

Recommendations of the meeting of the European Platform for Biodiversity Research Strategy

held under the Swedish Presidency of the EU
in Visby, Sweden, 29 September–1 October 2009

concerning

TARGETS FOR BIODIVERSITY BEYOND 2010 – RESEARCH SUPPORTING POLICY

Recognizing the dependency of human societies on biodiversity and the ecosystem services which are derived from it, and the need for an overarching goal and targets for biodiversity beyond 2010, the participants of the meeting

1. place high priority on research to:

- develop concepts, methods and policy mechanisms that allow targets to be set, implemented and modified in a context of precaution, uncertainty, inadequate knowledge, unexpected events and critical transitions;
- examine alternatives to target setting;
- understand better the cultural and social value systems and their impact on how international and European targets are translated into national and sub-national policy, and its implementation;
- understand how dynamic social and ecological systems influence the outcomes of the implementation processes;
- analyse and further develop methods that enhance stakeholder engagement and conflict management, and their role in ensuring a sense of ownership and responsibility for implementation;
- develop a conceptual and procedural framework for institutions and governance structures to help resolve conflicts that impede the implementation of biodiversity targets, particularly conflicts resulting from sectoral policies, and across administrative, spatial and temporal scales;
- understand in the context of target setting and implementation, the relationship between economic development, biodiversity, ecosystem functions and ecosystem services;
- improve and further develop measurable cost-effective indicators that track progress towards the targets, are comparable across regions, and facilitate communication among stakeholders;

2. and consider the following key principles to be of high importance when formulating them:

- The overarching goal should be based on a careful formulation of the desired outcome and communicate the urgency and scale of the problem in a way that motivates collective actions.
- The overarching goal, necessarily incorporating multiple key aspects of biodiversity, should be covered by a coherent set of specific targets relating to those aspects.
- Targets should be designed to achieve substantial, measurable and cost-effective advances at appropriate scales.
- Targets should encourage motivation, responsibility and sense of ownership among decision makers, managers, scientists, and other stakeholders.
- Targets should be simple but account for the complexity and uncertainty inherent in socio-ecological systems, and facilitate adaptive management and both institutional and individual learning.
- Target setting should address conflicts, acknowledging that some conflicts are unavoidable in achieving biodiversity outcomes.
- Targets for biodiversity should be supported by targets in other sectors, highlighting the fundamental dependency of humans on the living world, helping to move in the direction of sustainability, and reducing the European Union footprint across the globe.
- Biodiversity targets should be informed by societal choices of desirable states and understanding of ecosystem history, rather than on arbitrary historical baselines.
- The set of biodiversity targets should include the ecosystem services concept, alongside but not replacing biodiversity.
- The process to reach the targets should
 - be transparent, and from early on, use participatory approaches, and develop effective communication strategies;
 - include issues of multilevel governance, allocate accountability and identify or establish mechanisms to handle conflicts;
 - include suitable incentives and enforcement mechanisms;
 - accommodate the existence of scientific uncertainty and incomplete knowledge in decision making.