

Invasive Alien Species: legislation turning into an empty shell

Title

The members of the European Parliament's Environment Committee want to allow derogations to the EU regulation aiming at addressing invasive alien species, plants and animals that are introduced into Europe and cause significant environmental, economic and health damages. If it goes through the legislative decision making process, the derogation measure could render the regulation useless.

On January 30, members of the Environment Committee approved an amendment allowing any EU Member State to derogate the entire regulation and allow any type of enterprise to breed dangerous plants and animals within the EU. Such derogation would not even require Commission approval and could be justified on any ground of economic interest. This would undermine all EU efforts to achieve coordinated action against the most damaging species. Invasives represent a **cost of approximately €12 billion** to the EU annually and are one of the major causes of biodiversity loss in Europe.

‘Allowing individual Member States to issue derogations is nonsensical’ said Carles Carboneras, Species Policy Officer at the RSPB (BirdLife UK). ‘Invasive species don’t recognise national borders, if you allow the breeding of one plant or animal in one Member State, this species might spread to neighboring countries. Therefore actions taken to control these invasives, and the money put into it, will be in vain’.

The derogation measure, pushed by the industry lobby - notably the fur industry - has been heavily supported by Denmark and other Member States. Other corporate interests such as the biofuels industry are also supporting the push in order to receive a free hand in planting invasive weeds for fuel production.

‘It is shocking to see the Environment Committee caving in to the heavy lobbying by the fur industry, seeking to protect their lucrative production of American mink’ stated Ariel Brunner, Head of EU Policy at BirdLife Europe.

Member States will be finalizing the Council position next week and then negotiations will follow between Council, Parliament and Commission. If the new legislation is to be meaningful, the decision to allow sweeping derogations must be reversed, even if that means a longer legislative process.

?Ensuring good legislation that can effectively deliver should take precedence over the rapporteur?s haste to get a deal ahead of the elections.? Brunner concluded.



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