



Adopted resolution

Biodiversity for life – EGP calls for the Preservation and Strengthening of Our Global Natural Resources

We all depend on nature and its variable ecosystems, on the richness of our planet to provide us with goods and services that sustain our lives. The diversity of all living things and their interaction with each other has made our planet a unique and habitable place for humans. This natural diversity has intrinsic value and matters for pleasure, inspiration, or recreation. The extinction of plants and animals is an irreversible loss to humanity. But the range of human activities, unsustainable consumption and production patterns and the growing pressure on our natural resources due to climate change make the loss of biodiversity an ever-increasing problem.

For the European Green Party the protection of nature and the conservation of biodiversity has always been high on our political agenda - not only in terms of protecting natural resources but also in terms of their sustainable use. Public perception proves us right: 93% of European citizens consider nature protection a moral obligation, 70% think that they or their children will be affected by the loss of biodiversity, and 75% believe in the negative impact for the economy if we do not stop the loss of biodiversity soon. Europeans think green. And we address their concerns.

The EGP fully heartedly supports the targets of the CBD. The Ninth Conference of the Parties (COP 9) to the UN-Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in May 2008 in Germany is a unique opportunity for Europe to show responsibility for its own and for the global biodiversity and to intensify its efforts to stop its loss.

We call upon the German Government and the European member countries to agree upon strong measures to halt the loss of global biodiversity. At the Göteborg summit in 2001 the EU committed itself to halt the loss of biological diversity by 2010 and to contribute to the global commitment to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss worldwide by 2010. After seven years we are still nowhere near meeting these targets. Even worse, the dramatic loss of biodiversity does not even play a key role in European politics. Just lip service, while time is running out. We need to halt the loss of biodiversity in the EU now to meet our global responsibility. The protection and the sustainable use of natural resources calls for more political, more socio-cultural and for more economic will. It is strongly intertwined with climate change, with the pollution of water and air, with soil sealing and urban sprawl, with unsustainable production and consumption patterns.

Green Policy is focussing on solutions that regard biodiversity as a cross-cutting issue. One-sided measures that focus only on the protection of one species would be too short-sighted. We call for the integration of the protection of biodiversity into all policy areas. There is the need for a systemic approach. We are committed to coordinate regional, national, European and international efforts across all sectors of governments, businesses and international institutions to meet the 2010 target. We know that the productivity of ecosystems depends on policy choices about investment, trade, subsidies, taxation, and regulation, among others. Only green biodiversity policies take all this into account.

At the meeting in Bonn, European member states have to take on their responsibility. European Greens are calling for a comprehensive combination of policy measures and lifestyle changes to protect our natural resources. We have to focus as much on sustainable agriculture and forestry, on eco-friendly fishery, as on transport and energy policies. Meaningful and ambitious measures against climate change must be put into place combined with those to erase poverty.

Creating a network for life

The EGP asks the EU to set up a coherent Natura 2000 network with an interlinked system of biotopes including an efficient and working management and controlling system at the land and the sea. In particular, there is the need of securing adequate financial resources for the implementation and for the management of the areas.

The EGP calls for consequent integration of nature protection into all policy areas and financial instruments such as agriculture, transport, forestry, or land use regulations. The EU needs enhance recognition and communication of the benefits we all receive from biodiversity – and take seriously the moral responsibility we have to safeguard wildlife by strengthening environmental education from kindergarten to university.

2. Protecting biodiversity is protecting the climate

EU biodiversity policy should extend existing EU conservation strategies to accommodate the inevitable changes by establishing larger protected areas where needed. This might be a way to help those species adapt whose natural habitats might change. Protected areas, such as Natura 2000 sites, should be both properly interconnected and integrated into other major EU land use policies, delivering conservation at a landscape scale. The EGP strongly supports measures for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation as well as for avoiding deforestation.

We promote biodiversity conservation as a key objective of the EU's forestry policy both inside and outside the EU. The EU Forest Action Plan should include a long term vision for increasing the amount of strictly protected forests for all primary forests in Europe, e.g. the primeval European beech forests. But we also have to meet our global responsibility to protect biodiversity outside the EU. Imports of tropical timber must be banned when the origin cannot be reliably verified.

3. Call for global justice within biodiversity policies

The poorest countries in the world have the greatest richness of biodiversity: more than 80% of global natural resources can be found in developing countries. But as long as we do not consider the social and economic dimensions of trading natural genetic resources on the global scale, we will not solve the problem of fair and equitable sharing of their benefits. We need to implement measures and rules to safeguard the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities and to secure their rights through access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of their utilization.

Providers of biological resources and indigenous peoples in particular must be guaranteed access and right to their natural resources. Patenting of genetic resources and traditional knowledge is to be rejected by the Convention. The right to refuse access to genetic resources and other activities which are contrary to traditions and values of indigenous peoples and local communities must be recognised. Any approval on access must be based on free prior informed consent (PIC).

Women perform most farming work in the world. Traditionally, women have the most knowledge concerning preservation of seeds and the diverse nutritional and medicinal uses of plants. However, their access to means of production (land, property, technology, knowledge) is often cut off in traditional as well as industrial farming. The EGP aims at overcoming this injustice as giving women access to land and property this will have greatest potential for innovation in fighting poverty and improving food production and rural development.

In line with UN's principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, protection of biodiversity in developing countries should be compensated by developed countries that have deteriorated their own biodiversity for centuries and are responsible for the loss of biodiversity in developing countries to a large extent. Therefore, a global budget to protect biodiversity should be put in place. Contributions to this budget should be set on the basis of historical and current responsibilities.

4. Good farming principles for biodiversity

Agriculture is not only the biggest threat to biodiversity but also one main multiplier for its preservation. Farming systems today are often environmentally damaging and highly unsustainable, as they degrade soils and extract water at irresponsible rates. There are, however, ecologically sound farming systems that benefit biodiversity. Over the last millennia, farmers have provided for new breeding techniques that nowadays provide a broad fundament of agricultural biodiversity. But this agro-biodiversity comes under stress in highly developed regions of the EU. Not surprisingly, Europe has the highest rate of extinct or endangered species. Biodiversity on our plates needs diversity on our fields. This is one main contribution to the preservation of biological diversity and to our local sorts and varieties. The majority of consumers throughout the entire world reject genetically-modified foods and want to decide for themselves what they will eat. Many of them demand sustainable and unaltered products from their own regions and are willing to take on this responsibility. In addition to concerns over the safety of GMOs for human health and the environment and their added value, farmers around Europe realise, that planting GMOs in their neighbourhoods will make GMO-free production increasingly difficult, if not impossible.

Therefore we strongly support the European network of GMO-free regions. We call upon the institutions of the European Union to work towards a GMO-free Europe and to implement a legal basis for the right for farmers to GMO-free agriculture.

EU subsidies must meet ecological criteria. The new Rural Development Programmes for 2007-2013 provide a major opportunity to strengthen the integration of nature and biodiversity considerations into agricultural policy.

Biodiversity needs high standards for bio-energy

One of the key issues for the protection of biodiversity is strong and binding ecological and social certification for the growth of agro-energy. About 90% of tropical rain forests are cleared for palm oil, soy or sugarcane plantations for the production of Agro-fuels or for animal feed for growing worldwide meat consumption. This is not only the case in developing countries but also in Europe: there is a shift of investments and land from food to fuel production. The increasing demand for fuel crops will serious damage wildlife, water and soils. There is a clear need to stop this development.

We strongly disagree with the EU Commission that calls for a mandatory 10% target for agro-fuels in its energy and climate package. The proposed sustainability criteria are inadequate as well as being enormously difficult to enforce. EGP calls for public support only for sustainable and integrated farming systems. Biomass, biogas and agro-fuels can contribute to more energy efficiency and action against climate change, as part of a sustainable food and fuel system if food security and biodiversity conservation can be guaranteed in the first place. This can only be achieved if any public financial support for energy crops is exclusively available for integrated and sustainable food and farming systems on a decentralised level. Furthermore, we call upon the EU to put pressure on the WTO to adopt adequate regulations. The import of biomass and agro-fuels being produced at the cost of biodiversity, rainforest and livelihoods should not be permitted. Exporting countries have to come up with a certification system that can guarantee the sustainable production of biomass. Tax incentives, direct aid and multilateral funding should be linked to sustainability criteria and guaranteed through an agro-fuels certification scheme.

The protection of biodiversity is green

The EU has to prove its leadership with good example: a comprehensive policy on biodiversity is necessary and possible. The EU's growing ecological footprint, its impact on the loss of biodiversity worldwide cannot be accepted any longer. The European Green parties are aware of this responsibility. The preservation of our global natural resources bears no delay. EGP calls for sustainable policies and for changes in our lifestyle, which united the protection and the sustainable use of our natural resources with measures against climate change and poverty eradication.