

10 November 2010

## **REPORT**

**‘on the Committee of the Regions (CoR) consultation:  
*Assessment of Territorial Impacts of the EU Post 2010  
Biodiversity Strategy***

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The questionnaire of the present consultation was elaborated by the responsible CoR services.

**EN**

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The present report does not represent the position of the CoR.

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# 1. Consultation report

## 1.1 Introduction

The aim of the consultation on ‘Assessment of Territorial Impacts of the EU Post 2010 Biodiversity Strategy’ is to improve the understanding of the drivers and impacts of biodiversity loss as perceived by local and regional authorities (LRAs), to identify main remedy actions, monitoring and assessment initiatives undertaken by them, and to outline proposals for improving financial support measures as well as networking, cooperation and knowledge sharing mechanisms.

The results of the consultation will contribute to the preparation of the Impact Assessment accompanying the European Commission's proposal for a post-2010 Strategy on Biodiversity.

The consultation was launched by the Committee of the Regions, through its Subsidiarity Monitoring Network, Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform and EGTC Network and Expert Group, on 9 September 2010 with a final deadline on 25 October then postponed to 5 November 2010. The consultation's questionnaire was also sent to all regional offices in Brussels.

In total, 16<sup>1</sup> questionnaires were completed and submitted by entities from 10 EU Member States: 6 from local authorities, 3 from provinces and counties, 6 from regions, and 1 from a Chamber of Commerce.<sup>2</sup> The geographical distribution of respondents is to some extent sufficient with respect to a north-south perspective, ranging from the Mediterranean to the continental Europe and the Scandinavia region. However, only one contribution was received from the new Member States.

Within the synthesis and analysis section of this report, based on 15 questionnaires, a few initiatives, mentioned by the respondents, particularly focussed, or comprehensive, or innovative, have been highlighted in boxes to illustrate the commentary text.

## 1.2 Consultation results: synthesis and analysis

### *1.2.1 Protection of biodiversity and ecosystems as a priority concern (Q1)*

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<sup>1</sup> One questionnaire coming from the Diputación Provincial de Jaén (Spain) could not be taken into account as it was received on 9 November 2010.

<sup>2</sup> See list of respondents in Appendix I.

*The majority of respondents consider the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems a priority concern. Protection of biodiversity is addressed within environmental strategies and cross-sectoral plans. Several dedicated planning tools exist and diverse focussed actions are implemented.*

Thirteen (5 local authorities, 2 provinces/counties and 6 regions) respondents confirm that protection of biodiversity and ecosystems feature prominently among their environment priorities. The protection of biodiversity and ecosystems is fostered by means of different measures. Regulatory tools are primarily envisaged by regional authorities while planning and strategic development characterise both the regional and local level, though with a different territorial focus.

With regard to planning, the types of measures undertaken by regional authorities include the elaboration and adoption of regional territorial/land use plans, development programmes and related agri-environmental measures, environmental strategies, nature protection or conservation programmes/plans, including the planning of Natura 2000 network. At municipal level, biodiversity action plans, local biodiversity strategies and conservation programmes, and municipal master plans are mentioned. The use of a tool for determining compensation measures in case of removal of biological value, at the planning stage, is worth mentioning (B.1).

**B.1** The City of Gothenburg, Sweden, applies at the planning stage a ‘compensation tool’ measuring the compensation due in case biological value is removed. This tool allows early detection of impact and of necessary amendments; as a consequence, impact on biodiversity can be minimized.

Local and regional authorities have an important role in integrating biodiversity concerns within other sectoral policies, in particular at the regional level. According to the evidence provided by few respondents, integration may be fostered through very specific tools, such as enforcement by law, (B.2) or through the systematic evaluation of the environmental impact of planned interventions across all sectors, in particular those implying the development of infrastructure, in line with the EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) and SEA (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Directives.

**B.2** A legislative framework aimed at horizontally integrating the protection of biodiversity across relevant sectors, and at regulating all public and private stakeholders dealing with biodiversity and natural resources, has been prepared by the Government of the Autonomous Community of Cataluña, Spain. The proposal, cooperatively developed and agreed among the various governmental departments, is on the process to be officially approved.

Specific actions for the protection of species and habitats envisaged at the regional and local level include: the designation of ecological corridors; the maintenance of connectivity of natural areas; the establishment of a network of protected areas; the conversion of farmland to natural habitats; the establishment of natural reserves; the compilation of endangered species lists; the undertaking of research programmes; and awareness raising/education initiatives for school children as well as the general public. It is noted that among the respondents is a municipality-owned entity in charge of managing, on behalf of the local authority, all environment-related matters within the territory, an initiative that is itself a type of action undertaken to address environmental concerns in general and biodiversity in particular (reference is made to B.7 under paragraph 1.2.3.2).

In a few cases, regional authorities also consider projects specifically addressing the protection of biodiversity as actions/tools that are worth the granting of specific technical and/or financial support (B.3).

**B.3** In the Basque Autonomous Community, Spain, most of the projects towards the protection of biodiversity that are promoted by local entities are supported through a dedicated programme. In 2009, biodiversity-related projects for a total of 1.2 million EUR have been sponsored for, for example, the restoring of specific ecosystems (such as wetlands), the protection of species, or the improvement of connectivity at the local level. Also the Languedoc-Roussillon Regional Council, France, applies a mechanism to favor the financing of projects focusing on knowledge, protection and promotion of biodiversity.

It should also be noted that one of the two respondents not featuring the protection of biodiversity among its environmental concerns, specifies that this is due to the need to address the issue in a cross-sectoral manner; it thus considers that it is for the national level to take the responsibility for centralized biodiversity protection through regulatory tools and management decisions.

### ***1.2.2 Monitoring and assessment of the state of biodiversity (Q2, Q3, Q4)***

*When considered a priority concern, the state of biodiversity is monitored either through indicators or by undertaking relevant investigations. Little specific information is available on the outcomes of the monitoring process and on the type of biodiversity losses occurred, while reported drivers of loss include land abandonment, agricultural intensification, increasing urbanisation and built infrastructure, and the economic use of forests. The socio-economic impact of biodiversity loss is mostly unknown. Remedy actions range from the creation of the necessary knowledge base to the implementation of specific interventions; the budgets allocated to these actions vary greatly and are often not quantified. Ex-post analysis is rarely available. In general, there seems to be a gap between*

*the undertaking of monitoring and the drawing of evidence that may guide policy-making and interventions.*

#### *1.2.2.1 Monitoring and assessment initiatives (Q2)*

Monitoring and assessment of the state of biodiversity has been undertaken by the majority of the respondents (by 12 respondents, of which 5 local authorities, 2 provinces/counties and 5 regions) through studies, specific investigations, inventories or regional indicators. In a few cases only, the reference to existing biodiversity-related monitoring programmes, at the regional or national level, is made, with some of these programmes being a consequence of reporting obligations under the EU Habitat and Birds Directives. Some respondents specify that monitoring of biodiversity is limited to Natura 2000 sites. LIFE Nature-funded projects are reported to have been used as monitoring tools for specific species within specific locations.

In some cases, LRAs approach towards assessing the state of biodiversity appears to be characterised by attention to quality and to the regularity of the monitoring process. For example, one respondent specifies that biodiversity-related indicators have been developed with reference to national and EU initiatives, demonstrating attention to coherence, comparison and standards; another respondent outlines the fact that data and information gathered during the assessment process are integrated into a regional information system on natural assets, which supposes attention to an integrated and regular assessment process.

On the outcomes of the monitoring exercise the feedback provided is, in general, limited and very uneven both with regard to species and habitats, with a few exceptions (B.4). Overall, monitoring does not seem to be effective (or informative) enough to guide evidence-based policy-making or interventions.

**B.4** The province of Noord-Brabant, in the Netherlands, provides one of the most focussed descriptions of monitoring outcomes. Improvement has been noted for common species but the decreasing number of farmland birds and of highly vulnerable plants and animals, along the deterioration of nutrient-poor environments, is a matter of concern.

Those LRAs not considering the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems a priority concern do not monitor biodiversity status and do not feel they have responsibilities in this sense.

#### *1.2.2.2 Occurrence of biodiversity loss (Q3a)*

Four respondents (2 local authorities and 2 regions) do not provide a reply on the type of biodiversity loss occurred, although the majority of them have

previously indicated the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems as a priority concern. Among those providing a reply, some simply refer to an undefined ‘awareness’ that the loss is actually occurring without providing details, while others report which species are extinct, endangered or no longer detected in specific environments. Primary forest depletion and decreased amount of dead wood are also mentioned, along general ‘habitat losses’. Biodiversity loss occurs in agricultural areas, grazing land, and forest areas, but also in the fresh water and marine environments (B.5).

**B.5** The prefectural authority of Drama-Kavala-Xanthi, in Greece, has carried out the monitoring and assessment of fish species in the River Nestos. The findings revealed that fish population was affected primarily by the construction of hydroelectric dams but also by the introduction of alien species. According to the investigations carried out by the Fisheries Research Institute in Kavala, a fall in fish stocks was also observed in the Thracian Sea, along increasing outbreaks of phytoplankton. This situation has a major impact on the living of offshore fishermen.

#### *1.2.2.3 Drivers, impacts, remedy actions and their cost (Q3b, Q3c, Q3d, and Q3e)*

Three respondents (2 local authorities and 1 region) do not provide a reply to any of the relevant questions. Among the drivers of biodiversity loss reported by those responding to the questions are: the abandonment of agricultural land and of extensive grazing, the intensification of agriculture, land fragmentation and habitat loss, increasing urbanization and built infrastructure, contamination, invasive species, poor management of protected areas, overexploitation of fish stocks, and the economic use of forests. For agricultural land, acidification, nitrogen deposits and the lowering of groundwater levels are also specified.

Interestingly, the few investigations mentioned with regard to the socio-economic impact of the loss of biodiversity relate all to fishery (B.5). In general, the impact of biodiversity loss in economic and social terms seems to be mostly unknown.

Remedy actions range from the establishment of strategies and the effort to find a balance between economic use and conservation of biodiversity, to the widening of the biodiversity-related knowledge base, but also the increase of protected natural areas (including the marine environment), the implementation of recovery interventions, plans or projects for endangered species and of conservation/restoration interventions in endangered habitats. The latter, for example, include increasing biodiversity in farm production systems by planting trees and shrubs along the margins of the fields, or in combating acidification and improving water quality to restore habitats. Another intervention is the



modification or signalling of the electricity lines, done in cooperation with the energy companies concerned, to reduce the risks for avian species.

The provision of financial resources to remedy the effects of biodiversity loss varies greatly among the few respondents that quantify the budgets allocated, from zero to some 40 million EUR yearly. In some cases, it is specified that quantification is not directly available due to the fact that the budget is managed by different sections/departments.

#### *1.2.2.4 Ex-post analysis of preventive measures (Q4)*

Eleven respondents (4 local authorities, 2 provinces/counties, 4 regions, and the chamber of commerce) have not carried out or are not aware of ex-post analysis of the environmental, economic and social benefits of the measures taken to prevent biodiversity loss. Only three respondents (2 local authorities and 1 region) report about ex-post analyses that refer to local circumstances or specific environments such as natural parks and coastlines. One respondent mentions the undertaking of pilot studies to investigate the environmental, economic and social impact of the Natura 2000 network, as well as the identification of instruments for payments of environmental services and biodiversity conservation; however, these studies are considered by the same respondent too theoretical or they are at a too early stage of implementation to draw conclusions.

#### **1.2.3 Financial support measures (Q5, Q6)**

*Several respondents applied for national and/or EU funding for the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems. EU funds are expected to have a role in several areas, including: monitoring, also through the work on indicators; further supporting biodiversity protection/conservation both in protected and non protected areas; promoting biodiversity in urban areas; facilitating access to biodiversity; and supporting awareness raising initiatives. However, financing instruments are expected to be substantially improved and resources allocated to biodiversity increased. A limited number of LRAs are engaged in the implementation of innovative financing mechanisms.*

##### *1.2.3.1 Financial contributions (Q5)*

Ten respondents (4 local authorities, 2 provinces/counties and 4 regions) indicate that they applied for national and/or EU funding. In particular, the European Regional Development Fund (with initiatives like INTERREG), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, the European Fisheries Fund and the LIFE programme are mentioned.

EU funds are expected to play a role with regard to the following:

- Monitoring, inventory compilation and development of indicators, the latter to be used at both the national and regional level; in particular, a specific reference is made to the need to determine a composite indicator for biodiversity or a biodiversity-index.
- The further development of the Natura 2000 network, though the co-funding mechanism of the network is expected to be improved.
- The protection of biodiversity outside protected areas.
- The promotion of biodiversity in urban areas.
- Awareness raising initiatives, also addressed to local authorities to support the understanding of the impact that their actions/policies may have on biodiversity and of the role they can have in limiting biodiversity loss.

Six respondents from all territorial levels report on low awareness of EU funds among potential beneficiaries, and on difficulties in accessing EU funds, and/or in complying with the necessary procedures/requirements for, for example, stakeholders' participation, matching funding or audits/controls.

With regard to the financing of Natura 2000, the co-financing mechanism is considered to have constrained the development of the network. In general, it appears that project proposals for biodiversity are often unable to compete properly for the allocation of funds, when funding comes from existing instruments not adjusted to conservation/protection needs. Dedicated financial resources for biodiversity are considered important, along the example of the LIFE programme where financial instruments for biodiversity (i.e. LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity) exist.

Several suggestions were made for the improvement of the EU funding mechanisms related to biodiversity protection and conservation:

- Creation of a fund to support Natura 2000, or of a 'Biodiversity Fund' for the financing of Natura 2000 and of other biodiversity-related initiatives, to be managed in respect of the competences of each level of authority.
- Alternatively, creation of biodiversity-dedicated financial resources within existing instruments (i.e. specific programmes and/or budget lines), in particular with reference to the next programming period.
- If biodiversity conservation remains a horizontal component of other policies (agriculture, fisheries, regional development) and continues to be funded through their financing instruments, assessment of the presence, in a project proposal, of biodiversity conservation and/or recovery as a criterion to prioritise the selection of the project for funding.
- Identification of innovative mechanisms for biodiversity-related financing.

- Increasing of the overall EU budget allocated to biodiversity.
- Development of a fiscal policy, at the EU and national level, encompassing reward or punishment mechanisms for those contributing to the conservation/protection or degradation, respectively, of biodiversity.
- Considering the removal of all those subsidies/incentives encouraging the loss/degradation of biodiversity.
- Strengthening synergies between the financing of climate change adaptation and mitigation and of biodiversity conservation.
- Provision of support to the involvement of the private sector in the financing of biodiversity protection.

### *1.2.3.2 Innovative financing mechanisms (Q6)*

Seven (2 local authorities, 1 province and 4 regions) respondents indicate that they are engaged in innovative financing mechanisms, but in practice only four of the responses (1 from a local authority, 1 from a province and 2 from regions) outline these mechanisms, including: payment (by the developer) for compensation measures in case a biodiversity loss occurs during development; subsidy schemes; eco-taxes (B.6); public-private-partnerships or publicly-owned enterprises for the (co)-management of protected areas (B.7); and private financing.

**B.6** The Autonomous Community of Extremadura, Spain, has signed an agreement with two energy companies on the basis of which these companies have to pay an ‘eco-tax’. This eco-tax is in practice converted into the improvement of the environment of the urban settings of those municipalities having more than 50% of their territory within Natura 2000 sites and less than 20.000 inhabitants.

**B.7** ‘Esposende Ambiente’ is a Portuguese municipal enterprise located in a protected area, a natural park, of the Esposende municipality. The enterprise bears all environment-related management responsibilities within the park and within the municipality area. ‘Gothenburg Port’ is also a municipal company of the City of Gothenburg (Sweden) that has been heavily engaged in the management of Natura 2000 sites near the port.

### *1.2.4 Biodiversity and climate change (Q7, Q8)*

*Nature-based solutions related to reforestation and water flows control are adopted by some of the respondents towards climate change mitigation or adaptation. In general, no conflict between these measures and the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems has been observed, with an exception for renewable energy developments and related infrastructure. Preventive measures are applied either at the planning stage or during implementation. However, as conflicts are often complex to be detected unless deep investigations are*

*undertaken, the lack of ‘witnessing’ cannot be equated to the absence of conflicts.*

#### ***1.2.4.1 Nature-based solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation (Q7a, Q7b)***

Ten respondents (4 local authorities, 2 provinces/counties and 4 regions) clearly indicate to implement nature-based solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation. These solutions range from reforestation of forest and agricultural land, to retention capacity interventions (including on wetlands), creation of rural floodplains, open storm water systems for the reduction of overflows, interventions on streams paths and hollow areas along the banks, and installation of green roofs.

#### ***1.2.4.2 Conflicting issues (Q8)***

Six respondents (2 local authorities, 1 provincial authority and 3 regions) indicate that no conflict was observed between measures undertaken to mitigate or adapt to climate change and measures undertaken to protect or conserve biodiversity. Half of these respondents further clarify that the lack of conflict is a consequence of prevention: potentially conflicting measures, i.e. implying a loss of biodiversity, are not designed in the first instance, or are not implemented, or are combined with measures boosting biodiversity.

Only three respondents clearly indicate the occurrence of conflicts. In particular, conflict was noted with regard to renewable energy developments and related infrastructure (solar, wind and hydroelectric power plants).

Six respondents, including 2 local authorities, 1 county, 2 regions and 1 chamber of commerce do not reply to the question, either because not previously reporting on nature-based solutions or because admitting that the occurrence of conflicts is unknown. In fact, the issue is a complex one and the lack of ‘witnessing’ conflicts cannot be equated to the absence of conflicts unless there are site-specific investigations providing evidence.

#### ***1.2.5 Networking, cooperation and knowledge-sharing (Q9, Q10, Q11, Q12)***

*Local stakeholders and LRAs are mostly involved in the preparation of Natura 2000 management plans, often as a consequence of national legal provisions. Participation is fostered through consultation, or meeting and working groups. Partnership initiatives are undertaken for management purposes. Cross-border cooperation is considered a valuable, sometimes crucial, tool as biodiversity is not bounded by administrative borders. The majority of the respondents participate to local, regional and national meetings, fora and/or networks, with*

*a few also being active at the EU and, to a lesser extent, international level. In general, participation to the development/update of the National Biodiversity Strategies is limited.*

#### *1.2.5.1 Involvement in Natura 2000 management plans (Q9)*

The consultation indicates that local and/or regional authorities and local stakeholders are involved in the preparation of the management plans for Natura 2000 sites in most of the cases (13 positive replies, one unclear response and one negative response from the chamber of commerce). In several cases, this involvement is required by national law. Involvement of local stakeholders is foreseen in the planning and project design stages through information meetings, working groups, public enquires, or through the action of permanent bodies locally ensuring participation and cooperation. Some of these initiatives imply the possibility to influence the way the plans are finalised. Partnership initiatives, including those between local governments and non-governmental-organisations are also mentioned with regard to the management of the sites.

Some respondents note that several management plans have not been developed yet.

#### *1.2.5.2 The role of cross-border cooperation in protecting biodiversity (Q10)*

Twelve respondents (4 local authorities, 2 provinces/counties, 5 regions and the Chamber of Commerce) consider cross-border cooperation as important or ‘crucial’. As ecosystems and species, or cross-linking media such as water and air, do not recognize administrative borders, conservation needs to be addressed at higher levels. Cross-border cooperation has not been necessarily intended by respondents among different countries; a few replies, in fact, clearly refer to in-country cooperation.

Among the highlighted benefits are: increased knowledge, experience and good practice exchange, preparation of joint conservation plans (B.8), creation of shared values, and better coordination for civil protection interventions and fire management.

However, cross-border cooperation may be hindered by differences in legislation, by the time needed to develop it, by the lack of convergence on common targets and by the limited

**B.8** Cooperation between the Portuguese regions of Alentejo and Centro and the Spanish region of Extremadura started in the early nineties. Following a number of cross-border initiatives and projects, in February 2010, the Alentejo-Centro-Extremadura Euroregion was established; it is within this framework that the Natural Park of Tajo International will be created. The park will be the first in Europe with transnational territorial development strategies, common management and coordination by means of a single management plan.

intervention capacities of the cooperation framework, from a legal point of view.

#### *1.2.5.3 Opportunities for knowledge sharing (Q11)*

Eleven respondents (4 local authorities, 2 provinces/counties, and 5 regions) indicate to participate in biodiversity-related meetings at some levels. Only a limited number (5) attends European events, and even less (2) attend events at the international level. The majority are involved at the local, regional and/or national level. Internationally, the specific reference is to IUCN and UNFCCC; at the EU level, reference is made to the Environmental Conference of the European Regions (ENCORE), the activities of EIONET, Eurosite and MedPAN networks, the Europarc federation, and the EU Green Week event. Liaison with the Joint Research Centre in Ispra is mentioned for indicators-related cooperation.

None of the respondents pointed to the need to provide more opportunities for knowledge sharing at the EU level but one highlighted the need for more information on existing opportunities.

#### *1.2.5.4 Contribution to National Biodiversity Strategies (Q12)*

Seven respondents (3 local authorities, 1 province and 3 regions) have been directly or indirectly (with a consultative or informative role) involved in the development/update of their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans. The majority (8 respondents) was thus not involved or skipped the question.

No suggestions are given for improving involvement in the process.

## **2. Conclusions and recommendations**

The consultation has three main specific objectives against which conclusions are drawn and recommendations are made. Due to the limited number of replies received the sample cannot be considered ‘representative’ in statistical terms. Nevertheless, the information provided is **valuable** and highlights some **main challenges** LRAs face while dealing with biodiversity and its loss, as well as some **main common expectations** for the improvement of EU support.

### **2.1 Objective 1**

Are LRAs confronted with problems of biodiversity loss? If they are confronted, which are the causes, indicators, consequences and measures put in place to remedy biodiversity loss?

## Conclusions

The results of the consultation clearly indicate that most LRAs face problems of biodiversity loss and that such problems are among their priority concerns.

However, there is also evidence, in general, of limited knowledge on the type of loss occurred, notwithstanding existing monitoring and assessment initiatives. This may be due to several reasons, among which: (i) monitoring and assessment is often undertaken on a project- or *ad hoc* basis, and therefore is limited to specific locations and timeframes, habitats and/or species and unable to provide regular and comprehensive information on status and trends of conservation; (ii) monitoring is not indicator-based or the indicators used are not suitable to transfer the scientific knowledge gained to the policy-making level.

Causes of biodiversity loss are generally clearly outlined but with limited or no reference to empirical data. The impact of biodiversity loss in economic and social terms seems to be mostly unknown; consequently, remedy actions appear to be largely driven by the ‘perceived’ or, sometimes, evidence-based occurrence of biodiversity loss, and by the understanding of the drivers of the loss. Nevertheless, even if undermined by gaps in knowledge and/or evidence, LRAs put in place **a very significant range of measures** aimed to remedy biodiversity loss, from planning, cooperation, coordination, integration and partnering, to field interventions.

## Recommendations

- *There are evident difficulties in monitoring the **state** of biodiversity at the regional and local level, while **causes (drivers) or pressures** are more easily detectable. In the upcoming EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy, it is therefore recommended to set simple and clear targets against which LRAs can **realistically** measure their progress in biodiversity conservation, if possible by using pressure-related indicators.*
- *In general, the consultation highlights important **gaps in knowledge**, in setting the baseline and in measuring both progress and impact. Working on indicators requires resources that are usually not available to LRAs. Knowledge gaps and monitoring deficiencies are ‘structural problems’ that shall be looked at as a matter of concern if **informed-measures** are expected to be undertaken by LRAs. Additionally, any ‘economic valuation’ of biodiversity and ecosystem services will require a monitoring system to be in place. The EU can indeed support LRAs in the monitoring process by providing financial resources but also by inviting existing initiatives (such as SEBI) to focus more on the regional and local*

*level. In this sense, further to the recent publication of the TEEB for Local and Regional Policy Makers report, the EU could promote relevant lighthouse projects in European cities and regions.*

- *As protection and conservation measures are implemented at the local and regional level, it is important that local and regional stakeholders are, in a first instance, aware of the impact that their actions/policies may have on the loss of biodiversity and, in a second instance, that they are able to take (remedy) action. This awareness raising may be part of a broader **empowerment of LRAs** and relevant local stakeholders (land users and land owners) in terms of **enhanced capacity** to avoid biodiversity loss and to protect/conservate biodiversity.*

## 2.2 Objective 2

Do LRAs believe, with consideration to the principle of subsidiarity, that EU action in the field of biodiversity can make a difference?
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### Conclusions

There is evidence across all the questionnaires that the EU role is considered to be important, and there are expectations on actions that may be undertaken at the EU level to complement/support locally or regionally undertaken initiatives (reference is to paragraph 1.2.3.1 for details). It is also noted that EU support is expected where the engagement of LRAs, according to the results of the consultation, is limited, as it is the case for innovative financing mechanisms to protect biodiversity, including fiscal measures.

A strong call to a **more straightforward and substantial financing** of biodiversity is made and, more generally, several suggestions are proposed for improving the financing of biodiversity protection and conservation (reference is to paragraph 1.2.3.1 for details).

### Recommendations

- *Significantly **increase** the financial resources allocated at the EU level to biodiversity (conservation and restoration) within the post-2013 budget.*
- ***Prioritise** the funding of biodiversity at the EU level, either (i) through the creation of a ‘Biodiversity Fund’, for both Natura 2000 sites and beyond the Natura 2000 network, or (ii) by earmarking biodiversity-dedicated*



*financial resources within the existing financial instruments to ensure a fair share of funds is spent on biodiversity.*

- *Assess whether the **co-funding mechanism** of Natura 2000 has hindered the development of the network, and, possibly, consider its revision.*
- *Extend EU action to biodiversity protection (i) **outside** protected areas, and (ii) in **urban** areas.*
- *Provide **support in the identification of innovative financing mechanisms** that may be applied at the local and regional level to protect biodiversity, including fiscal/taxation tools.*
- *As **cross-border cooperation** is considered important, or even ‘crucial’, any EU initiative or financial instrument fostering such cooperation is highly recommended.*
- *Consider establishing **reward or punishment mechanisms** for those contributing to the conservation/protection or degradation, respectively, of biodiversity.*

### 2.3 Objective 3

Do LRAs provide suggestions for best practices in dealing with biodiversity loss?
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### Conclusions

The initiatives highlighted (in boxes) within the present report cannot clearly be considered as ‘best practices’ as there is not enough information on the reliability of the approach/methodology used, or on their potential to be replicated elsewhere.

The analysis of the responses, however, shows that **several interesting measures/initiatives exist and are undertaken** at the local and regional level. These measures/initiatives are aiming at:

- Establishing a very comprehensive regulatory framework for the protection of biodiversity;
- Avoiding, as far as possible, and by means of prevention, conflicting situations at the implementation stage with developments occurring in

other sectors (including measures to mitigate the impacts of climate change or to adapt to climate change);

- Finding a balance between the economic use of natural resources and biodiversity, and, more in general, between economic development and biodiversity objectives;
- Integrating biodiversity concerns into other policies that highly impact on biodiversity loss (i.e. policies concerning transport networks, industry, energy, infrastructure, etc.);
- Agreeing with developers remedy or compensation measures for the biodiversity loss caused by developments.

### **Recommendations**

- *The **identification** of **good practices** and their **promotion** among LRAs is strongly recommended. The knowledge about simple but successful tools or mechanisms could help solving several practical problems daily faced by local stakeholders when dealing with biodiversity protection, in or outside Natura 2000 sites. More complex or structured approaches could lead by providing concrete examples.*
- *To support the efforts undertaken by LRAs in integrating biodiversity concerns into other relevant policies and in avoiding conflicting situations among developments across sectors, the EU can also consider the establishment of **cross-checking mechanisms** ensuring that EU financial instruments are used coherently towards the conservation of biodiversity, i.e. EU funds do not support the conservation/protection of biodiversity on one hand, and its loss on the other hand.*

# Appendix I - List of respondents

## Local Authorities

- City of Augsburg (Germany)
- City of Gothenburg (Sweden)
- City of Malmö (Sweden)
- Communauté d'agglomération du Grand Besançon (France)
- Esposende Ambiente (Portugal)
- Autorité Préfectorale de Drama-Kavala-Xanthi (Greece)

## Provinces/Counties

- Noord-Brabant Province (The Netherlands)
- Hampshire County Council (United Kingdom)
- Diputación Provincial de Jaén (Spain)

## Regional Authorities

- Pardubice Region (Czech Republic)
- Asamblea de Extremadura (Spain)
- Languedoc-Roussillon Regional Council (France)
- Generalitat de Catalunya (Spain)
- Centre for Economic Development Transport and the Environment for South Ostrobothnia (Finland)
- Basque Government (Spain)

## Chamber of Commerce

- Chamber of Commerce of Drama Prefecture (Greece)