



## **BIODIVERSITY**

Biodiversity - the variety of ecosystems, species and genes - is the world's natural capital, yet biodiversity is being lost at an ever faster rate. Because biodiversity issues cross national frontiers, the European Union is an essential player in efforts to slow and ultimately reverse this trend.

The Socialist & Democrat group is leading the pressure for more radical action to preserve biodiversity, whose loss could have dramatic and often unforeseen impacts on our way of life and the ecology of the planet.

### **Biodiversity under threat**

Economic and social activities have an impact on biodiversity. The clearance of vegetation for agriculture, housing, timber and industry destroys habitats. Pollutants and pesticides have led to biodiversity losses; fish stocks are decreasing and soil fertility declining; 40% of all species vanished from the earth between 1970 and 2000 - and all expectations are that this will get worse, not better. Together with climate change, loss of biodiversity is the most critical global environmental threat.

Loss of biodiversity is worrying not only because it is destroying the natural world, but also because biodiversity sustains essential services for humans such as the production of food, fuel, fibre and medicines, regulation of water, air and climate. These services in turn support economic growth, jobs, social wellbeing and quality of life.

### **The European Union in the lead**

The EU plays an essential role in biodiversity governance. The Habitats and Birds Directives are designed to protect the most seriously threatened habitats and have led to the creation of the Natura 2000 Programme for the creation and protection of a network of sites of highest nature value. These sites cover 17% of the EU's territory, the largest network of protected areas in the world. The EU's Water Framework Directive and Marine Strategy Directive have far-reaching provisions to safeguard ecosystems owing to the hard work of S&D Members.

### **Ambitious Plans - but inadequate action**

In 2001, the EU agreed on the target to halt biodiversity loss in the EU by 2010. A year later, the EU signed up to a global target to significantly reduce biodiversity loss worldwide by 2010.

However, despite the adoption of an ambitious Biodiversity Action Plan, the EU has not achieved its 2010 target.

The S&D Group has been pressing for radical action over the past years. For the UN Conference on the Convention on Biodiversity, in Nagoya, Japan, in October 2010 our key demands were:

- to integrate biodiversity in all EU policies (environment, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, transport, international trade, development, etc.)
- to incorporate biodiversity targets and action plans as part of the EU strategy for 2020
- to strengthen and expand the Natura 2000 programme
- to complete the Natura 2000 network in the marine environment
- to take action against deforestation
- to adopt an ecosystem approach in the fight against climate change
- to come forward with an EU strategy to combat invasive alien species
- to support establishment and management of protected areas in third countries.

In Nagoya, the world leaders adopted a package of measures to address global biodiversity loss. In line with the conference outcome, the European Commission came up with a new biodiversity strategy in 2011.

The Group of Socialists and Democrats strongly supports the main targets of the new strategy, such as full implementation of environmental legislation, more sustainable agriculture and forestry, better management of fish stocks and a bigger EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.

The political commitment by the Council to mainstream biodiversity concerns in all national policies has remained very vague.

However, we will continue with our efforts to include biodiversity issues in all forthcoming legislative proposals to secure its benefits for our economies and for future generations.