

## Biodiversity Research in the Technology Platforms

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### Introduction

In its Communication COM(2004)353 "Science and technology, the key to Europe's future - Guidelines for future European Union policy to support research", the Commission has proposed six major objectives, one of which is the launching of European technological initiatives. In this context, the Communication notes that, "at the initiative of the Commission and industry, **"Technology Platforms"** are being set up, which bring together companies, research institutions, the financial world and the regulatory authorities at the European level to **define a common research agenda** which should mobilise a critical mass of - national and European - public and private resources." Technology Platforms are expected to play a major role – if not the largest one - in mobilizing Europe's research, technological development and innovation efforts. They bring together the key stakeholders (industry, national and European public authorities, the academic community, the financial community, consumers and users) around a common vision for the development of the technologies concerned. Their primary objectives are the definition of Strategic Research Agendas for the medium to long-term and the establishment of the necessary, effective public-private partnerships for their implementation. Such Agendas, when adopted by the European Commission, will be funded strongly with the FP7 and subsequent mechanisms. The CORDIS Technology Platforms service (at [www.cordis.lu/technology-platforms/](http://www.cordis.lu/technology-platforms/)) provides access to information on the development of the various technology platforms.

### What about biodiversity research?

The recent developments with respect priorities and mechanisms for FP7 funding are not positive for biodiversity research. It is now crucial to mobilize very different kinds of stakeholders with the objective to push the arguments why biodiversity research is now more important than before.

Different from 'technologies' as meant above, biodiversity as such is not a technology, nor an economic sector. Nevertheless, biodiversity is crucial for a healthy society and economy. Wrong decisions today, or the absence of decisions, may result in future high costs. As such, biodiversity has an enormous economic impact. In view of the European goals with respect to economic welfare and competitiveness, the concerned stakeholders have to unite in a kind of 'Technology Platform' in order to define a common research agenda for medium to long-term period.

### The way to go

There are possibly two approaches to consider. One is to find an analogy of the concept of "Technology Platforms", which implies to find the key stakeholders. If this does not hold for the sector of biodiversity an alternative approach might be to ask the European Commission for a special case, an exception, for this sector. Probably, a mix of the two approaches has to be considered. The key stakeholders are in the following sectors.

### *Industry*

In the private sector are quite a number of industries that are concerned for various ways with biodiversity. This might be the natural resources, but also the potential negative effect of their affairs, or the sustainability of the industry in an environment with poor biodiversity. A common platform to discuss these issues and research priorities is likely to meet various industrial concerns.

### *NGO's*

The large NGO's are organised at the European level. It is expected that a suggestion to get involved in a European platform with other key stakeholders will be accepted.

### *Public sector*

As a matter of fact the "biodiversity industry" consists of the combination of governmental (and comparable) agencies that prepare and execute the policy decisions with regard to biodiversity. At the European scale these agencies are more or less organised in the framework of the EEA networks. These should be involved.

### *The EPBRS*

The previous considerations may imply that the EPBRS will change, or even disappear. But there are good reasons that the EPBRS should take the initiative to explore the possibilities of a renewed biodiversity platform in the context of FP7 and beyond.

### **Next steps**

The time frame is short. In order to have a strong position in the early calls of FP7, the research agenda of the new biodiversity platform should be ready in mid 2005 for negotiation with the European Commission. Fast and effective developments require leadership and trust. The EPBRS Steering Committee decided to give mandate to a small group to get in contact with key stakeholders groups and with the European Commission. The group consists (in alphabetical order) of Sybille Van den Hove, Wouter Los, Martin Sharman, Andrew Stott, Jurgen Tack, Jacques Weber. The target is to identify the stakeholders that want to commit themselves to work together and with the research community to establish a research agenda. Jacques Weber offered a venue and occasion at the next Biodiversity Conference in Paris to explore potential developments with these stakeholders.