



The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and its targets for protection, management and restoration of forests

Towards forest management in line with the protection and conservation of Biodiversity

LIFE GoProFor – Final European Conference – 16 February 2022

Frank VASSEN, European Commission, DG ENV.D3, Nature Conservation Unit

The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030

- Strategy adopted by the European Commission on 20th May 2020
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1590574123338&uri=CELEX:52020DC0380>
- Overall goal: **to put biodiversity on the path to recovery** by 2030, by protecting and restoring nature and ecosystems in the EU
- **Headline targets:**
 1. *Establish a larger **coherent EU-wide network of protected areas***
 2. *Develop a **EU Nature Restoration Plan***
- the Strategy was **endorsed by Member States** through Council Conclusions in October 2020, and by the **European Parliament** in an own-initiative report adopted in June 2021

Protected area targets in the Biodiversity Strategy:

A larger and coherent EU-wide network of protected areas:

- **Legal protection** for at least $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 30 \% \text{ of EU land area} \\ 30 \% \text{ of EU sea area} \end{array} \right.$
 - ↳ **Strict protection** for at least $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 10 \% \text{ of EU land area} \\ 10 \% \text{ of EU sea area} \end{array} \right.$
- By 2030, all **protected areas** should:
 - have clearly defined conservation objectives and measures
 - be effectively managed
 - be appropriately monitored

Commission Guidance note (January 2022)

- The target for 30% of legally protected areas shall include:
 - Natura 2000 sites
 - Existing protected areas under national schemes
 - New protected areas
- The network shall integrate ecological corridors
 - ensure connectivity & prevent genetic isolation, allow species migration, maintain an enhance healthy ecosystems
- OECMs & urban green areas should be considered
- Restored areas should also be included

Strict protection

- strictly protected areas need to be legally protected as such
- **these areas should include**
 - all old-growth and primary forests
 - other carbon-rich ecosystems, such as peatlands and grasslands
 - other ecosystems that require strict protection
- **natural processes** are left essentially **undisturbed** → not necessarily incompatible with some human activities
- both **non-intervention areas** and **areas in which active management is required to achieve the conservation outcome**
- **functionally meaningful areas** → sufficient size on their own or together with buffer zones

How to achieve the target ?

- Identify and designate **additional protected areas**:
 1. complete any remaining gaps in the Natura 2000 network, in particular for marine species and habitats
 2. identify species and habitats that require additional areas to be protected (first at EU level, then at national or regional level)
 3. select the most suitable areas to be designated for the protection of those species and habitats

The mechanism

1. Initial pledges for new areas to be designated should be submitted by MS to the Commission

- explain { **criteria used** for the identification
scientific evidence that is being used for the designation

2. Discussion of the MS's **pledges within the framework of the biogeographical meetings**

- focus on both { natural values of individual sites to be designated
global coherence and completeness of the network

Effective management of protected areas

Establish and implement **appropriate conservation objectives and measures:**

1. ensure non-deterioration
2. define clear and quantified conservation objectives and clear conservation measures to achieve them
3. include monitoring as it is crucial for an effective protection
4. measure management effectiveness

Format for the national pledges

The format for the pledges on the protected areas targets includes 3 main sections:

- 1) Member State-level information
- 2) Information on existing protected areas and OECMs, to establish a clear baseline
- 3) Pledges for future designations as protected areas or recognition as OECMs

Subsequent reporting of protected areas through the CDDA (*Common Database of Designated Areas*)

The “30% status improvement target” in the EU Biodiversity Strategy:

« The Commission will request and support Member States to **raise the level of implementation of existing legislation** within clear deadlines.

It will in particular request Member States to **ensure no deterioration in conservation trends and status of all protected habitats and species by 2030.**

In addition, Member States will have to ensure that **at least 30% of species and habitats not currently in favourable status** are in that category or show a strong positive trend.

The Commission and the European Environmental Agency will provide **guidance to Member States in 2020 on how to select and prioritise species and habitats.** »

Key features of the target

- designed to **speed up the implementation** of EU Birds and Habitats Directives
- **national-level target** that each Member State achieves individually (this is hopefully triggering national ownership + “positive competition”)
- **aligned with the reporting** on status and trends of species and habitats under Art.17 Habitats Directive and Art.12 Birds Directive
- **no breakdown** of the target **below national level** (ex. species vs. habitats, biogeographical regions, terrestrial vs. marine, etc.)
- although primarily focussed on the national level, achieving the target will require **trans-national coordination** (in particular for mobile/migratory species)
- **not a legally binding target**, but endorsed by Council conclusions

Commission Guidance note (June 2021)

Guidance note provides clarification on the target and proposes criteria for prioritization of habitats and species, based on:

1. Biodiversity-related criteria
 - Habitats/species with highest risk of extinction
 - “national responsibility”
 - “umbrella effect” on other species and habitats
2. Synergies with other EU policies
 - Climate change adaptation / mitigation (restore carbon-rich ecosystems)
 - Synergies with other restoration targets in the Strategy, etc.
3. Prioritising “easy” targets, to be able to show successes

➔ These criteria are indicative and aimed to help Member States fulfilling their political commitment expressed in the Council conclusions, where they welcomed the EU Nature Restoration Plan under the EU Biodiversity Strategy

Setting the baseline

1. **National biogeographical region-level conservation status assessments** (HD Art. 17 report of 2019): all habitats and species reported as present + not assessed as FV (Favourable Conservation Status)
 - National biogeographical region assessments for species or habitats present in more than one region in a Member State count as separate units for the baseline
2. Bird species reported at national level (BD Article 12 report of 2019) + not assessed as “Secure” in the **EU-Level population assessment**
 - Commission Guidance suggest to focus on **breeding populations**
 - Member States can decide to extend the list of birds, by including additional species/sub-species considered in bad status at national level (national red lists, etc.)

To meet the target, there should be no more deterioration (negative trends) by 2030 for any of the species and habitats in the baseline; and for 30% of all assessments there should be a strong positive trend by 2030

Format for pledges

Provide list of habitats and species **that should (at least) achieve a strong positive trend by 2030**

- an explanation on the criteria used for selecting these habitats and species
- an explanation on the measures needed to achieve the desired positive trends by 2030

Provide additional list of habitats and species for which additional measures should be taken **to achieve non-deterioration by 2030**

- an explanation on the measures needed to achieve non-deteriorating trends by 2030

Provide a list of habitats and species for which deterioration is expected not to be halted, despite all possible measures taken.

- an explanation on the reasons why deterioration cannot be halted by 2030

A description of measures that will be taken to improve the quality of monitoring and reduce the share of “unknown assessments”

Description of measures in the pledge format

- List all foreseen measures per species or habitat; for each measure **provide quantitative and qualitative information that would allow assessing that what is foreseen is suitable to achieve the desired outcome**
- Provide an **indicative timeline** for these measures
- Explain **why the envisaged measures are considered sufficient** to either achieve non-deterioration or a strong positive trend by 2030

Examples of forest-related national priorities for non-deterioration or recovery

91F0 Alluvial hardwood forest

Assessed **U1- / U2-** (Unfavourable and declining) in 13 national biogeographical region assessments (Art. 17)



Copyright: Lionel Wibail

Osmoderma eremita

Assessed **U1- / U2-** (Unfavourable and declining) in 17 national biogeographical region assessments (Art. 17)



Copyright: Oskar Gran

Hazel Grouse

Reported as declining in 10 Member States
EU population status: **Threatened**



Copyright: Matti Suopajärvi

Next steps (for both targets !)

Commission and EEA:

1. Development of electronic “reporting formats” for pledges (mid 2022)
2. In line with the format, development of dashboards to publicise the pledges received (end 2022)

National authorities:

1. Development of pledges (in the course of 2022)
2. Submission of pledges (end 2022)

Commission, EEA, national authorities & stakeholders:

1. Review of the pledges (early 2023)

Funding opportunities for achieving the target

- Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)
 - L'Instrument Financier pour l'Environnement (LIFE) – priorities in the MAWP !
 - European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
 - European Maritime and Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)
 - Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)
-
- ➔ **Prioritized Action Frameworks (PAFs)** do already prioritize actions and financing needs for habitats and species during the next MFF, but might need revision in view of the restoration ambition of the target
 - ➔ National/regional authorities are encouraged to apply for **LIFE** funding, in particular through **Strategic Nature Projects (SNAPs)**, to help them secure additional resources for planning and implementation of targets, and transnational coordination
 - ➔ Look out for synergies with funding for **climate adaptation and mitigation** !



Thank you for your attention !