of reviewing different national approaches in order to draw lessons for the years to come. Given that MS (through the Council) and other EU institutions, have asked the Commission to table a proposal for a TEN-G, the review could also provide some information on whether and how a more strategic approach at EU level could complement the current EU strategy and the Member States' efforts.
- it was noted that analysis and information on mainstreaming green infrastructure in other sectors such as urban policy, spatial planning, transport, energy, and flood protection infrastructure would be very useful. Several Member States referred to national experience and expressed interest in the review as an opportunity to exchange experience and learn about different national approaches. It was noted that a uniform approach may not be possible or necessary, given that green infrastructure provides solutions to respond to a range of challenges, at different levels.
- CGBN members asked who would be contacted by the Commission in the fact-checking and consultation process, and how the different positions would be assessed. The Commission explained that the intention was to send the draft country fiches to the Member States' representatives in the CGBN and the Green Infrastructure and Restoration WG (who may decide to consult further authorities or stakeholders). The Commission also agreed to consider with the contractor to what extent publications in national languages could be used.
- Information on the implementation of HD Art.10 collected in the context of the Nature Fitness Check would be taken into account in relation to functional and structural connectivity.

In concluding the discussion, the Commission indicated that the definition of GI would be added to the template of the country fiches; reminded that green infrastructure is about seeking to enhance ecosystem services delivery and maximising synergies with other environment-related policies and legislation to facilitate their better implementation; and referred to good initiatives happening on the ground in all the Member States that should also be made more visible through this review.

The CGBN members were invited to send written comments on the planned review process and format, as well as possible documents to be taken into account in preparing the draft fiches, by 21/04/2017 to ENV-BIODIVERSITY@ec.europa.eu.

2.4. Summary report from CBD COP 13

The Commission reported on the main outcomes of the 13th Conference of the Parties under the Convention on Biological Diversity in December 2016. The agenda was very dense, with parallel COP-MOP meetings under the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefits Sharing and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. A high-level segment with environment and sector ministers preceding the Conference adopted the [Cancun declaration on mainstreaming the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for well-being](#)².

The EU position, in the form of Council Conclusions adopted under the Slovak Presidency, covered over 60 paragraphs reflecting the dense COP 13 agenda. The EU objectives for Cancun were almost fully achieved thanks to the extensive preparatory work to reach a common EU position, and the coordinated efforts of Member States, the Presidency and the Commission at the COP 13 itself.

COP 13 adopted decisions on a wide range of topics³. Some of the most difficult negotiations concerned marine and coastal biodiversity, voluntary guidelines on the involvement of indigenous people and local communities, the subject of synthetic biology; there were also difficult discussions on Article 10 of the Nagoya Protocol. The guidance on risk assessment under the Cartagena Protocol was not endorsed but noted.

Reflections have started on the preparation of the Post-2020 Strategic Plan. CBD COP14 will take place in Egypt in 2018. CBD COP 15 in 2020 (new Strategic Plan) will take place in China in 2020, and CBD COP 16 will be in Turkey in 2022.

Finally, the Commission reported briefly from the 5th plenary meeting of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), which took place on 7-10/03 in Bonn. IPBES is facing severe budget shortages. The 2017 budget was agreed but important work in 2018 (completion of the European Regional Assessment, the Land Degradation Assessment) depends on new funding pledges from Members or on finding other sources. Pending resolving the status of the EU in the IPBES Rules of procedures (EU is aiming at full membership), the EU was granted enhanced observer status which will enable it to better support the work of the IPBES Secretariat..

The following points were made in the discussion:

- Securing financing for the work of IPBES was recognized as crucial, also in view of the important assessments due in 2018. Member States' support in this regards was highlighted and thanked for (FR has made extra resource available and seconded an expert to work on fundraising; DE has pledged significant funding as well as hosting the IPBES Secretariat; etc.). Financing options were discussed e.g. Horizon 2020 (for national representatives at the Committee to request).
- It was noted that 2016 data on the EU's delivery under the resource mobilisation commitment are not available yet. Updated figures for 2015 will be available soon, in response to a new notification from the CBD.

² <https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/cop/cop-13/official/cop-13-24-en.pdf>

³ For a full list, see [Decisions of the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity](#): <https://www.cbd.int/conferences/2016/cop-13/documents>

2.5. Agriculture and Forestry Related Issues

Public Consultation on the future Common Agricultural Policy

A press release was sent to the CGBN in advance of the meeting.

The Commission (DG ENV) informed that a public consultation on the future of the EU Common Agricultural Policy⁴ is open until 2 May 2017 for all stakeholders (in all official languages) and invited all stakeholders to participate in the consultation. The consultation and the following impact assessment are being carried out with the aim of maximising the CAP's contribution to the Commission's ten priorities and to the Sustainable Development Goals. Results of the questionnaire will be published and communicated in a public conference in July 2017. The process will lead to a Commission Communication towards the end of 2017.

The following points were made in the discussion:

- Member States' and stakeholders' input to the Nature Action Plan includes proposals on how to improve integration with the CAP that should be taken into account. Many Member States are discussing and building their positions on the future CAP and MFF. It is important to feed these into the consultation. More detailed position papers or proposals can be submitted to the Commission in addition to the online consultation responses.
- Opportunities for dialogue with the agriculture sector should be actively sought, e.g. in the proposed informal discussions between Nature and Agriculture Directors (ref. NDM Conclusions, Slovakia, October 2016).
- Issues suggested for consideration in more detail included:
 - The compensation nature of agri/forest environmental payments which cover lost income but do not reward benefits. They cannot compete with the economic profits that farmers and foresters can get on the market (i.e. need for payments for ecosystem services). In relation to this, the Commission invited all participants to a workshop on "Farming for Biodiversity: Results-based payments for biodiversity achievements in agriculture" on 30 March in Brussels, to which CGBN members had received an invitation.
 - The existence still of perverse incentives under the CAP leading e.g. to the intensification of marginal land with high biodiversity impacts.
 - The need for: more sensitive rules and less rigid control systems in relation to the compensation of farmers and foresters in Natura 2000; flexibility to allow consideration of natural dynamics; linking across forestry and agricultural measures to create connectivity (i.e. not stop at the end of the forest).
 - Funding for the extensive management of high nature value grasslands and wetlands.
 - Improved field monitoring of biodiversity in farmland.
 - Taking a holistic view on the range of challenges faced by the agriculture sector, including climate change, food quality and security, environmental protection (including air and water quality, and climate mitigation and adaptation) and economic sustainability; consideration of how agri-environmental schemes can better support climate adaptation objectives.
 - Implications of trade rules and recent trade agreements for agriculture and biodiversity (a request was made to discuss this at the next CGBN). The Commission reminded that the information note on progress under the Biodiversity Strategy mentions several recent developments under Target 6 in relation to trade: a scoping study on biodiversity integration into trade agreements launched, to be followed by a larger contract on methodologies for future trade agreements. There is a relatively advanced "Sustainable Development and Trade" chapter in CETA. DG ENV will contact DG TRADE for an update.

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/consultations/cap-modernising/2017_en

The Commission reminded in conclusion that suggestions will be welcome in the context of the consultation on how the future CAP can answer the challenges of today and of the future. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind the possibilities to modify Rural Development Programmes in the current CAP if there is evidence that measures are not working for nature and biodiversity, or if there are new emerging challenges. The Commission is also currently drafting a report and SWD on the evaluation of Ecological Focus Areas (EFA)/green payment schemes [*in the meantime adopted on 29/03/2017*⁵]. In the framework of the Greening Review, the Commission has proposed a ban on pesticides in EFA. The Regulation is currently under scrutiny period by the Council and the EP, and CGBN national Members may wish to liaise on this proposal with their counterparts in the agriculture ministries.

Evaluation of forestry measures under CAP / Rural Development

The Commission (DG AGRI) presented the ongoing evaluation of RDP forestry measures. An evaluation roadmap⁶ was published in 2016 explaining the purpose, subject, content, scope and the evidence base of the evaluation, as well as the consultation process (it is still possible to make comments on the roadmap and the suggested evaluation process⁷). The evaluators are currently collecting evidence and feedback from authorities, civil dialogue groups and stakeholders on forestry measures under the RDP looking into environmental, economic and social aspects. Attention is also paid to other measures which can interfere with forestry. In addition, there will be a counterfactual analysis, i.e. a comparison with a situation in the absence of aids. The evaluation contract will finish at the end of November. It is conducted under one of a number of framework contracts to evaluate the CAP. Other evaluations will probably look into climate change and renewable energy.

A broad public consultation (including an online questionnaire) is currently under preparation. Once the consultation will be launched, the CGBN members will be informed so that they can provide input and liaise with counterparts in the national administrations directly consulted by the external contractor in this process.

The following points were made in the discussion:

- Evidence indicates that forestry measures programmed in the national and regional RDPs are not being taken up by foresters on the ground. This in turn prompts national authorities to reduce the budgets for these measures. The very low uptake of forest Natura 2000 payments was also one of the findings of the Nature Fitness Check. The reasons for this need to be clarified and addressed in the final evaluation (are measures not well targeted, burdensome, not competitive with alternatives, not well-linked with other measures, or anything else?)
- It was suggested to make a folder with related studies and references to stakeholder comments on the Nature Directives' Fitness Check on CIRCA⁸ to ease the consultation process. The Commission noted that all studies are published on the evaluation webpages.
- Information was also requested about which national authorities would be contacted by the evaluators, and on the connection between the CAP evaluation and the EU forestry strategy.

⁵ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1490786763554&uri=COM:2017:152:FIN>

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2016_plan_239_evaluation_forestry_roadmap_en.pdf

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/consultations/docs/planned-consultations-2016_en.pdf;
http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/consultations/public/index_en.htm; and form for sending comments:
<http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/#fbform>

⁸ Note: The Nature Fitness Check evaluation can be seen here:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/fitness_check/docs/nature_fitness_check.pdf.

The responses received to the Fitness Check public consultation can be seen here:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/fitness_check/evidence_gathering/index_en.htm

Management authorities for RDP funding are the first points of contact and they are expected to provide the contractor with further contacts.

- The final evaluation of the BDS should consider the evaluation of all programmes and policies from RDP, agriculture and forestry, fisheries, EU forestry strategy etc.
- More interaction is needed between the CGBN and the Standing Forestry Committee. **DG Environment indicated that the Commission services are discussing a possible back-to-back CGBN/SFC meeting with one joint session, on 14-15 September 2017 (to be confirmed).** A joint meeting of the Civil Dialogue Group on Forestry and Cork and the SFC is also envisaged.

Further work of the CGBN working group on "Nature and Forests"

The Commission recalled that DG ENV and DG AGRI set up 4 years ago the informal working group 'Natura 2000 and Forests' which has developed a guide on Natura 2000 and Forests. Exchanges within the group were not always easy but over time the group provided a platform for dialogue, mutual understanding and cooperation. Now that the main task has been accomplished (Guide on Natura 2000 and forests delivered), the Commission considers building on the positive experience and continuing the process. The next steps could be to set up the group as a sub-group of the CGBN – to bring it in line with the new rules for Commission expert groups – and to draw up a formal mandate and deliverables. Discussions within the Natura 2000 & Forests working group last December provided already some elements for a possible mandate. In addition, CGBN members were invited to suggest concrete tasks and deliverables which the group could work on in the future.

The following points were made in the discussion:

- The Natura 2000 and Forests group was created years ago to address mistrust and misunderstanding, and to improve dialogue between different stakeholder groups. In the process, it developed into a real dialogue group, building better understanding beyond the guidance. One of the possible future objectives should be to maintain this dialogue, and if there are issues beyond Natura 2000, these could also be discussed in a spirit of cooperation.
- The options for continuing the work of the group had been discussed earlier in the context of the CGBN roadmap and the Common Implementation Framework. If a decision is taken to go ahead, a concrete task could be the development of a guidance document with practical methods and instruments to enhance the implementation of Target 3B (beyond Natura 2000)
- Links with the Biogeographical Seminars would also need to be addressed. Biogeographical Seminars are a process to enhance cooperation and exchange of best practice on Natura 2000 management. This also covers forests, e.g. there are forestry workshops in the Mediterranean and in the Alpine Regions.
- The discussion prompted inquiries on related other CIF groups, such as the Biodiversity and Agriculture WG (still under reflection). The Commission was requested to share with the national authorities the full list of the CIF Expert Groups with their members' contacts. An updating of the lists is underway and they will be shared with the national members upon completion.

In order to give the CGBN Members the necessary time for reflection and consultation, the Commission invited them to provide written feedback on this proposal as well as suggestions for possible concrete tasks and deliverables, in the course of the following three weeks (by 14 April 2017 at the latest), to the functional mailboxes ENV-BIODIVERSITY@ec.europa.eu and Nature@ec.europa.eu.

2.6.AOB

- The Commission informed the CGBN that in line with the Better Regulation principles, there will be an **evaluation of the 2013 EU Climate Adaptation Strategy** in 2017-2018, which will result in a Commission evaluation report. Lessons learnt will also feed into the review of the Strategy in 2018. There are Stakeholder workshops planned in March and April; and an online consultation will be launched in September.
- The Commission briefly presented progress under the **Environmental Implementation Review**, with the first set of country reports and an overarching Communication published in January 2017, and follow-up events envisaged in 2017 (see PPT on CIRCA: <https://circabc.europa.eu/w/browse/e74ace96-c35b-46f7-8fee-cfd767542c3a>)
Member States can request the organisation of country dialogues and to identify priority topics as a way to raise awareness, work together better, understand deep root causes and to make implementation more political. Member States are also encouraged to invite stakeholders to these dialogues. In June, a peer-to-peer exchange and learning tool will be launched. The next country dialogues are envisaged in Tallinn (28 March 2017), Brussels (29 March 2017) and Bratislava (3 April 2017).

A brief discussion followed in which it was noted that the EIR complements rather than replaces legal proceedings, and that it needs to be clarified how it would work in practice (in particular how MS could be involved in the context of infringement procedures and in bilateral dialogues in parallel). Stakeholders inquired about opportunities to feed into the national level assessments in the next cycle, and pointed out that cross-cutting issues such as capacity are important to address. Member States asked for an opportunity to correct some of the summary brochures before formal translation versions are put online (comments on the brochures can be sent to ENV-BIODIVERSITY@ec.europa.eu and Nature@ec.europa.eu). The country reports themselves had been checked with the Environment Ministries in September last year and they are final, but there will be updated series every two years.) The Commission explained that national authorities are asked to involve civil society in the country dialogues. Opportunities exist to provide input to the EESC, CoR and EP follow-up processes. Infringement discussions are to be kept separate to the extent possible.

The Commission referred to the updated lists of studies and upcoming events list on CIRCA: <https://circabc.europa.eu/w/browse/0f2f0fdb-be41-4f65-9ea3-3d171b135c22>
Some events were highlighted in particular:

- The Beaulieu Café at DG ENV (regular events / discussions on politically topical issues in a relaxed atmosphere) will take place on 11 May with the theme of Biodiversity and Food security.
- Green Week 2017 will take place from 29 May to 2 June with the theme of 'Green jobs for a greener future'. In addition to a high level conference in Brussels, the programme will also feature a series of partner events and actions taking place across Europe. The high-level conference will include a sessions on nature and green jobs. The full programme is available on <http://www.eugreenweek.eu/>
- The Twelfth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals will take place in Manila on 23 – 28 October 2017

- The next meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) and the Working Group on Article 8j will take place in December in Montreal
- It was remarked that the Dutch parliamentary elections featured a very popular polling station on the island of Marker Wadden, a major nature restoration project. The island is closed to the public but voters could reach the polling station by boat on the day.

There was a brief session with questions and answers on the "Summary of progress under the Biodiversity Strategy to 2020" uploaded on CIRCA in advance of the meeting (<https://circabc.europa.eu/w/browse/c06de188-b9d8-4afe-a039-d54aa2cc3ad7>). The Commission explained the process of updating the IAS list, from new requests, risk assessments according to criteria defined in the Regulation, Scientific Forum discussions to debate in the IAS Committee (looking also at socio-economic aspects and costs). Stakeholders are invited to provide relevant information (can be sent to the ENV-BIODIVERSITY@ec.europa.eu functional mailbox). The first list update is expected to be voted upon at the next IAS Committee meeting on 19 June, information is available on the [IAS page](#).

In relation to Target 1, Action 1 under the "Summary of progress" document, Ireland noted that it disagrees with the conclusions on sufficiency of designation with regards to the bottlenose dolphin.

3. Next steps

- The CGBN national representatives are invited to share with their offices the timeline for the final evaluation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 and the overview of key deliverables, in order to make colleagues aware of expectations and timing (as discussed under Agenda point 2.2).
- CGBN members are invited to send written comments on the planned Green Infrastructure review process and format, as well as possible documents to be taken into account, by 21/04/2017 to ENV-BIODIVERSITY@ec.europa.eu (as discussed under Agenda point 2.3)
- CGBN Members are invited to provide written feedback on the proposal for continuing the mandate of the Nature and Forests working Group as well as suggestions for possible concrete tasks and deliverables, by 7 April 2017, to the functional mailboxes ENV-BIODIVERSITY@ec.europa.eu and Nature@ec.europa.eu (as discussed under Agenda point 3).
- CGBN Members are invited to contribute to ongoing consultations under the CAP (as indicated under Agenda point 3)
- The Commission services will discuss the possibility and logistics of organising back-to-back CGBN/SFC meetings, with one joint session on 15 September 2017 (to be confirmed).
- Member States are invited to comment on the Environmental Implementation Review summary brochures before the formal translated versions are put online (please send comments to ENV-BIODIVERSITY@ec.europa.eu and Nature@ec.europa.eu). The next country dialogues under the Environmental Implementation Review follow-up are envisaged in Tallinn (28 March 2017), Brussels (29 March 2017) and Bratislava (3 April 2017). In June, a peer-to-peer exchange and learning tool will be launched.

- The Commission will share with the CGBN information on plans for the European Cultural Heritage Year 2018.

Key dates:

- Next NDM and Conference under the Maltese Presidency, 29-30 May 2017
- Nature Action Plan timeline:
 - Adoption envisaged by the end of April 2017,
 - Launch of the Natura 2000 Day on 15 May (including high-level signing event in Brussels)
 - Nature Action Plan Conference on 6 June in Brussels
 - Possible Council Conclusions on 19 June under the Maltese Presidency.
- NDM under the Estonian Presidency: 28-29 September 2017.

The Commission thanked Jana Durkošova for her work in co-chairing the CGBN. The next three Presidencies (Estonia, Bulgaria and Austria) are invited to nominate a CGBN co-chair for the next 1.5 years.

- 4. The next CGBN meeting** will take place on 14-15 September 2017, possibly back-to-back with the Standing Forestry Committee (including one half-day joint session), to be confirmed.

5. List of participants:

Member States

1. ABENIUS Johan - Sweden
2. ASCHAUER Arno - Austria
3. AYMERICH Miguel - Spain
4. BELASOVA Inga - Latvia
5. BERTEL Edda-Maria - Austria
6. CABANIS Sophie - France
7. CAPLIKAITE-DENISOVIENE Lina - Lithuania
8. DALBIAK Agnieszka - Poland
9. DEBRUYNE Catherine - Belgium
10. DUPRE' Eugenio - Italy
11. DURKOŠOVÁ Jana – Slovak Republic
12. ÉRDINÉ DR.SZEKERES Rozália - Hungary
13. FARRUGIA Bonnie - Malta
14. GAMBIN Marie Therese - Malta
15. GOODWIN Jane – United Kingdom
16. KELLY Eamonn – Ireland
17. KOBASLIC Ana - Croatia
18. KORPELAINEN Heikki - Finland
19. KUSNIROVA Tereza – Czech Republic
20. LINDAHL Helene – Sweden
21. MARTENS Els - Belgium
22. MOLLER Kadri - Estonia
23. NIIKKONEN Kristiina - Finland
24. PORRO Clive – United Kingdom
25. PÜRSCHER CHRISTENSEN Brigitta - Denmark
26. RATTE Christa - Germany
27. RUDFELD Lars – Denmark
28. SILVA Mario - Portugal

29. SKOBERNE Peter - Slovenia
30. SMARANDA Samad John - Romania
31. STASOVA Simona – Slovak Republic
32. STYLIANOPOULOU Eleni - Cyprus
33. SVEJGAARD Mette - Sweden
34. SZYMANSKI Detlef - Germany
35. VAN DEN HEUVEL Hans – The Netherlands
36. WOLCZUK Beata - Poland
37. ZINGEL Hanno - Estonia

Not represented: Bulgaria, Greece and Luxembourg.

Candidate countries

1. IŞIKLAR Süreyya – Turkey
2. TANRIÖĞER Serap – Turkey

Not represented: Albania, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

European Environment Agency and European Topic Centre

1. CONDÉ Sophie - ETC
2. MEINER Andrus – EEA
3. WERNER Beate - EEA

NGOs and other stakeholders:

1. ANANE Monia – FACE
2. ARROYO Alberio - IUCN
3. BERGLUND Emma – CEPF
4. BUDNIOK Marie Alice - ELO
5. COLLINS Sue – EHF
6. KLEIN Natacha – IUCN
7. KOSTOPOULOS Konstantin – ELO
8. KOTULAK Monika – EHF
9. LANGHOUT Wouter – BirdLife
10. LEEMANS Sabien – WWF
11. MAYERHOFER Eva – EIB
12. MAZZA Leonardo – EEB
13. MCINTOSH Neil – ECNC
14. MORGADO Maria - UNEP
15. NEAGU Oana – COPA-COGECA
16. OPFERMANN Valentin – COPA-COGECA
17. SCALLAN David – FACE
18. THOMA Franz – CEPF
19. VERKERK Koert – COPA-COGECA

European Commission:

DG ENV

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VETTORI Andrea
LÖFFLER Peter

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LEDOUX Laure
HAUSER Rayka
KOSICKA Joanna
KOVACEVIC Vujadin
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TELLER Anne

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O'BRIAIN Micheal
BAROVA Sylvia
KREMER Francois
PANTAZI Christina
PEDERSEN Susanne
VALLEJO PEDREGAL Noelia

ENV.C1

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DG RTD

FRITZ Marco

DG AGRI

DIANA Olivier
GUTIERREZ TEIRA Alfonso
LILLIG Andreas