



**European Committee
of the Regions**

ENVE-VI/031

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OPINION

The contribution of EU cities and regions to the CBD COP14 and the post-2020 EU Biodiversity Strategy

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS:

- acknowledges that despite the uniqueness of biodiversity in Europe, recent scientific assessments warn that biodiversity and ecosystem services are threatened by degradation and are declining;
- highlights that a relevant input in inverting some of the negative biodiversity trends is represented by national and international preservation and conservation policies adopted and enforced in recent years;
- considers necessary to increase the efforts to implement the current Strategic Plan 2011-2020, and EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020;
- believes that the post-2020 biodiversity policy framework should be ambitious both at global and European level;
- calls on the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to recognise explicitly the indispensable the role of local and regional authorities in achieving a successful implementation of the current and future global and European policies on biodiversity;
- calls on the European Commission to propose a comprehensive plan for coordinated awareness raising and engagement at the national and subnational levels in the run up to COP 14 and COP 15 so that the CoR and local and regional authorities can better identify opportunities for synergies and engagement of partners;
- offers its support to the European Commission for the preparation of the post-2020 EU Strategy on Biodiversity.

Rapporteur

Roby Biwer (LU/PES) Member of Bettembourg Municipal Council

Reference document

Letter from Frans Timmermans, Vice President, European Commission, April 2018

**Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions –
The contribution of EU cities and regions to the CBD COP14 and the post-2020 EU Biodiversity
Strategy**

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

A. *Current state of play in meeting biodiversity targets in Europe and across the globe*

1. expresses concern at the gravity of biodiversity loss, which is not limited to animal and plant species loss, but also adversely impacts opportunities for the future – economic, environmental and even societal and cultural;
2. highlights the fact that the target dates of two important policy instruments for the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity – namely the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD Strategic Plan) and the corresponding 2020 EU Biodiversity Strategy – are approaching soon;
3. reiterates the view that – whilst there is remarkable progress in parts – scientific evidence indicates that the world in general, and many local and regional authorities (LRAs) in particular, are not on track to meet all global Aichi Biodiversity Targets (ABT) and to implement the EU Biodiversity Strategy. However, much can still be achieved by 2020 and the preparatory phase for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework has already started;
4. stresses that the global biodiversity loss, as well as loss and deterioration of ecosystems, is a major threat to the future of our planet; in the overarching political context of achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), tackling and reversing biodiversity loss and restoring ecosystems is a crucial element closely linked to combating climate change ;
5. acknowledges the culminating impact of individual local (in)actions as a contribution towards the global biodiversity crisis, which brings to light the danger of "narrow framing" by dealing with each biodiversity-related case in isolation on a local scale – hence neglecting its impact globally as well as other external impacts – and underlines the need for a balanced micro-macro perspective;
6. maintains that there is sufficient evidence and scientific proof that it is urgent to take more radical, proactive and preventive actions at global, regional and local levels towards halting biodiversity loss and restoring degraded ecosystems now and not to wait any longer (i.e. for the formal assessment of progress in 2020);
7. highlights the inconsistency in policy objectives – horizontally and vertically –, with often contradictory approaches towards environmental issues, including, for example, agricultural or energy policies, which undermines progress in achieving ABT;
8. realises that urbanisation policies of EU Member States still cause landscape fragmentation and urban sprawl, resulting in loss of ecosystems and biodiversity;

9. welcomes the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and their functioning, and the development of a new overarching policy and governance frameworks that support cross border cooperation and calls on the relevant national and regional authorities to start using these instruments to develop coherent policy interventions across borders;
10. asserts the destruction of individual Natura 2000 sites and the current level of illegal killing and trapping of birds and other species and is convinced that greater effort at all levels is needed to meet the requirements of monitoring and enforcing the Nature Directives through appropriate management plans;
11. is disconcerted by the persistence of illegal trading in protected species, the increase in invasive alien species and the unsustainable use of pesticides, such as neonicotinoids, causing a massive decline of pollinators, including bee populations;
12. recalls the urgency of substantially enhancing global and EU efforts to effectively address the world biodiversity crisis and of decoupling economic development from biodiversity loss and related issues, including the subsequent deterioration of ecosystem functions and services;
13. draws attention to the insufficient financial means and instruments for mainstreaming biodiversity action and adequate biodiversity management and the related financial and economic risks of non-action, which is predominant at all levels;
14. stresses the need to focus on the weaknesses in the global and European governance structure, the challenges in the implementation of the CBD Strategic Plan and improving the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework in order to achieve effective implementation through concrete strategies;
15. notes with concern the absence and/or inadequacy of measuring, reporting and verifying (MRV) mechanisms for (voluntary) contributions to assess the progress with implementation of the ABT through National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plans (NBSAPs) and Regional Biodiversity Strategic Action Plans (RBSAPs);
16. urges the early involvement of all relevant stakeholders in preparations for the next phase in formulating the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Frameworks – globally and at EU-level;

B. Actions and responsibilities until 2020

17. thinks it appropriate to use the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) 14th Conference of Parties (CBD COP14) as a major opportunity to identify what can actually still be achieved by 2020, so that clear and achievable commitments can be formulated;
18. stresses the important role of LRAs in implementing the ABT in the remaining two years;
19. highlights the importance of an adequate multilevel governance framework for coordinated action by LRAs, the EU and its Member States on further implementation of the ABT and the delivery of the European Biodiversity Strategy by 2020;

20. backs the European Union's decision to ban widely used pesticides, such as neonicotinoids, because of the serious danger they pose to non-target insects such as pollinators, which are crucial for plant reproduction in forests, urban green areas and crop fields, and therefore vital for global food production. The Committee emphasises the role of LRAs in limiting the use of pesticides – with due regard to the differences that exist between the Member States in terms of the division of responsibilities –including through initiatives such as "Pesticide-Free Towns" and "Bee-Friendly Cities";
21. advocates an increase of resources (legal, financial and human) for LRAs who wish to do so to adequately develop their direct competences in matters of protection, planning, sustainable use, management, restoration and monitoring of biodiversity and ecosystems, including sites of greater conservation interest;
22. highlights the importance of LRAs being provided with tools and mechanisms to access high quality information on status and trends of species, habitats, ecosystems and their services;
23. calls on EU Member States to establish an integrated approach to the development and implementation of national, subnational and local biodiversity strategies and action plans (LBSAP), , along the lines suggested in the Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan Guidelines of the CBD Secretariat and ICLEI, where they are not already in place, and to improve LRA involvement in setting up, reviewing and implementing NBSAPs in order to support their effective delivery and their integration into planning – vertically and horizontally – and sectors whose activities impact biodiversity (positively or negatively);
24. underlines the need to increase biodiversity funding, particularly investments in Natura 2000, throughout EU funding instruments, including the Structural and Cohesion Funds, and also welcomes support tools such as eConservation which offers a database with valuable information about biodiversity funding opportunities by public donors;
25. proposes best practices be provided on the removal of perverse subsidies in different sectoral policy fields in order to increase the coherence of EU action for biodiversity protection and carry out assessments of environmentally harmful subsidies to better steer the EU budget towards sustainable development; earmarking of financial resources must give a high priority to sustainable development;
26. welcomes the efforts of the EU's Horizon 2020 programme to intensify research and innovation activities exploring the potential of Nature-based Solutions (NBS) and Green and Blue Infrastructures (GI) for regenerating urban areas which it sees as good building blocks for improving the implementation of the EU biodiversity strategy in urban and densely populated areas, including in the period 2020-2030 and in conjunction with the EU Urban Agenda; underlines, however, the need to further foster implementation of the EU Nature Directives, and stresses that these programmes on NBS and GI must not be considered a replacement for, but can be useful additions to, strong biodiversity and ecosystem services actions in peri-urban and rural areas;

27. highlights the fact that funds from the various existing financing instruments should be managed directly by the competent and mandated regional and local bodies responsible for conservation and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems in accordance with the ABT;
28. calls for a strengthening of the role of LRAs in preventing illegal trading by establishing biodiversity-oriented procurement rules and for halting the increase of invasive alien species, notably by providing frameworks for collaborative, joint activities in cross-border situations in the interest of integrated species migration and biodiversity management; highlights the role of existing strategic networks such as the Trans-European Network for Green Infrastructure (TEN-G) in providing cross-border green infrastructures and corridors through cross-border cooperative management and action plans;

Central Role of Local and Regional Authorities in the Implementation of the CBD Strategic Plan and the EU Biodiversity Strategy up to 2020

29. confirms and welcomes the increasing recognition of the role of local and regional authorities at EU level in delivering on the European Biodiversity Strategy;
30. believes that LRAs should be actively involved in the creation and implementation of policies for the removal of counter-productive subsidies and mainstreaming biodiversity in different sectoral policy fields, including agriculture as well as urban and regional development (through the relevant EU Funds);
31. encourages LRAs to step up work to mainstream biodiversity considerations in land-use and urban planning as an effective instrument to facilitate contributions to implement the ABT;
32. reasserts the role of LRAs in running, on a voluntary basis, awareness-raising programmes and platforms aimed at highlighting the importance of protecting and restoring our biodiversity and ecosystems and their services;
33. encourages LRAs to engage in international, European and national standardisation and certification processes for managing biodiversity and ecosystems, including tools to use as references and to support uptake of a coherent biodiversity governance and management framework;

C. Towards an effective and operational post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

34. welcomes the Resolution from the Parliament on the EU Action Plan for Nature, People and Economy adopted at the end of 2017, which asks the Commission to start working without delay on the next EU Biodiversity Strategy, in line with the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) formulation process;
35. recognises the need to reinforce the political commitment at global and EU level to address the global biodiversity crisis and raise the ambitions in the post-Aichi decade 2020-2030;

36. expects CBD COP15 to generate renewed global attention and commensurate commitments to not only halt the loss of, but actually to restore biodiversity and ecosystems and to establish an ambitious, inclusive post-2020 GBF until 2030 that is capable of achieving the 2050 Vision of the CBD and other relevant UN Agreements;
37. urges the EU to take responsible leadership in the global preparatory process towards a post-2020 GBF and establish an "external biodiversity policy" – or contribute to a "global interior biodiversity policy" – determining the EU's responsibility as a global leader in biodiversity;
38. calls on the EU and all parties of the CBD COP to strengthen and formalise the dialogue and participation of LRAs (and other non-party stakeholders) in the development and implementation of the new policy framework;
39. encourages the EU to engage in cross-regional collaboration with Africa, South America, Asia, and – in particular – China, as host of CBD COP 2020, in order to develop common and coherent approaches to promoting joint interests in meeting the "renewed" ABT for restoration, sustainable use and management of biodiversity and ecosystems in the decade 2020-2030;
40. highlights the need to translate the Vision for 2050 into tangible terms and pathways that include pragmatic, solutions-oriented responses, to be discussed at CBD COP14;
41. highlights the need for developing the post-2020 GBF by aligning and integrating all relevant environmental UN Agreements, such as UN SDGs, the Paris Climate Change Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), with the – renewed – Aichi Biodiversity Targets, to prevent the separation of biodiversity and ecosystem services from the social and economic goals that they underpin; this will allow biodiversity values to be mainstreamed into other sectors and, hence, policies and planning processes, as well as in cross-border collaboration;
42. urges policy coherence through better integration of biodiversity in particular with SDG 11 "Sustainable Cities and Communities", SDG 14 "Life below Water", SDG 15 "Life on Land" – and more precise and aligned formulations across the different instruments in order to avoid confusion, contradiction and duplication;
43. emphasises the crucial significance of multilevel cooperation and the establishment of an effective and operational multilevel governance structure in the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, including LRAs (globally as well as in the EU), for coordinated action towards meeting the "renewed" ABT;
44. calls for the new post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework to explicitly mention the role of LRAs in the mechanism for national monitoring, reporting, and verification;
45. encourages a coherent post-2020 Global Biodiversity Governance structure and mechanism that applies the principles of horizontal mainstreaming, vertical alignment, and cooperative and integrated management linked to measurable targets and reporting mechanisms by and for all levels, including subnational governments, aligned with other international agreements;

46. recommends exploring the possibility of fostering a system of voluntary contributions at the different levels – similar to UNFCCC introducing nationally, regionally and locally determined contributions – commensurate with national circumstances, but at least equally bold and ambitious;
47. reiterates the need to continue with an approach similar to – and in the spirit of – the ABT, introducing clear, time-bound and new measurable targets to halt the loss of, and to restore, biodiversity, nature and ecosystems, as well as effectively eradicate and prevent the introduction of invasive alien species and effectively stop the illegal killing and trading of wildlife in the decade 2020-2030;
48. calls on the EU to provide a strategic and continuous orientation and guidance for EU Member States and other countries for their efforts in addressing threats to, and management of, biodiversity and ecosystem services. Given the understanding that biodiversity loss is driven by a multitude of individual cases and decisions, guidance should include principles and criteria for assessing the impacts of these derived from, and compared with, global biodiversity targets to avoid "narrow framing";
49. considers a coherent monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) approach very important for the accounting of progress within the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and the periodical stock-taking of the implementation of its long-term goals. This must be done in a comprehensive and facilitative manner, focusing on (1) halting biodiversity loss, (2) restoring biodiversity and ecosystems, (3) sustainable use and management of biodiversity and ecosystems. This should be done through prevention of arrival and eradication of invasive alien species, and stopping illegal killing and trading of wildlife, and monitoring and verifying biodiversity indicators. MRV must be as objective as possible and based on the best available science, providing for the attribution of quantified impacts to policies and action, visibility of progress and achievements, and identification of needs for correction or further action;
50. urges the mapping and monitoring of national contributions, including regional and local, against global targets under the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework to allow for tracking and periodical stock-taking of collective pledges;
51. favours the creation of a common scientific and technical knowledge base on biodiversity which would involve developing comparable methods of detection, establishing common monitoring rules and creating appropriate platforms for management and dissemination of data and knowledge;
52. wishes to see greater awareness of resources and services (environment, tourism, agriculture, crafts, energy, services and the social economy) offered by subnational levels in order to promote a better meshing of biodiversity conservation measures with the planning at different levels of government and with subnational socio-economic development initiatives;

53. calls for a deepening and dissemination of knowledge of good practices in the management of Natura 2000 areas at European level and the promotion of a regular dialogue with the relevant management bodies, as well as the involvement of various public and private stakeholders in the locality that work in biodiversity;
54. proposes the introduction of operational "SMART" (specific, measurable, ambitious, realistic, and time-bound) targets in the post-2020 framework, moving from status-related, non-measurable goals, towards result-oriented, "pressure-related" targets, defined in clear and operational manner and language, and allowing for progress to be measured and reported in comparison to the targets;
55. acknowledges the need for more compelling and easily communicable goals and targets in the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, while also updating and/or replacing the time bound Aichi targets, including the following: (1) Strategic goal B on reducing direct pressure on biodiversity and promoting sustainable use should incorporate sustainable use of terrestrial species alongside fish and invertebrate stocks and aquatic plants under Target 6; (2) Strategic goal D on enhancing benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services should acknowledge the contribution of biodiversity to human health – apart from those mentioned in targets 14, 15 and 16 – with additional targets on issues such as pharmaceutical use, medicinal plants, nutrition, mental health and health promotion, etc., as well as a recognition of the links between biodiversity, peace and conflict and migration of people; (3) increased attention to the services offered by soil, freshwater and the high seas and their respective biodiversity, and (4) measures in respect of nature and ecosystem services aimed at improving the living environment in cities and peri-urban areas, including from the perspective of climate change;
56. points out to local communities the importance of seeing biodiversity as an opportunity in economic, social and employment terms, including in relation to social inclusion needs, and of experimenting with new local cooperation models based on the dissemination of social and environment provisions designed to improve biodiversity;
57. calls for joint biodiversity indicators to be built on , added to and to be aligned across all relevant international frameworks, including in particular the SDGs, in order to avoid duplication, to promote effective, integrated measurability and implementation and to leverage transformational change in the interest of eradicating poverty, promoting climate mitigation and adaptation and increasing food resilience in local communities;
58. calls for more capacity development opportunities – including the necessary financial means and innovative, activating methods such as peer-to-peer learning – to strengthen technical knowledge and skills for halting biodiversity loss, restoring biodiversity and ecosystems as well as preventing invasive alien species and illegal killing and trading of wildlife, at all levels, involving Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), experts and professionals (including hunters, fishers, shepherds and foresters) in managing biodiversity;
59. proposes stronger partnerships and support for collective action amongst all stakeholders and the wider public, with special attention to contributions from Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), women, young people and those directly relying on and managing

biodiversity (including hunters, fishers, shepherds and foresters) and the stopping of illegal killing and trading of wildlife. The CoR reiterates the need for increasing technical assistance and/or guidance (not only for EU local and regional authorities but also for transit and source regions of wildlife trafficking), capacity building and rights-based instruments for an effective participatory process integrating the principles of good governance;

60. encourages the development of international standards for Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and integrated management and planning, as well as other instruments related to the future governance and management mechanism to facilitate uptake and coherence;
61. recognises the importance of global biodiversity modelling and scenarios for better informed and sound biodiversity management decisions and the development of innovative data collection systems or the expansion of existing systems with data on biodiversity;
62. encourages the creation of a global platform for knowledge transfer, monitoring and reporting on implementation of commitments by nations and LRAs for engaging LRAs in exchanging and snowballing best practices and supporting MRV;
63. insists on the need to increase biodiversity funding – globally, in the EU and domestically – targeted at specific local contexts. This should include appropriate guidance to ease access and effective and efficient deployment of available funding instruments, as well as regular systematic evaluation of results to avoid adverse effects and conflicts between different policy objectives;
64. recommends the benefits be explored and exploited of new and innovative financing options, including tax incentives, payments for ecosystem services, regional/national lotteries, a dedicated biodiversity fund at EU and/or global level, and the combination and blending of financing, as well as related structural innovations, such as public-private partnerships for biodiversity, private-business foundations, foundations under public law, and incentives for action through, for example, voluntary labelling/certification;

65. commits itself to continuously and proactively engaging in the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework preparatory process in the spirit expressed in this opinion.

Brussels, 10 October 2018

The President
of the European Committee of the Regions

Karl-Heinz Lambertz

The Secretary-General
of the European Committee of the Regions

Jiří Buriánek

I. PROCEDURE

Title	The contribution of EU cities and regions to CBD COP14 and the post-2020 EU Biodiversity Strategy
Reference	Letter from the European Commission
Legal basis	Article 307(1) TFEU
Procedural basis	Rule 41(a)
Date of Council/EP referral Date of Commission letter	11 April 2018
Date of Bureau/President's decision	21 March 2018
Commission responsible	Commission for the Environment, Climate Change and Energy (ENVE)
Rapporteur	Roby Biwer (LU/PES) Member of Bettembourg Municipal Council
Analysis	8 May 2018
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Previous Committee opinions	CDR 8074/2013 – CoR opinion on Multilevel governance in promoting the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 and implementing the international Aichi Targets (rapporteur: Kadri Tillemann (ET/EPP))
Date of subsidiarity monitoring consultation	–