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# An EU Rescue Plan for Biodiversity

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In the light of the unprecedented crisis of our planet's ecosystems and the associated biodiversity, the European Union needs to champion a Rescue Plan for Biodiversity which should include the following elements:

1. **An overarching vision for a healthy planet** that bridges the gaps between climate, biodiversity, social and economic agendas. Based on findings such as from TEEB it is evident that healthy and resilient ecosystems are essential for fighting climate change and for ensuring long-term and fairly distributed prosperity. Human well-being, and ultimately survival, depends on our ability to strengthen ecosystems and to restore biodiversity.
2. Ambitious **2020 biodiversity targets** at global and European levels, underpinned by clearly measurable sub-targets and indicators. The increasing evidence on the speed, gravity and implications of both climate change and loss of habitats and species, make it imperative that the targets will go beyond the ambition of the current 2010 targets. A possible 2020 "triple" target for the EU could be phrased as follows:

- **STOP** immediately the further loss and deterioration of biodiversity
- **IMPROVE** the conservation status of threatened species and habitats, both in the EU and world-wide
- **ENHANCE** and **RESTORE** ecosystems to make them resilient to climate change, supporting biodiversity and delivering the services human well-being depends upon

In order to reach an international agreement on a new biodiversity target, it is important that the EU demonstrates its commitment and leadership by not only adopting ambitious EU targets before CBD-COP 10 but also by **committing to the necessary measures and investments needed** to meet these targets.

3. A clear focus on restoring and maintaining the **resilience and (bio)diversity of the world's ecosystems**. However, given the complexity of, and the uncertainty around, the functioning of ecosystems we think it is not sufficient, and even risky, to single out or even prioritise individual *ecosystem services* for specific protection or management.

Instead, what should be the central focus of attention is the **health, resilience and functioning of ecosystems as a whole** in order for them to provide a whole series of different types of services (even if some of them cannot be adequately valued). In contrast to grey infrastructure which is usually designed to deliver one service (waste water treatment or flood defense), ecosystems are by definition multi-functional, they always deliver different types and sets of services (e.g. they store carbon, AND water, AND provide spawning grounds for fish AND act as buffers against floods).

4. Strong **EU leadership** and commitment to address biodiversity loss also outside its borders. In particular, development of effective measures to **reduce Europe's global ecological footprint**.
5. An **ambitious package of EU measures** that will be less “aspirational” and more binding than the previous 2010 Biodiversity Action Plan, including:

## GOVERNANCE AND LEGISLATION

- Significant new efforts to **improve implementation and enforcement** of existing ecosystem related legislation, in particular of the Birds and Habitats Directives, the Water and Marine Strategy Framework Directives, and other environmental legislation - which would help *inter alia* building up a “**green infrastructure**” for Europe and which should aim at more integrated and coherent implementation of the various types of legislation.
- **Reform all sectoral policies** to end their adverse effect on ecosystem resilience, and to make them deliver for a healthy planet. The ongoing debates on agriculture, fisheries and regional policy reforms provide unique opportunities for this, they must not be missed.
- **Complement the regulatory framework** by adopting new legislation on Invasive Alien Species, Soils, and Biodiversity in the EU's outermost regions.
- To ensure truly sustainable development, decisive moves towards **coherent and strategic spatial planning** systems across the EU. This should allow the integration of requirements from various environmental legislation, and it should be based on significantly strengthened, meaningful and effective **(strategic) environmental impact assessment procedures**. Finally, it needs to be based on a clear target to **reduce land sealing** in the EU.
- A mechanism that all **climate change mitigation and adaptation measures**, especially those funded by the EU budget, are not harming but strengthening the resilience of ecosystems and biodiversity.
- A critical assessment of the role the **subsidiarity** principle is playing with regard to the effectiveness of EU environmental policies.

## INVESTING IN OUR NATURAL CAPITAL

A strategy is needed to move towards a new economic policy model which recognizes both the intrinsic and functional/service values of biodiversity, the irreplaceability of some natural assets and the urgent need to value them more adequately in economic decision making by taking the following immediate steps:

- Reforming **national income accounts** to factor in countries consumption of natural capital, both domestically and through imports.
- On this basis, identify the level of financing needed to reinvest into the protection and restoration of natural capital and use this in the next EU budget to allocate significantly more funding for the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems, by **ring-fencing parts of sectoral EU funds** as well as through a new **dedicated EU environmental funding instrument**.
- Environmentally **damaging incentives and subsidies** must be abolished and EU and Member States' regulatory and fiscal policies should be reformed to support existing high nature values, minimize biodiversity losses and provide incentives for restoration and recovery.
- Commit to the development of a long term, **effective international financing mechanism** which will ensure the protection and restoration of the natural capital consumed in biodiversity rich countries.

## KNOWLEDGE AND COMMUNICATION

- Meaningful and understandable **sub-targets and indicators** need to underpin the biodiversity rescue plan.
- Significant progress must be made in **monitoring** of biodiversity and ecosystems, supported by additional funding. **Reporting** systems under various EU legislation should be streamlined as much as possible, while it must be ensure that they provide meaningful information to inform and improve policy.
- An **international science-policy platform for biodiversity and ecosystem services** should be established.
- **Mobilize action and communicate, positively and effectively, the importance and benefits of biodiversity and ecosystems** to citizens, media and economic stakeholders.

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