

EU promises a greener future, but budget stays grey

Title

Despite a few encouraging steps forward, this uninspiring budget proposal offers more business as usual at a time of deep crisis? said Angelo Caserta, Regional Director of BirdLife Europe. *Instead of a bold move away from perverse subsidies and towards investments in a sustainable future, it safeguards inefficiencies while starving environmental programmes?*

The proposal does include important positive elements:

- 30% of the CAP income subsidies being attached to (unspecified) greening commitments;
- Re-orientation of the fisheries fund towards support for sustainable fisheries and conservation of the marine environment;
- Environmental and climate proofing of cohesion policy investments.

However, the proposal lacks overall ambition and does not include serious commitments needed to sustain Europe's ecological systems:

- Rural development, the part of the agriculture policy that includes environmental schemes, will not receive any increased funding, and might potentially decrease in real terms, while ineffective and untargeted subsidies in the so called Pillar 1 are to be reformed only partially and very slowly.
- Despite a tiny increase of LIFE, the only dedicated tool for the environment, this fund is still going to receive an almost irrelevant 0.31% of the Budget.
- No clear financial targets have been set for investments in biodiversity and climate.

Studies have shown that policy inaction in halting the loss of biodiversity would cost Europe more than €1 trillion by 2050. This means that any crucial investments are only a minimal investment saving on future costs. For example the estimated cost for management of the

Natura 2000 is 6 billion per year, and by 2050 it would cost less than one quarter of the estimated cost of inaction.

The current overhaul of the EU budget is a once in a decade opportunity to bring the EU spending in line with EU commitments, including the commitments made on biodiversity in Nagoya and on climate change in Cancun. The new budget must focus on public goods, helping steer Europe towards a sustainable and resource efficient economy. Sadly the commission proposal is a far cry from what is needed.

?The EU offers pocket money as an answer to the urgent environmental and climate crisis. This is keeping us on a road for an ecological and economic disaster that might be too big for bailouts? said Angelo Caserta.
