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## Environment

### Biodiversity Policy in the EU

The EU's environment ministers [reviewed progress](#) on the implementation of the EC's Biodiversity Action Plan at the end of June 2009. In examining the European Commission's "Mid-term assessment of implementing the EC biodiversity Action Plan" they highlighted many of the key issues facing Europe in its quest to halt the loss of biodiversity. Many are of great relevance to EUROPARC's network of protected areas:

#### *Enhancing the Natura 2000 Network*

The importance of completing the terrestrial part of the Natura network by 2010 and the need to strengthen efforts to finalise the network at sea by 2012 were both emphasised. Enhancing the coherence and connectivity of the Natura network and thereby the resilience of species and ecosystems were also stressed.

#### *Targets*

It was noted that the Commission's mid-term assessment indicated that half the species and two-thirds of the habitat types of EC interest have bad or inadequate conservation status. This is of significant concern. With the 2010 target for halting the loss of biodiversity in the EU not going to be met, the need to establish a vision and targets for beyond 2010 for biodiversity conservation within the EU was highlighted.

#### *Monitoring*

The need for continued monitoring and the promotion of sharing practical experience in the implementation of the Birds and Habitats directives in order to strengthen their effective and efficient implementation, is another important area and one where EUROPARC members are particularly involved. Emphasis was also placed on the importance of biodiversity research and strengthening of the science-policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services

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## *Broadening support*

Supporting stakeholders at European and member state level, enhancing integration of Natura 2000 into other relevant policies, and promoting best practice in the framework of the existing legislation were also emphasised.

## *Financing Natura 2000*

Also highlighted was the need to determine how much Community assistance actually benefits biodiversity through rural and regional development funds and the Common Fisheries Policy. In particular it is necessary to consider whether the current integrated approach to financing implementation of the Natura 2000 network has been adequate. There is a further need to consider biodiversity funding requirements in the forthcoming EU budget review.

## *Prosperity*

The vital role of biodiversity and ecosystem goods and services for economic and social prosperity was again highlighted. It was further underlined that this should be considered in relation to other relevant policy sectors, and that indicators be used more to understand better the forces in specific sectors behind biodiversity loss. The Study on The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) will be of great benefit in this regard; the final report will be published later in 2010.

## *Climate change*

It was stressed that terrestrial and marine ecosystems constitute a major buffer against the impacts of climate change and that degradation of these ecosystems leads to a reduction in their capacity as carbon sinks and protection against floods and soil erosion, which in turn compromises efforts to mitigate, and capacity to adapt to climate change.

Absolutely essential is a better understanding and full recognition of the critical role of biodiversity and healthy ecosystems that are able to resist environmental stresses such as climate change. In this regard there is also a need for greater synergy between measures for climate change mitigation and adaptation and for combating land degradation and

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desertification, and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems.

### *Other significant issues*

Several other policy questions of significance include the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the EU Strategy on Invasive Alien Species, and the development of key strategic principles to facilitate participation by the EU in deliberations at global level on the future strategic plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

### **EU progress on sustainable development**

At the end of July 2009 the European Commission submitted a [Communication](#) to the Council and Parliament on progress in implementing the EU's Strategy for Sustainable Development. This strategy, adopted in 2006, focused on seven key challenges:

- Climate change and clean energy;
- Sustainable transport;
- Sustainable consumption and production;
- Conservation and management of natural resources;
- Public health;
- Social inclusion, demography and migration;
- Global poverty.

Whilst the review showed that although progress has been made in some areas, unsustainable trends persist in other areas. These highlight the importance of the values and benefits of protected areas. The global demand for natural resources is already too high and is growing. Biodiversity remains in decline, and as stated above the 2010 target to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010 almost certainly won't be met. The loss of ecosystem services continues with resultant welfare losses. Forest ecosystems in the EU are increasingly exposed to severe challenges including storms, fires and other harmful impacts relating to climate change. Soil quality is also declining as a result of climate change.

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The review looks towards intensifying efforts for the protection of biodiversity, water and other natural resources. The degradation of ecosystems reduces the quality of our lives and those of future generations, and also stands in the way of sustainable, long-term economic development. A rapid transition to a low carbon economy is seen as vital, as are changes in consumption pattern. Strengthening the international dimension to sustainable development is also a must.

Of immediate importance is the completion of the Natura 2000 network together with appropriate management. Full implementation of the Water Framework directive to achieve good environmental status of all waters by 2015 is another big challenge, but of great significance.

## Research

### DG Research issues call for proposals for 2010

As part of the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme for Research the European Commission published on 30 July several calls for proposals in various thematic areas of the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme. These include the environment and climate change, which in turn has possibilities for research projects in the area of conservation and sustainable management of natural and man-made resources and biodiversity. Applications for this area have to be submitted by 5<sup>th</sup> January 2010. An **Infoday** for everyone interested in taking part in the Call (FP7-ENV-2010), will take place the **17 of September 2009** in Brussels.

Here you can [register and download the programme](#) of the infoday.

More details on the published calls are available [here](#).