



**European Committee  
of the Regions**

**ENVE-VII/002**

**140th plenary session, 12-14 October 2020**

## **OPINION**

### **Bio-diverse cities and regions beyond 2020 at the UN CBD COP 15 and in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030**

#### THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- reiterates the conclusions by the 2019 IPBES Global Assessment and other scientific reports on the need for immediate science-based policy and action on the direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss and ecosystems degradation. Most international societal and environmental goals will not be achieved based on current trajectories;
- stresses the need for formal recognition of the contribution of Subnational Governments, Cities and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity (SNGs) in meeting the 2030 outcome-oriented goals and action-oriented targets of the post-2020 biodiversity framework, which must create enabling conditions for SNGs if it is to achieve transformative outcomes at the EU and global scale;
- welcomes the Parliament request for legally binding biodiversity commitments, and appreciates the consideration of it being of outmost importance to work on an ambitious post-2020 strategic plan and implementation mechanism that formally includes local and regional authorities;
- calls on the Commission to develop, as a central element of the European Green Deal, an action plan for nature and biodiversity that recognises the role of local and regional authorities in the development, implementation and M&E of an ambitious, realistic and coherent 2030 EU Biodiversity Strategy;
- requests the Council to adopt a mandate for the EU position in the negotiations at the UN CBD COP15 to request the adoption by Parties of a dedicated Decision 15/- or a renewed Decision X/22 Plan of Action for SNGs on biodiversity;
- calls for policy coherence to align the efforts, objectives and outcomes produced by the different EU policies, including the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the EU Green Deal and the EU's trade relations and international commitments, namely the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UN Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the CBD and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Management, in a comprehensive EU Sustainability Strategy with clear objectives and implementation measures.

Rapporteur

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Reference document

COM(2020) 380 final

**Opinion of the Committee of the Regions – Bio-diverse cities and regions beyond 2020 at the  
UN CBD COP 15 and in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030**

**I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

1. calls on the international community to make the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP) of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 2021 the Kunming Moment for Biodiversity and a wake-up call to irreversibly bend the curve in the loss of biodiversity and ecosystems;
2. alerts people to the fact that since 2018 the state of biodiversity has worsened and most international societal and environmental goals, in particular the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (ABT), have not been met. Global efforts to halt biodiversity decline have failed, as documented by the IPBES 2019 Global Assessment leading to the World Economic Forum 2020, identifying the loss of biodiversity and collapse of ecosystems as one of the top five threats facing the world;
3. points out that the main drivers of biodiversity loss are land-use change, direct exploitation of natural resources, and climate change, which have to be addressed by concrete and timely actions.
4. emphasises that the total ecological footprint of the EU-27 Member States exceeds more than twice the capacity of ecosystems to produce useful biological material and to act as carbon sinks in the region;
5. stresses the increasing evidence of the direct connection between the climate, biodiversity and human health crises and the increased zoonotic risk of pandemics due to advancing global destruction of natural ecosystems;
6. highlights that the current state of the biodiversity crisis requires a set of ambitious and easily communicable targets and immediate science-based policy and action on the drivers of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation that are proportionate to the aim of bending the curve in biodiversity loss;
7. calls for policy coherence to align the efforts, objectives and outcomes produced by the different EU policies, including the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the EU Green Deal and the EU's trade relations and international commitments, namely the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UN Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the CBD and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Management, in a comprehensive EU Sustainability Strategy with clear objectives and implementation measures;
8. highlights the urgency to act as confirmed by the CBD's 5th Global Biodiversity Outlook and its recommendation to promote local level urban governance and transdisciplinary planning, to promote NBS as well as to adopt integrated approaches to land use and land use change on the

local and landscape level as key components of pathways towards bending the curve in biodiversity loss;

9. stresses that, despite increasing acknowledgement, a formal recognition of the key role for Subnational Governments, Cities and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity (SLGs)<sup>1</sup> in bending the curve in biodiversity loss and applying a "whole-of-government approach" in each step and at every level of the biodiversity governance process is still lacking in both the [EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030](#) and the [Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework \(Post-2020 GBF\)](#). Such recognition could be achieved in particular through the inclusion of Local and Subnational Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (LBSAPs/SBSAPs) in National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs);
10. supports the establishment of the EU's long-term climate neutrality objective to steer the European project towards irreversible climate neutrality by 2050, based on a 2021-2027 MFF which meets at least the target of 30% climate related expenditure; and emphasises that the EU's Climate Law should ensure convergence of measures to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions with EU and global biodiversity objectives;<sup>2</sup>

#### ***The Role of Cities and Regions to bend the curve in biodiversity loss***

11. agrees with the [IPBES 2019 report](#)'s conclusion that LRAs, through responsible production and consumption, as well as integrated territorial land use planning and implementation, and nature-based solutions (NBS) and solutions that are based on the protection and sustainable use of natural and primary resources that are sensitive and specific to social, economic and ecological contexts, can make significant contributions to relevant UN Conventions, including the UN 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement;
12. points out that LRAs are a constituent part of national authorities ratifying the CBD, make extensive voluntary contributions and create important partnerships that mobilise the major groups (Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities – IPLCs, youth and women) and relevant sectors (business, culture and civil society organisations);
13. emphasises that LRAs, as engines of innovation and of the implementation of integrated spatial and territorial plans and strategies, are an underused resource, also financially, for achieving EU and global biodiversity goals and that their full capabilities can be harnessed by recognising, activating and equipping the key roles of LRAs;
14. emphasises that innovative NBS – which are solutions that are inspired and supported by nature, which are cost-effective, simultaneously provide environmental, social and economic benefits and help build resilience – are among the most effective tools for restoring ecosystems and

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<sup>1</sup> All levels of government below national level are referred to in the wording "Subnational Governments, Cities and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity" (SLGs) in the context of the global framework, and in the wording "Local and Regional Authorities" (LRAs) in the EU context.

<sup>2</sup> [COM\(2020\) 80 final](#), [COR \(2020\) 01361](#).

mobilising people's ability to thrive with nature, as the [2020 Naturvation project report](#) points out<sup>3</sup>;

15. calls for the exchange of best practices in order to foster the uptake and spread of innovative NBS, and build guidance for all relevant stakeholders;
16. draws attention to the interconnectedness of the Sustainable Development Goals, and suggests the integration of biodiversity and climate targets in further policy developments, e.g. by continuously considering the biodiversity of renewable energy infrastructures' surroundings, in order to reach both biodiversity and climate targets;
17. recalls its encouragement to LRAs to establish LBSAPs or SBSAPs, respectively, and engage in international, European and national standardisation to mainstream biodiversity and ecosystems management as well as NBS for increased applicability and impact;

#### ***Cities and regions as drivers for implementing the EU's biodiversity ambitions***

18. welcomes the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 as an interface for vertical collaboration in addressing the main causes of biodiversity loss and its links to societal challenges such as climate mitigation and adaptation and protection from future pandemics;
19. calls for strong cooperation among LRAs for the establishment of ecological corridors, as part of the Trans-European Nature networks, as they are the key for local buy-in;
20. stresses the importance of coordinating nature conservation measures and setting targets at local level. The EU should provide funding and information support for cities and regions in order to promote biodiversity, including for conservation projects, nature-based solutions, development of nature data resources, spatial planning that safeguards biodiversity and the strengthening of expertise and resources in cities and regions;
21. welcomes the [Council's commitment in its conclusions](#) on the preparation of the Post-2020 GBF to increase the application and implementation of NBS in support of biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration and sustainable land-use;
22. welcomes and supports the ambitious EU-wide commitments, targets and goals of the EU Green Deal and the EU Biodiversity Strategy; highlights the key role of LRAs in their achievement, in particular by establishing Urban Greening Plans by the end of 2021 and emphasises their innovation and integration potential for supporting regional and urban biodiversity, resilient recovery and social cohesion;
23. stresses the need for an integrated EU-wide strategy for the goal to plant at least 3 billion additional trees in the EU in full respect of ecological principles to ensure consideration of key

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<sup>3</sup> Xie, L.; Bulkeley, H. (2020) City for Biodiversity: The Roles of Nature-Based Solutions in European Cities, NATURVATION.

functions; reiterates its opinion<sup>4</sup> on the crucial role of forests in both rural and urban areas for biodiversity protection, climate change mitigation, protection against hydrogeological damage, carbon storage, human health and other co-benefits, and calls for increased efforts to protect and restore forests in full respect of ecological principles, significant age, unique ecological characteristics and the highest level of biodiversity;

24. welcomes the EU Urban Greening Platform as a capacity development tool for cities and recommends that it be integrated into key initiatives and platforms such as the new [EU Green City Accord](#), [NetworkNature](#), [CitiesWithNature](#) and [RegionsWithNature](#). In particular, it supports [CitiesWithNature](#) and [RegionsWithNature](#) as the official platforms of the [Sharm El-Sheikh to Kunming Action Agenda for Nature and People](#) to engage and commit SLGs to showcase their efforts and recognise the value of nature in cities and regions;
25. emphasises the LRAs' key role in managing Natura 2000 sites and requests sufficient logistical, scientific and financial support for full coverage and enforcement by 2025;
26. calls on the EU to supply sufficient resources, capacity development and guidance to LRAs to implement climate mitigation and adaptation activities, conservation measures, site management and urban greening plans for implementing ambitious biodiversity action;
27. welcomes the goal of putting in place a new European biodiversity governance framework as put forward in the EU Biodiversity Strategy, enabling LRAs and all levels of government, based on local conditions, to comply with monitoring and evaluation responsibilities and measure progress on biodiversity action, and asks for a clear set of indicators and measurable targets that are standardised at European level; stands ready to collaborate and contribute in the development and implementation of the new governance framework to ensure a structure that is most effective in harnessing the full potential of LRAs in bending the curve in biodiversity loss;
28. calls on the EU, building on existing evidence of effective implementation, to take concrete action, including capacity development, that further mainstreams and aligns biodiversity priorities across jurisdictions and policy areas – namely agriculture, spatial planning and urban development, trade, environment, research and innovation, climate mitigation and adaptation and the EU Green Deal – and adequately integrates all levels of governance to ensure delivery of EU-wide impacts;
29. emphasises the recommendations of its report on financing biodiversity action<sup>5</sup> to step up ambitions in environmental mainstreaming across EU funding as well as increasing and streamlining biodiversity-dedicated funding targeting LRAs at the appropriate scale, including in LIFE;
30. requests coherent cross-border environmental policies and corollary cross-border cooperation, since species live beyond borders;

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<sup>4</sup> [NAT \(2019\) 4601](#).

<sup>5</sup> CoR (2020) [Financing biodiversity action: opportunities and challenges for EU subnational governments](#).

31. calls on the EU to prioritise bending the curve in biodiversity loss as a key principle in all major financial plans, including the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027 and COVID-19 recovery plans, mobilise sufficient resources to, directly or indirectly, stimulate biodiversity action at all levels of government and specific to the regional context, simplifying procedures for increased uptake of funding; to this end, suggests considering the implementation of a traffic light system on public spending or investment activities which reflects the possible impact on biodiversity and drivers of its loss;
32. asks that EU state aid schemes fully integrate the objective of eliminating subsidies that are harmful to biodiversity, ensuring that public and private economic and regulatory incentives are positive for biodiversity by 2030; it also emphasises the importance of including biodiversity in the cohesion policy;
33. draws attention to the high number of jobs endangered by biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation and to the job-creation potential of applying bioeconomic and sustainable production models, and calls on the Commission to make preservation of jobs that are directly related to halting biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation a priority in future environmental strategies;
34. calls for stepping up investment in research on the links between nature and the economy to ensure additional input for evidence-based policy-making and more effective investments;
35. encourages a facilitated process for mainstreaming biodiversity in CAP plans; encourages common binding and effective minimum earmarking for eco-schemes in all national strategic plans;
36. points out that there is often incoherence in the terminology used in different directives and regulations, that procedures (e.g. the LIFE programme) are often too complicated for smaller LRAs and mostly targeted at large scale projects and not adequate for nature projects in peri-urban and rural areas;
37. notes the important role of zoos and aquariums, but highlights that the conservation and preservation of biodiversity should focus on in-situ efforts and the prevention of wildlife trafficking, stepping up the protection of local species and increasing knowledge about them; offers its support to LRAs in improving the implementation of the EU Zoo Directive in alignment with CBD targets;
38. recalls that while the EU's framework for marine environmental protection is one of the most comprehensive and ambitious worldwide, a boost in action is necessary to be able to properly address main pressures such as overfishing and unsustainable plastic litter, excess nutrients, fishing practices, underwater noise and all kinds of pollution; sustainable fishing practices and health of marine ecosystems are essential for economies, people and communities in coastal areas;

39. calls on the EU to strengthen the important role of sub-national governments in preserving and re-establishing biodiversity, particularly in unlocking the potential of biocultural diversity. As the concept of biocultural diversity encompasses biodiversity, cultural diversity and local, regional and European identity, the preservation of biodiversity is likely to bring added value from the perspective of local communities;
40. calls on the EU to stand up for a strengthened Post-2020 GBF reflecting the equal importance of the international, regional and local levels by means of a dedicated decision for full involvement of LRAs, building on the legacy of the [Plan of Action of Decision X/22](#) and its remarkable achievements at all levels of government over the past decade;

### ***Establishing the role of cities and regions in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework***

41. supports the goal of the [UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#) for accelerating and massively scaling up the global restoration of degraded and destroyed ecosystems to fight the climate crisis and enhance food security, water supply and biodiversity, e.g. through the [Bonn Challenge](#) that aims to restore 350 million hectares of degraded ecosystems by 2030;
42. reiterates the need for formal recognition of the key role of SLGs in achieving global restoration and biodiversity objectives by multiple decisions of previous CBD COPs and calls on UN Parties to engage with their SLGs and strengthen their capacities to incorporate biodiversity into urban, spatial and territorial plans in order to achieve the CBD objectives and the Post-2020 GBF as per the mission of Decision X/22;
43. welcomes the formal recognition of the connection between biodiversity and human health in the Post-2020 GBF and highlights the fact that SLGs are key to implementing and managing NBS, including accessible and inclusive green spaces in urban, peri-urban and rural areas, effectively improving health conditions;
44. recommends explicitly referring to the role of SLGs throughout the Post-2020 GBF, in particular by developing goals and targets (amending section I. Introduction/B), building partnerships, driving momentum for change (by amending section I. Introduction/C) and mainstreaming biodiversity, including in relevant sectoral policies at all levels of government (by rephrasing section D, 2030 targets, item 13)<sup>6</sup>;
45. recalls the need for collective action of all stakeholders and the wider public, with special attention to contributions from IPLCs, women, youth and those directly relying on and managing biodiversity;
46. calls for prioritising a Long-term Approach to Biodiversity Mainstreaming (LTAM), horizontally and vertically, across policy areas and sectors at subnational and local levels, and notes that SLGs, as the local public governance interface with civil society and the private

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<sup>6</sup> As per Zero Draft of the Post 2020 GBF <https://www.cbd.int/article/2020-01-10-19-02-38>

sector, are best positioned to address ecosystem restoration and protection in specific local and regional contexts, pooling resources and utilising economies of scale;

47. advocates Post-2020 GBF Target 15 for explicitly addressing the need for additional resources to support the LTAM through targeted capacity development at all levels of government, including through innovative, activating methods such as peer-to-peer learning, to reverse biodiversity loss, restore ecosystems, prevent invasive alien species and the illegal killing of and trade in wildlife, and involve key stakeholders and experts, in particular IPLC, in managing biodiversity and providing technical assistance and adequate financial and human resources;
48. calls on CBD Parties to significantly step up public funding as the backbone of resource mobilisation, collected by and distributed to SLGs for investment in biodiversity action at their level, with special consideration of biodiversity hotspots, in order to create enabling conditions for private sector investment;
49. recommends developing Communication, Education and Public Awareness-raising (CEPA) initiatives in alliance with technical experts, artists, writers and the education and media sectors, tailored to the local and subnational level to highlight the cultural, tourism-related, recreational, human health, economic and intrinsic value of biodiversity across communication in the public, private and business sectors and emphasises the unique position, insight and legitimacy of SLGs as the level of government closest to the people for implementing such initiatives;
50. calls for provision of consistent definitions of indicators, including on urban green space, based on the revised Singapore Index on Cities' Biodiversity, as a tool to measure the contribution of local biodiversity action supporting a clear role for SLGs in the Post-2020 GBF monitoring, reporting and verifying mechanism (MRV);
51. urges monitoring efforts to be significantly scaled up, harnessing new technologies, all adequate data sources and predictive modelling in integrated biodiversity monitoring systems, so as to inform assessment of the effectiveness of international agreements and accurately and transparently track the impact of biodiversity action at all levels;
52. calls on the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO) to make explicit reference to the importance of SLGs in developing and implementing national policies;
53. encourages annual platform conventions for SLGs to connect, exchange and collectively present their contributions to the Post-2020 GBF and to establish interfaces to such as the [Global Platform for Sustainable Cities](#), the [Global Environment Facility's Sustainable Cities](#), [BIODEV 2030](#), [IADB's Emerging and Sustainable Cities Programme](#), the FAO's Great Green Wall of Cities and the CBD Area-based commitments Platform;
54. advocates the COP15 Decision dedicated to full participation of SLGs in the post-2020 GBF, including a renewed Decision X/22 delineating a Plan of Action on SLGs for Biodiversity and accelerating a "whole-of-government" approach to vertical collaboration between all levels of government to ensure policy coherence and exploit their full potential for meeting the 2050 Vision and 2030 Mission;

55. supports the recommendation by the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI) "On Engagement with Subnational and Local Governments to enhance implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework" and requests that the SBI undertake a mid-term review of the role of SLGs in the implementation of the Post-2020 GBF and LTAM in 2024;
56. highlights the important collaboration with international key partners<sup>7</sup> in the "Edinburgh Process for SLGs on the development of the Post-2020 GBF" and the forthcoming 7th Global Summit of Subnational and Local Governments in the global positioning of SLGs as part of an effective Post-2020 GBF;
57. commits itself to proactively engage in implementing the Post-2020 GBF and the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 and in preparing an aligned, ambitious EU Biodiversity Action Plan.

Brussels, 14 October 2020

The President  
of the European Committee of the Regions

Apostolos Tzitzikostas

The Secretary-General  
of the European Committee of the Regions

Petr Bližkovský

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<sup>7</sup> Such as the [Group of Leading Subnational Governments \(GoLS\)](#), [ICLEI](#), [Regions4](#) and the [Governments of Scotland](#) and [Quebec](#).

## II. PROCEDURE

<b>Title</b>	Bio-diverse cities and regions beyond 2020 at the UN CBD COP 15 and in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030
<b>Reference(s)</b>	EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 COM(2020) 380 final
<b>Legal basis</b>	Own-initiative opinion
<b>Procedural basis</b>	Rule 41.b (i)
<b>Date of Council/EP referral/Date of Commission letter</b>	-
<b>Date of Bureau/President's decision</b>	-
<b>Commission responsible</b>	Commission for Environment, Climate Change and Energy (ENVE)
<b>Rapporteur</b>	Roby Biwer (LU/PES), Member of Bettembourg Municipal Council, Luxembourg
<b>Analysis</b>	6 April 2020
<b>Discussed in commission</b>	8 June 2020
<b>Date adopted by commission</b>	9 September 2020
<b>Result of the vote in commission (majority, unanimity)</b>	Majority
<b>Date adopted in plenary</b>	14 October 2020
<b>Previous Committee opinions</b>	CoR opinion on the Contribution of EU local and regional authorities to the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, October 2018 <a href="#">ENVE-VI/031</a>
<b>Date of subsidiarity monitoring consultation</b>	n/a