



CEEweb for Biodiversity
Kuruclesi út 11/a, 1021 Budapest, Hungary
Phone: +36 1 398 0135
Fax: +36 1 398 0136
ceeweb@ceeweb.org
www.ceeweb.org

Assessing the Biodiversity Action Plan and its implementation: a failure of delivery or a failure of approach?

Since 2001 the main objective of the EU biodiversity policy is to halt biodiversity loss by 2010. Through sustaining ecosystem services, which are based on biodiversity, this would be a major and indispensable contribution to human well-being. Although the 2010 deadline is fast approaching, we do not seem to get even close to the achievement. How is this possible? Is biodiversity conservation finally not so important for the EU, even if the well-being of its citizens depends on it? Or are there other reasons?

CEEweb for Biodiversity assessed the BAP and its implementation and concluded that the more than 150 BAP actions, although most of them are indispensable for biodiversity conservation, do not respond to the **root causes** of biodiversity loss. Looking at the wider socio-economic framework, the BAP actions are not more than end-of-pipe solutions trying to tackle the results of our consumption and production patterns, sectoral institutional system, economic regulatory framework and material values among many others. The complex nexus of cause-effect relationships which connect biodiversity changes and socio-economic trends is not sufficiently revealed and the underlying problems remain untouched both by biodiversity and other EU policies. This challenge to biodiversity policy is shown below through the example of some bird species of Community importance, which form part of the Natura 2000 network.

Many birds are declining in Europe as a result of intensifying agriculture, among others because they do not find enough food, nesting or hiding places. Among them are the European roller, the whinchat as well as several birds of prey like the imperial eagle. Intensification of agriculture involves the increased use of inputs, like fertilizers and pesticides, the application of heavy machinery and irrigation, as well as the establishment of large fields of monoculture. These practices do not adapt to the local ecological conditions, but instead try to change them to realise higher yields or bring new areas or crops into production. **But why is it happening?**

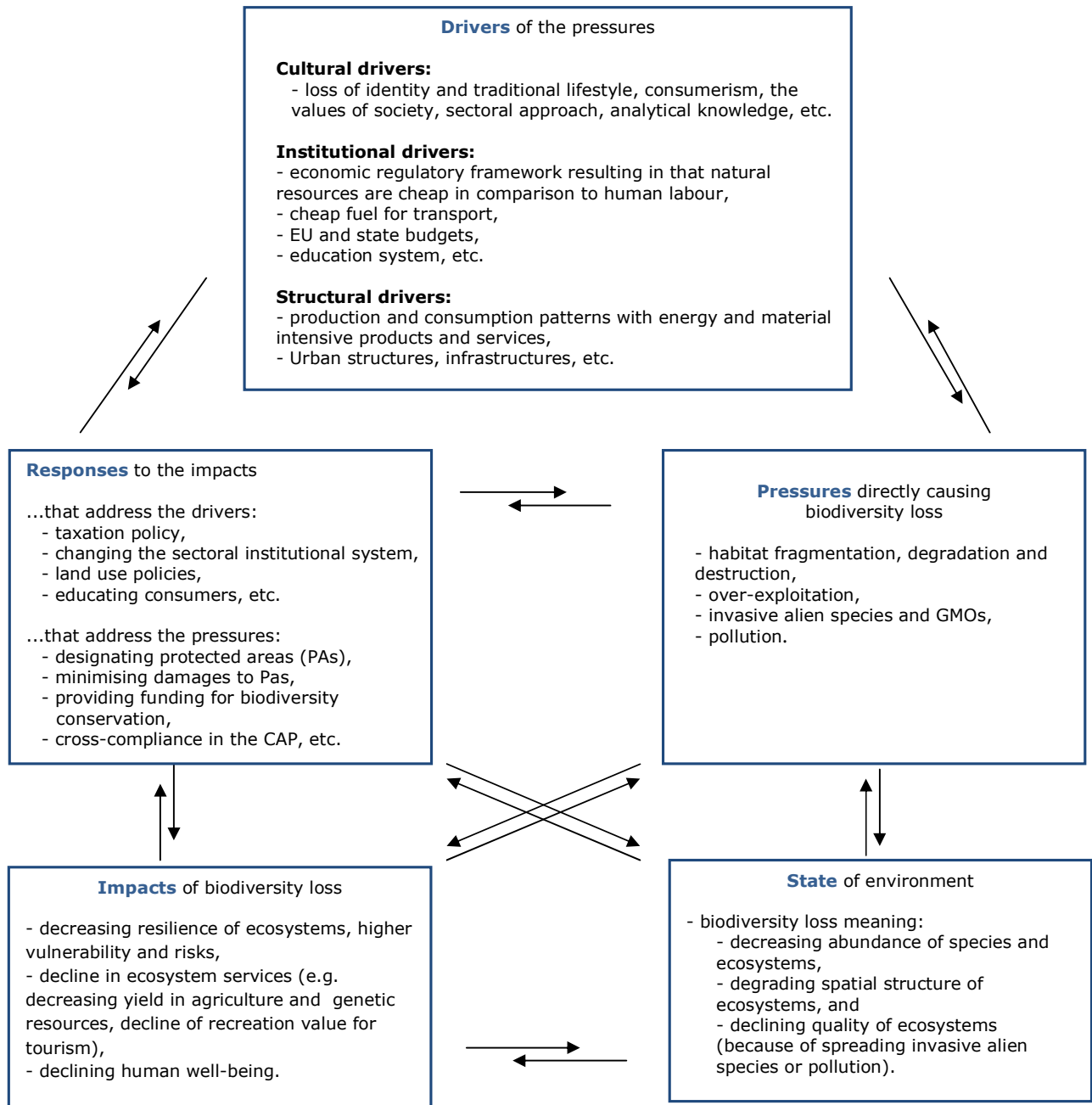
The production of all these inputs (fertilizers, pesticides, machines, fuel for the machines) is still affordable enough to make intensive agriculture more profitable in comparison to extensive production. While this high input use contributes to higher yields, it also replaces human labour in many aspects, and thus agricultural production provides livelihood for less people than it used to do before. This trend is also forced by international trade and competition, which drives down the prices, and consumer decisions, which favour cheap food easily available in supermarkets. If farmers try to resist these market forces and maintain traditional farming techniques, they are forced out of the market. Agri-environment schemes, awareness raising about organic products and direct marketing initiatives can hardly compensate for all this. **But why are these trends worsening, why isn't it possible to change their course through the careful design of agricultural subsidies?**

Agricultural production happens in the wider economic framework, which includes the chemical industry (with seemingly unlimited cheap raw materials and energy), transport (based on cheap fuel and enabling the long term transport of both the input and output of agricultural production), trade (exploiting the differences in the social and environmental standards within the global economy), and the taxation policy for human labour (making it expensive in comparison to natural resource use). **But why isn't there any response given to these trends?**

Changing the course of all these contributing factors is not possible with separate sectoral measures. Horizontal economic measures are needed to control the material and energy input of the economy. Changing the fundamental economic regulatory framework requires a holistic approach and a stronger political will. These are closely linked to the values of the society, which determine the relative importance of healthy ecosystems, safety, personal relationships, health and material wealth as contribution to human well-being. Without setting the right balance between these values, introducing a different economic framework is not possible.

As we can see, only a small number of the factors influencing the population of the whinchat or imperial eagle physically appear in the farmed fields. The majority of the drivers entangle economy and society, establishing causal links between bird population trends, financial regulations, the approaches of decision makers and the values of society.

These complex relationships can be examined with the help of the DPSIR (drivers-pressures-state-impact-response) model adopted from the one developed by the European Environment Agency.



EU and national biodiversity policies have long been trying to respond to the direct environmental pressures, which originate from the various sectors, like agriculture, transport, industry, housing, etc. The existing tools range from species and site protection through impact assessments to advising farmers on good agricultural practices. However, responses addressing the drivers for environmental management are hardly in place yet.



The EU BAP: a failure of delivery or a failure of approach?

Achieving the 2010 target clearly requires measures that go far beyond the scope of biodiversity policy. Besides clearly identifying the environmental pressures, the BAP also identified some of the drivers behind them: climate change, population growth and growing per capita consumption, governance failures, the failure of conventional economics to recognise the economic values of natural capital and ecosystem services, and globalisation, including European trade. However, the BAP did not rely on a thorough assessment of these underlying drivers, and consequently many important socio-economic factors and links remained hidden when the more than 150 BAP actions were identified. Hardly any of these actions try to address the underlying drivers (in the BAP it is done through applying Strategic Environment Assessments for territorial plans or Sustainability Impact Assessments for global trade for instance). But even these attempts remain within the logic of sectoral integration: diminishing the impacts of the sectors as much as it is realistic within the current framework, without examining what are the ultimate reasons for the conflicting sectoral interests and

how these drivers can be changed. The lack of holistic approach within the BAP is also proved by the fact that it **does not consider and aim to reduce the total environmental pressure.**

Unfortunately the BAP assessment for 2008 showed that implementation has not delivered the necessary results, so halting biodiversity loss seems unrealistic by 2010. Taking a holistic approach though, it is not surprising: it can be expected neither from the European Commission nor from the Member States to fully implement all these measures and thus to halt biodiversity loss, if the fundamental socio-economic drivers remain the same and constantly regenerate the problems that these institutions are fighting against. With this the BAP takes the same flawed approach as other environmental policies, and from a systemic perspective applies end-of-pipe solutions without delivering substantial results for the overall environment. Unfortunately the 2008 BAP assessment does not point out these shortcomings or call for additional actions, discussions, etc.

CEEweb's first recommendations for the future

Halting the loss of biodiversity is possible in the long term within a properly functioning market economy, which is able, by taking a holistic approach, to ensure the sustainable use of natural resources, the good quality of the environment, the coherence of ecosystems, as well as social justice. Whilst immediate implementation of already identified conservation measures, and some additional ones, is essential in the short term, it is indispensable to complement these efforts with the design and implementation of long term measures which can lead to fundamental changes in the socio-economic drivers underlying biodiversity loss. These measures should bring about the lowering of total environmental pressure to a level that stays within the global ecological carrying capacity.

RECOMMENDATION 1. Put an absolute limit on total natural resource and energy use and ensure the sustainable use of biodiversity. Applying input side regulation to the economy is the only effective way to decrease total environmental pressure. This would create the right balance between the use of natural resources and human labour in the production process, and thus contribute to achieving full employment. This would shift the production and consumption patterns towards less energy- and material-intensive products and services, and positively change the values of society by making people appreciate natural resources more, including healthy ecosystems. As production and consumption patterns fundamentally change, the sustainable use of biodiversity, including the management of Natura 2000 sites, becomes more profitable for the land owners. Similarly, this would make a substantial contribution both to improving the coherence of ecosystems and to limiting pollution and the spread of invasive alien species and use of GMOs, by creating an enabling socio-economic environment for effective policies and legal regulation in those fields.

Long term priority measures

Develop and introduce **economic measures to limit total energy use** in the economy

Immediate priority actions

Finalise **Natura 2000** in terrestrial and marine areas and realise its proper management through effective conservation measures and by providing sufficient funding. Launch initiatives, with funding, to take concrete action for biodiversity in the wider European context.

Include the conservation of all natural ecosystems amongst **climate change** mitigation and adaptation measures under any future international agreement (push for "biodiversity credits" to be issued for the preservation of forests, peat bogs and other natural ecosystems, as a system parallel to carbon credits)

Adopt the **Soil Directive** for the sustainable use of soil

RECOMMENDATION 2. Improve the coherence and connectivity of natural ecosystems. As the status of biodiversity is largely determined by the spatial structure of ecosystems, effective land use policy that can ensure the coherence and connectivity is indispensable for biodiversity conservation. Currently there is no coherent ecological network in Europe, on the contrary, man made infrastructures form a coherent network of roads, rails, pipelines, etc. This needs to be changed.

Long term priority measures

Develop and adopt **land use policy**, including at EU level, in order to:

- limit green field investments,
- rehabilitate degraded areas and give natural processes free rein in them,
- rationalise the current man-made infrastructures which prevent ecosystem coherence.

Immediate priority actions

Launch the **EU Wilderness Initiative** and design tools to effectively conserve and possibly extend the wilderness areas as appropriate for the conservation of European biodiversity

Minimise the negative impacts of programmes, plans and projects on ecosystem **coherence** through SEA, EIA and other tools

RECOMMENDATION 3. Effectively control the total environmental pressure originating from pollution and biological agents. The quality of the state of the environment and thus ecosystems needs to be ensured through strict legal regulations, which first of all aim for prevention (through controlling the intentional and unintentional spread of invasive alien species, maintaining the integrity of ecosystems, giving up the use of GMOs and controlling the production of chemicals and other pollutants) and which apply control and eradication as complementary measures.

Long term priority measures

Expand the EU **chemicals policy** in order to address the total pressure from pollution

Give up the idea of **GMOs**, as a false solution to social and ecological challenges

Immediate priority actions

Develop and adopt a new EU legal regulatory framework for the prevention, control and eradication of **invasive alien species**

In order to achieve the above, an open debate with no sacred cows, which examines fundamental socio-economic links and relationships in a holistic approach, needs to start within the framework of the EU discussion on future biodiversity policy. This debate should also be extended to the global level within the framework of the CBD, WTO and other fora, as global solutions are needed for global biodiversity.

Please download the full study on the BAP and its implementation by CEEweb at:
www.ceeweb.org



CEEweb for Biodiversity is a network of non-governmental organizations in the Central and Eastern European region. Our mission is the conservation of biodiversity through the promotion of sustainable development.

Contact

Klára Hajdu, Executive Director
E-mail: hajdu@ceeweb.org
Address: Kuruclesi út 11/a, 1021 Budapest, Hungary
Phone: +36 1 398 0135
Fax: +36 1 398 0136
Website: www.ceeweb.org

The assessment was carried out with the support of the European Commission DG Environment and the French Ministry of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and Territorial Management. The assessment and the publication do not reflect the opinion of the donors.