



**European Committee  
of the Regions**

**ENVE-VII/020**

**148th plenary session, 26-27 January 2022**

## **OPINION**

### **Local and regional authorities accelerating the implementation of the EU Pollinators Initiative**

#### **THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

- underlines the importance of pollinators to the sustainability of our societies and nature. Pollinators play a key role both in food systems and in maintaining biodiversity and landscapes. It is therefore not only domesticated pollinators that need support; viable habitats for wild pollinators must also be provided, as they are a part of nature's biodiversity. Domesticated pollinators should be seen as a complement to wild pollinators, and not the other way around;
- highlights the possibilities and responsibilities of local and regional authorities in accelerating the implementation of the Pollinators Initiative, now and even more so in the future;
- welcomes the positive direction taken by the EU Pollinators Initiative when implemented in 2018. Is concerned to note, however, that since then, the trend of a declining pollinator population has continued. Is thankful that the IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services concludes that, despite insufficient action, it is not too late for the climate and for biodiversity, but that transformative action is needed at all levels;
- supports, therefore, the conclusions of the Special Report 15/2020 by the European Court of Auditors and has high expectations for the revision of the EU Pollinators Initiative;
- calls for legally binding targets whose scope covers pollinators, as part of the upcoming European Commission initiative on nature restoration targets under the EU biodiversity strategy; In this light, offers to support the implementation of a new EU Pollinators Initiative, in particular regarding the implementation and monitoring of activities;
- calls on the Commission to address the decline of pollinators internationally and to advocate strong measures to protect pollinators and their habitats during the second part of the CBD COP15, scheduled to take place from 25 April to 8 May 2022 in Kunming, China;
- stands ready to be part of the EU delegation to the UN CBD COP15 and future CBD COPs in order to share the views of local and regional authorities in the EU and the measures they have already implemented and also to help build on the success of the Edinburgh Declaration in the field of protecting pollinators and their habitats.

Rapporteur

Frida Nilsson (SE/RE), Member of a Local Assembly: Lidköping Municipality

Reference document

COM(2021) 261 final

## **Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions – LRAs accelerating the implementation of the EU Pollinators Initiative**

### **I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

1. underlines the importance of pollinators to the sustainability of our societies and nature. Pollinators play a key role both in food systems and in maintaining biodiversity and landscapes. It is therefore not only domesticated pollinators that need support; viable habitats for wild pollinators must also be provided, as they are a part of nature's biodiversity. Domesticated pollinators should be seen as a complement to wild pollinators, and not the other way around;
2. is concerned at the lack of awareness about what pollinators are, the degree to which they are key to the functioning of our eco-systems and the consequences that their decline and extinction could have on our lives;
3. highlights the important link between biodiversity and climate change, and that these relate to and affect each other. Differences in temperature, changing weather conditions, loss of habitat and other factors caused by a changing climate are having a direct impact on the decline of pollinators. In turn, protection and restoration of biodiversity play an important role in climate adaptation;
4. appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the European Union framework for supporting and sustaining viable and diverse populations of pollinators and therefore welcomes the European Commission review of the Initiative on Pollinators, as well as the European Parliament Resolution and the Council Conclusions on this subject<sup>1</sup>;
5. welcomes the positive direction taken by the EU Pollinators Initiative when implemented in 2018. Is concerned to note, however, that since then, the trend of a declining pollinator population has continued. Is thankful that the IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services concludes that, despite insufficient action, it is not too late for the climate and for biodiversity, but that transformative action is needed at all levels;
6. supports, therefore, the conclusions of the [Special Report 15/2020](#) by the European Court of Auditors and has high expectations for the revision of the EU Pollinators Initiative;
7. appreciates the inclusion of objectives for biodiversity and pollinators in several EU strategies and policies, such as the new CAP, the EU strategy for Biodiversity and the Farm to Fork strategy;
8. calls for legally binding targets whose scope covers pollinators, as part of the upcoming European Commission initiative on nature restoration targets under the EU biodiversity

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<sup>1</sup> [2019/2803\(RSP\)](#) and [Council conclusions adopted by the Council at its 3782nd meeting held on 17 December 2020 \(14168/20\)](#).

strategy; In this light, offers to support the implementation of a new EU Pollinators Initiative, in particular regarding the implementation and monitoring activities;

9. The objectives outlined to help support pollinators should also aim to help the European Union reach the goals set in the United Nations Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals<sup>2</sup>, in particular, the goals aiming to sustain biodiversity and habitats important to wild pollinators;
10. is convinced that solving pollinator decline demands coordination and integrated strategies, involving all sectors and political spheres. It is important to engage all relevant actors and improve the efficiency of existing, but fragmented, efforts. The current Pollinators Initiative laid the foundation, but now requires further work;
11. advocates that all three pillars of sustainability should be considered in the process of securing sustainable populations of wild pollinators. This means that social, economic and biological sustainability needs to be sufficiently addressed in the implementing measures;

#### *Pollinators as part of the rural/urban divide*

12. highlights the importance of looking beyond agricultural policies when aiming to stop the decline of pollinators, as the agricultural sector and its contribution to declining populations of wild pollinators is in many ways already regulated and implemented in several EU policies;
13. calls for special attention to be paid to conventional farmers in their efforts to reduce their impact on pollinators, as organic agriculture and agroecological practices in many ways already protects and nourishes pollinators. Research, innovation and a flexible system for implementation is key to solving the challenges but also to allowing a diverse agricultural sector;
14. emphasises the need to examine the full extent of and to tackle environmental polluters that go beyond pesticides, such as light pollution, for example, which is proven to affect pollinators to a large extent but still remains unaddressed;
15. points to the fact that urban areas can contribute to the positive development of biodiversity, through botanical gardens, allotments and residential gardens and urban vacant lots, which may have a direct impact on the populations of wild bee species<sup>3</sup>;
16. warns that in a world of expanding cities, incorporating the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services into urban planning and practices is a must in order to protect pollinator populations, contribute to their diversity and create new habitats;

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<sup>2</sup> The UN Agenda 2030. <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>.

<sup>3</sup> Baldock, K. C. R. et al. Where is the UK's pollinator biodiversity? The importance of urban areas for flower-visiting insects. *Proc. R. Soc. B Biol. Sci.* **282**, 20142849 (2015), Theodorou, P. et al. The structure of flower visitor networks in relation to pollination across an agricultural to urban gradient. *Funct. Ecol.* **31**, 838–847 (2017).

17. calls for the relevant authorities to carry out impact assessments that take account of development that limits ownership rights and which in other ways changes the possibility of sustainable livelihoods. These impact assessments need to consider not only the biological gains, but also the possible negative impact on residents' livelihoods and lives;

*Action at the EU level*

18. calls on the European Commission, the European Parliament and the EU Member States to ensure that post-pandemic recovery policies, programmes and plans contribute to the sustainable management of biodiversity, including stopping the worrying decline of wild and domestic pollinators;
19. calls for support at local and regional level for an eco-scheme for pollinators that would include: the use of annual crops that are attractive to pollinators in at least 10% of agricultural land; in addition to the flowering period of perennial crops, planting of at least two plant species that are of interest to pollinators between rows of plants in production, with flowering at different times of the year to guarantee to a maximum the availability of resources for pollinators; training for farmers on beneficial insects and integrated pest management practices; and measures to be taken in favour of farms that ensure the presence of pollinators in areas lacking biodiversity;
20. calls for environmental considerations to be taken into account at all levels of public decision-making and across policies, as most human interaction with nature affects ecosystems, to some extent. Regarding pollinators, this should be given particular consideration in the development of urban areas, infrastructure and other land-use conversions;
21. warns that, although regional and local authorities act as direct links to the European citizens, responsibility for implementing and developing objectives for pollinators does not solely lie in their hands. National governments and the EU have to contribute to this work by supporting, encouraging and coordinating solutions that can easily be implemented at a local and regional scale;
22. calls on the EU Commission to actively support awareness-raising campaigns on national, regional and local levels, industry sectors and public through already existing and new channels;
23. regrets that platforms that were built for knowledge building and the sharing of best practices as part of the Pollinators Initiative, such as the EU Pollinator-information hive, have not been able to reach all actors and are still insufficiently well known. Calls therefore for funding, knowledge and capacity building, as well as best practices, as part of the upcoming Commission initiatives to be designed and communicated in a transparent way, so that citizens are not only inspired but also know how to contribute to the task of creating sustainable habitats for pollinators;
24. urges that the revised Pollinators Initiative investigate how existing networks and organisations can be used to share knowledge and best practices with local and regional authorities inside and outside the EU;

25. offers, consequently, to work with the European Commission towards making the pollinators initiative part of existing EU initiatives, such as the Urban Greening Platform and the Green City Accord;
26. reiterates that monitoring and reporting on the development of pollinators plays an important part in analysing the efficiency of any measures that are implemented. Calls, therefore, on the European Commission to share a reporting and monitoring framework that could be used by subnational authorities to this end. To ensure straightforward implementation and support in establishing standardised pollinator monitoring programmes at the local and regional levels, efforts should follow existing best practices;
27. notes the close link between native species of flowers and native species or variations of pollinators and calls, therefore, for investment in knowledge, preservation and production of these species as a way of supporting pollinators;
28. therefore calls on the European Commission to evaluate how the commitment to plant at least three billion additional trees in urban areas in the EU by 2030 could be expanded and linked to include more planting of native flower species;
29. would like efforts to secure healthy populations of wild pollinators and effective biosecurity measures relevant for pollinators, as well as encouragements to use local plants to be included as an objective in the national CAP strategic plans to be approved in 2022, to push for further action. For easy and correct implementation, this responsibility should lie with the Member States;

*Action at the local and regional level, and the involvement of the CoR*

30. highlights the possibilities and responsibilities of local and regional authorities in accelerating implementation of the Pollinators Initiative, now and even more so in the future;
31. believes in the need for cooperation between local and regional authorities, both nationally and cross-border, when adopting and implementing environmental measures. For pollinators, biological corridors are essential to support the sustainability and resilience of populations. These types of task are well suited to local and regional authorities which can, by means of cooperation, easily implement measures that will contribute to sustainable populations of pollinators;
32. also notes the importance of involving, besides local and regional authorities, civil society, knowledge institutions, local farmers and the private sector. To take full advantage of these actors, their work and innovation within their sectors, the new Pollinators Initiative must create an efficient framework for voluntary initiatives, knowledge, common goals and reports. This would allow these actors not only to help reach the goals set within the Initiative but also to go further;
33. gives its commitment that, when working on environmental issues, in particular issues relating to biodiversity, it will raise awareness and underline the importance of objectives supporting

pollinators, should set out clear roles for national, regional and local governments to contribute to reversing the loss of pollinators and support the development of national and local pollinator action plans, also as part of the Green Deal Going Local campaign;

34. emphasises the importance of acknowledging the socioeconomic benefits of pollinator programmes as well. There are economic opportunities and opportunities for social inclusion by focusing on these programmes;
35. expresses its intention to continue its close cooperation with the European Commission, especially in the revision and implementation of biodiversity objectives concerning pollinators;
36. offers to launch a Pollinators Network as a pilot project, where local authorities can share knowledge and best practices with each other, aimed in particular at urban centres;
37. calls on local and regional authorities to monitor and report on the conditions of pollinators, as knowledge of native species and local flora and fauna is key to understanding the local conditions of both wild and domesticated pollinators, and local and regional authorities are already familiar with their local and regional conditions;
38. calls on CoR members to lead by example and organise dialogues and open meetings at the local and regional levels, ensuring that civil society and NGOs are included, as finding and closing knowledge gaps is one of the most important aspects of the Pollinators Initiative;
39. calls on representatives of local and regional communities to evaluate the degree to which the rehabilitation of their industrial and historical sites can be achieved in combination with Nature-Based Solutions aimed at increasing the population of pollinators;
40. strongly believes that including the younger generations in the debate and in finding solutions is crucial, as implementing environmental objectives and strengthening wild populations of pollinators in particular will take several generations. In this regard, welcomes existing examples, such as the involvement of young people in the STING project<sup>4</sup>, but calls on CoR members and the wider community of local and regional authorities to build on this example and suggest citizen engagement activities in their cities and regions, aimed in particular at children and young people. Increasing awareness about pollinators could become part of the 2022 European Year of Youth activities;

#### *European involvement on a global scale*

41. welcomes the positive signal sent by the UN CBD COP15 and its pledge to reverse the loss of animal and plant species by 2030;
42. highlights the crucial importance of the [Edinburgh Declaration for subnational governments, cities and local authorities on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework](#) and also commits to

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<sup>4</sup> STING (Science and Technology for Pollinating Insects) project by the European Commission.

promoting it in the sphere of the discussion on pollinators at the European and international levels;

43. calls on the Commission to address the decline of pollinators internationally and to advocate strong measures to protect pollinators and their habitats during the second part of the CBD COP15, scheduled to take place from 25 April to 8 May 2022 in Kunming, China;
44. stands ready to be part of the EU delegation to the UN CBD COP15 and future CBD COPs in order to share the views of local and regional authorities in the EU and the measures they have already implemented and also to help build on the success of the Edinburgh Declaration in the field of protecting pollinators and their habitats.

Brussels, 26 January 2022

The President  
of the European Committee of the Regions

Apostolos Tzitzikostas

The Secretary-General  
of the European Committee of the Regions

Petr Blížkovský

## II. PROCEDURE

<b>Title</b>	<b>Local and regional authorities accelerating the implementation of the EU Pollinators Initiative</b>
<b>Reference(s)</b>	Non-legislative Opinion
<b>Legal basis</b>	Article 307 TFEU
<b>Procedural basis</b>	Rule 41(b) (i)
<b>Date of Council/EP referral/Date of Commission letter</b>	27 May 2021
<b>Date of President's decision</b>	16 June 2021
<b>Commission responsible</b>	ENVE
<b>Rapporteur</b>	Frida Nilsson (SE/RE)
<b>Analysis</b>	12 July 2021
<b>Discussed in commission</b>	9 September 2021
<b>Date adopted by commission</b>	23-24 November 2021
<b>Result of the vote in commission (majority, unanimity)</b>	Unanimity
<b>Date adopted in plenary</b>	26 January 2022
<b>Previous Committee opinions</b>	<a href="#">CoR (2020) 594</a> , <a href="#">CoR (2018) 1019</a> , <a href="#">CoR (2016) 3170</a>
<b>Date of subsidiarity monitoring consultation</b>	-