

# The policy context of ETC/BD work

## What was expected from the ETC/BD?

The EEA terms of reference call for an '*ETC on biological diversity (...) to work with EEA member countries and key international organisations to arrive at efficient structures of European data systems to deliver policy relevant biodiversity data and information*'.

Support and information to enable assessment of biodiversity policy implementation, relate specifically to:

- 2010 biodiversity targets at global, pan-European and European levels
- Birds and Habitats Directives (Natura 2000)
- Bern Convention (Emerald Network)
- Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS)
- Regional Marine Conventions
- Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests in Europe
- Forest Focus Regulation

## What is the wider context of this work?



- As with the other ETCs, the ETC/BD works at the interface of science and European policy making. It is expected to contribute to the EEA mandate, i.e. *'to support sustainable development and to help achieve significant and measurable improvement in Europe's environment through the provision of timely, targeted, relevant and reliable information to policy making agents and the public'*
- Our focus is mostly on EU policy in support to the 6<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme 'Environment 2010. Our future, our choice' and the EU Strategy on Sustainable Development. More recently the EU Biodiversity Communication and Action Plan on 'Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 and beyond' – which are the European contribution to the Convention on Biological Diversity – provide a framework for action for the next decade
- EEA and ETC/BD also provide support to the development of other multi-lateral environment agreements such as the pan-European 'Environment for Europe process', the Pan-European Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests in Europe, the Bern Convention and marine conventions
- The general follow-up of international conventions such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Ramsar Convention is also supported
- The ETCs yearly work planning takes place in the context of the European Environment Agency's multi-annual work programme, in response to the above-mentioned policy environment

## What has the ETC/BD achieved?

Some examples of work to which the Topic Centre has made a significant contribution include:

- Scientific and technical support to the EC in building the Natura 2000 network (see factsheets on 'EU Directives', on 'Working with countries', on 'Ecological Networks/Designated Areas', on 'Information', on 'Science')
- Development of guidance to support the reporting on the conservation status of species and habitats listed on Annexes of the Habitats Directive under the Article 17 reporting process (see factsheets on 'EU Directives', on 'Working with countries' and on 'Information')
- Development of European indicators to measure progress against and help achieve the 2010 biodiversity targets (the SEBI2010 programme) (see factsheets on 'Indicators' and on 'Information')

- Updating of EEA biodiversity indicators, including through the EIONET priority data flow (see factsheets on 'Indicators', on 'Information and on 'Ecological Networks/Designated Areas')
- Support to the development of the Emerald network under the Bern Convention in the West Balkan countries (see factsheet on 'Ecological Networks/Designated Areas')
- Input to the Belgrade Assessment on Europe's Environment (see factsheets on 'Information' and on 'Ecosystems')
- Input to the report on a Pan-European Ecological Network as part of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (see factsheets on 'Ecological Networks/Designated Areas' and 'Information')
- Providing methodological guidelines for reporting on marine habitats in support to regional marine conventions: Black Sea, Baltic, Mediterranean (see factsheets on 'Information')
- Contribution to framing the biodiversity component of a forest monitoring in Europe as part of the Forest Focus regulation (see factsheet on 'Ecosystems')
- Support to the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe: providing background information in support to the development of selected indicators of sustainable forestry (see factsheet on 'Ecosystems' and on 'Science')
- Compiling, analyzing and synthesizing information on selected ecosystems and on ecosystem functions, goods and services in support to policy relevant integrated assessments (see factsheets on 'Ecosystems' and 'Science')

## Which are the main challenges ahead?

- Biodiversity ranks high on the policy agenda. It is progressively being taken into account as a full component of sustainable development policy instruments at EU, pan-European and global levels. Biodiversity assessments will be increasingly needed to analyse how specific sectors influence or can benefit from biodiversity (forestry, agriculture, fisheries, business...). However, experience gained with reporting by countries under the Habitats Directive shows that the lack of basic data on biodiversity and their extreme fragmentation remains a serious difficulty to be overcome
- Important emerging issues such as climate change, the impacts of bio-fuels, valuation of ecosystem goods and services require a transfer from scientific knowledge to policy implementation. Within its mandate the EEA and its ETC/BD will have to ensure that adequate expertise is mobilized to support the various policy areas targeted by the EU Biodiversity Communication as well as the work under the Convention on Biological Diversity
- Data gathering and assessments to support the implementation of marine policy instruments including the setting up of marine protected areas are to be enhanced

## What have we learned from our experience?

All of the ETC/BD Consortium members are involved in policy development, implementation or assessments at national and/or European scale. When bidding for the ETC/BD contract, members of the Topic Centre Consortium demonstrated their extensive policy experience, including work done by the nine partners in other contexts such as in support of national and European policy delivery.

A number of lessons emerge from the experience over the past decade plus of running the three 'incarnations' of the biological diversity Topic Centre. Three stand out in particular:

- The importance of institutional memory is a key strength in refining and streamlining processes for policy development and assessment
- A broad network of contacts in many institutions, both governmental and non-governmental has enhanced opportunities for review and integration
- A range of skills, and flexibility in their application, are important in responding to challenges emerging from changes in the policy environment