

Costs of Invasive Alien Species mount as Commission further delays EU action

Title

Since the European Commission in 2012 made a [commitment](#) to publish a dedicated EU legislative instrument to address the problem of Invasive Alien Species, financial and environmental costs have been mounting, but so far no legislative proposals have been published regarding this issue.

2013 has seen the arrival and spread of new alien species across the EU, with alarming and growing impacts on the EU's fragile environment and economy. In the Mediterranean and the Black Sea blooms of native and invasive alien jellyfish, which threaten both tourism and fisheries industries, have been observed along many kilometres of coastline. In the UK, the invasive alien killer shrimp, *Dikerogammarus villosus*, accidentally introduced from the Caspian Sea region, has spread to further water bodies in the UK, and has now been joined by a further killer shrimp species, *Dikerogammarus haemobaphes*. It is widely anticipated that the impacts of these species on freshwater ecosystems will be devastating.

Across the EU the potential economic and environmental impacts of the invasive alien fungus *Chalara fraxinea*, commonly known as 'ash dieback disease', are only now being fully realized. In 2012 the fungus was detected in Belgium, France, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Britain and Ireland. Experience in previously affected countries suggests that up to 85% of ash trees in these countries will be wiped out by this disease.

As the Commission itself recognises, Invasive Alien Species - animals and plants accidentally or deliberately introduced into a natural environment where they are not normally found - represent a serious threat to native species in Europe. The Parliament and Member States called for action as long ago as 2009, when costs were conservatively estimated to be €12bn annually, and the [joint BirdLife / IUCN European Parliament event](#) earlier this year further highlighted the urgent need for action.

The question for the Commission must be then: how bad do things have to get before action will be taken? The above examples represent just the tip of the invasive alien iceberg. Now it is up to the Lithuanian EU Presidency to lead the process to finally tackle this problem. Without effective EU wide legislation in place the EU's biodiversity is stuck on a collision course.

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