

## Environmental Ministers of the EU shall adopt clear and ambitious commitment to save biodiversity and thus the well-being of European citizens

*Budapest, Hungary – CEEweb for Biodiversity urges EU Environment Ministers ahead of their Council meeting on 19th December to take bold steps on biodiversity conservation through tackling the emerging problem of resource use.*

Why could the upcoming Environmental Council meeting be a turning point in nature conservation?

EU Environmental Council meetings take place twice under each EU Presidency. The one going to be held 19<sup>th</sup> December intends to discuss two essential issues related to biodiversity conservation. One of them is adopting concrete actions to reach EU's prime target to stop the decline of biodiversity at EU level, as well as globally. The other is shifting the path to the implementation of the Roadmap in order to realize a resource efficient Europe and to achieve the objectives set in the Europe 2020 Strategy.

What would be the minimum results of the Council meeting that would really benefit the environment?

CEEweb calls for a strong support from the Environment Council to be held on 19<sup>th</sup> December to adopt strong and ambitious actions able to meet the EU 2020 Strategy's biodiversity targets. That would be the absolute minimum to halt the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem decline, to make significant progress in restoration and to increase substantially the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.

Proper integration of biodiversity into ongoing reform of agricultural, fishery and cohesion policies holds special significance. Therefore, CEEweb urges EU Environmental Ministers to support the meaningful greening of the Common Agricultural Policy, to stress its significant contribution to achieve biodiversity goals and to promote ecological areas and grassland protection at farm level. Furthermore, the Central and Eastern European umbrella organisation calls the ministers to hinder weakening the commitments to deliver sustainable fisheries EU wide.

How can the EU financing mechanism be adjusted to biodiversity commitments?

The further loss and degradation of ecosystems resulted from unfavourable EU financing mechanism shall be stopped urgently. The EU budget shall follow a new logic, collecting revenues from activities with negative externalities and supporting activities that generate positive externalities. In order to achieve that aim, cohesion policies and related funds shall serve the prevention of further loss of biodiversity; and LIFE Fund shall support biodiversity loss mitigation measures.

Therefore, CEEweb urges EU Environmental Ministers to make steps towards reforming Structural and Cohesion Funds so that they would serve environmental and social goals at the same time, and to initiate debate on LIFE Fund streaming and to stand beside an increased share and efficiency of the LIFE Fund.

How could proper regulation of natural resource use contribute to achieve biodiversity goals?

The EU intends to move towards to a more resource efficient economy, also as a mean to recover EU's economy, to increase its competitiveness, but at the same time to protect valuable ecological assets, the services they provide and the quality of life for present and future generations. The European Roadmap delivering these objectives should also tackle the negative side effects, such as the rebound effect of resource efficiency. Therefore, CEEweb calls Environmental Ministers to initiate the identification of robust set of mandatory targets, indicators and regulatory instrument to reduce Europe's overuse of its natural resources.

Besides, accordingly, an absolute resource use reduction shall be realised at an EU level not to loose gains on resource efficiency improvement due to the rebound effect. Only this can ensure the achievement of the EU's objectives on fighting climate change and limiting environmental impacts of resource use. That would strengthen also EU's efforts to improve the well-being of its citizens; and last but not least it would contribute to stopping global biodiversity loss through reducing EU's negative environmental impacts on the rest of the world. Therefore, CEEweb for Biodiversity calls the Ministers to acknowledge the necessity of an absolute reduction of resource use in order to meet EU's objectives for the improvement of its environment and the well-being of its citizens.

Editors note:

Rebound effect

The so-called rebound effect<sup>1</sup> occurs when some or all of the savings from efficiency increase are cancelled out by changes in people's behaviour. On a consumer level it can be direct (turning up the heating in a newly insulated house) or indirect (spending the money saved on bills on a flight to Spain). And on a macro-economic level, improved efficiency is usually believed to lead to lower prices and more demand.

About CEEweb for Biodiversity

CEEweb for Biodiversity is an umbrella organization of NGOs in the Central and Eastern European region. Our mission is the conservation of biodiversity through the promotion of sustainable development.

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