

Environment Commissioners win a round for biodiversity on Cohesion policy, but harder CAP fight is still in balance

Title

On Thursday 6 October, the European Commission has made a timid step forward towards honoring its commitment to integrate biodiversity in its legislative proposal on the Cohesion Policy, one of the two main components of the EU Budget.^[1] Contradicting earlier reports circulating in recent weeks, the proposal for the next cohesion and structural funds spending framework identifies biodiversity as a priority, though it falls short of giving it the level of urgency warranted by the seriousness of the ongoing ecological crisis. In particular, no funds are actually earmarked for biodiversity and very weak safeguards are introduced to prevent harmful investments.

BirdLife Europe now calls on Member States and the European Parliament to build on the proposal, bringing robust safeguards against ecologically harmful investments and prioritise investments in the health of our ecosystems. *‘It is encouraging that the Commission has avoided backtracking on its biodiversity commitments, though it is disappointing that so little progress has been done on securing actual investments in nature and ecosystems and in ensuring that no more environmentally destructive investments would be allowed.’* said Ariel Brunner, Head of EU Policy at BirdLife Europe. *‘The collapse of biodiversity and disruption of our ecosystems is as big a challenge to society as Climate Change and on the long term, bigger than the economic crisis. Europe urgently needs a radical shift of public spending away from short term fake growth and toward long term sustainable prosperity.’*

The last minute inclusion of biodiversity among the spending priorities is a personal achievement for the Environment Commissioner. As recently as September 22 2011, Janez Potočnik, Commissioner for the Environment, during the Economic and Social Committee (EESC) Plenary Debate, declared *‘If there is one key to resource efficiency, then it is surely an integrated approach. The success of this sustainability agenda depends on the extent to which we will be able to see it as a watermark in related policy areas.’* Biodiversity, nature

and ecosystem services are also key components to his recently proposed Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe[2]. However, a bigger test is next on his agenda: the reform proposal for the Common Agricultural Policy where recent leaks suggest that current proposals are nothing short of a counter reform, backtracking even on the current highly criticised situation. *Commissioners Potošnik and Hedegaard have made a first concrete step towards putting the EU budget to work for a climate friendly, ecologically sound and socially viable Europe; but an even bigger test is now offered by the imminent CAP reform proposal. The time for leadership is now.* said Angelo Caserta, Regional Director of BirdLife Europe.

NOTES

[1] CAP is the other largest share of the EU budget

[2] Click [here](#) to read the European Communication of the 20th of September 2011
