



REPORT

“Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) *Reconnecting science to policy* *Why? What? How?”*

Chaired by Gaston Franco, Member of the European Parliament (MEP)

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The well-being of people in Europe and all over the world depends on goods and services that nature provides. The clothes we wear, the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, as well as fuels, medicines and countless others, come to us, free of charge, from our planet’s ecosystems and biodiversity that supports them.

However, this natural heritage is showing an alarming decline and the world needs a stronger link between government policy and scientific facts regarding the state of the world’s ecosystems and natural resources. In a recent report, UNEP together with the top scientists from around the world identified 21 environmental issues for the 21st century with reconnecting science to policy ranking the top three. By adopting a resolution on an EU Biodiversity Strategy, the European Parliament recognized that biodiversity science is the necessary backbone for any kind of policy implementation.

“Scientific research is an essential foundation for the implementation of any policy in favour of biodiversity. We need to improve data on biodiversity and its dissemination between the scientific community, policymakers and civil society both at the EU and global levels,” called **Mr Gaston Franco, Member of the European Parliament (MEP)**. After years of international negotiations, in April 2012 more than 90 governments agreed to officially establish the [Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services \(IPBES\)](#).

IPBES intends to be an independent global body aiming to link scientific communities and policy-makers. Based in Bonn, Germany, it will equal the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) for issues directly linked with nature conservation, food security, sustainable development and human well-being. Measuring the latest trends of biodiversity and ecosystem services and identifying policy relevant tools, it will shape the international agenda and set the scene for legitimate and credible knowledge to inform policy making.



Opening Session

Welcoming words and introduction by MEP Gaston Franco



MEP Gaston Franco recalled that IPBES has been officially launched on the 21th of April 2012 in Panama. He stated that biodiversity is a precious common good however it is at risk. In Europe, almost 60% of habitats and 52% of the species listed in the Habitat Directive are in an unfavourable conservation status.

It is clear that the EU did not achieve its 2010 Biodiversity Target and has developed a long term strategy which outlines a number of actions to meet the EU’s 2020 headline target for biodiversity and global biodiversity commitments: “Halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss”. The strategy is in line with global commitments made in Nagoya in October 2010, in the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), where world leaders adopted a package of measures to address global biodiversity loss over the coming decade.

Furthermore, the European Parliament (EP) adopted the report entitled “*Our life insurance, our natural capital: An EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020*”. MEP Gerbrandy’s report insists on the value of biodiversity for future generations and highlights that the importance of biodiversity has not been well understood by policy-makers and the whole society. Awareness campaigns, scientific data and share of best practices are urgently needed.



Reconnecting science to policy: What is IPBES and why do we need it?

Dr Salvatore Arico, UNESCO

Dr Arico introduced Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), which is a two-way interface between the scientific community and the policy makers to strengthen the use of science in policy-making. He explained that IPBES will work with multiple stakeholders and involve multiple knowledge holders in the field of biodiversity and ecosystem



services. The platform has been built after several years of work, started in 1995.

Dr Arico explained that the needs and expectations expressed by the civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders will be taken into account by an assembly of governments which will address the requests to panels of experts. Scientific knowledge relevant for the subsequent request will then be assessed by panels of experts in a critical and systematic way to identify policy-relevant responses. The platform will also aim at reinforcing the capacity of governments and experts to participate in the process. When a knowledge gap will be identified, the Platform will report it and stimulate further scientific research.

The Platform will work by:

- Being scientific, independent, credible and legitimate;
- Being policy-relevant, not policy-prescriptive;
- Recognising the regional differences;
- Collaborating with existing initiatives and being inclusive;
- Full and effective participation of developing countries;
- Taking an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach;
- Recognising and respecting the contribution of indigenous and traditional knowledge;
- Using clear and transparent methods for exchanging data, information and knowledge;
- Taking a bottom-up approach.

Although important progress has been made in Panama City, much remains to be done. In particular, several rules and procedures for its governing and technical bodies need to be determined and a work programme for its first years of operation endorsed. Between today and the first IPBES Plenary, the Rules of Procedures have to be finalised, the catalogue of assessments has to be completed and the conceptual framework has to be adjusted. With regard to capacity-building and partnerships, access must be opened and the promotion of Sub-Global Assessments has to be pursued. Moreover, the Platform will rely on national and regional centres of excellence and some tools ensuring balanced participation have to be established.

Dr Arico concluded that the EU has a crucial role to play in the operationalisation of IPBES, including by participating in defining the conceptual framework of assessments and inspiring regional assessments based on national assessments coherent among themselves.



Roundtable



Biodiversity and its benefits: Knowledge of conservation community for IPBES

Pierre Commenville, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

IUCN envisions IPBES as a unique template to bring together three kinds of inputs: knowledge, expert opinion and policy options. It is important to ensure that the range of knowledge, which will be assessed, is broad and goes beyond the academic scientific institutions.

IPBES should tap into existing databases, assessments, review processes and communities of practices, where NGOs, conservation groups, local communities, intergovernmental organisations and others can be valuable contributors.

Mr Commenville illustrated the variety of knowledge produced by the conservation community. As an example, he referred to [ECOLEX](#), the most comprehensive global repository of environment law (including natural resource management). ECOLEX is operated jointly by IUCN, FAO and UNEP and enables policy makers, NGOs, lawyers and researchers to access the legal basis for sustainable development from a single source. Another relevant example is the [Global Biodiversity Information Facility \(GBIF\)](#), which is the world's largest database on biodiversity data and is implemented by volunteers partly coming from the civil society. [The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™](#) is an assessment of the conservation status and is based on knowledge held by more than 7,000 experts in the scientific research sector and beyond.

Other forms of knowledge held by civil society include collections of action tools and best practices. The business sector is a massive producer of data in this regard. The [EU Business and Biodiversity Platform](#), working at the European level, is a consortium of private companies and non-profit organizations, that collect this data, document the results and make it accessible.

To conclude, Mr Commenville pointed out that civil society organizations are important holders of knowledge in the field of biodiversity and ecosystem services. It is crucial that IPBES could rely on this knowledge and benefit from an efficient and active participation from civil society.



A knowledge dialogue for the 21st century: Indigenous knowledge, traditional knowledge, science and connecting diverse knowledge systems

Maria Schultz, The Resilience and Development Programme (SwedBio), Stockholm Resilience Centre

Ms Schultz confirmed that in addition to scientific knowledge, IPBES provides an opportunity to integrate other useful knowledge in policy and decision making. She stressed that indigenous, traditional, local and scientific knowledge systems are different manifestations of valid and useful knowledge systems which can contribute to the sustainable management of ecosystems.

She presented the [Dialogue Workshop on Knowledge for the 21st Century](#) held in April 2012, before the second plenary session to build IPBES. The overarching goal was to facilitate better exchange and cross-fertilization among diverse knowledge systems in an equal, legitimate, and transparent way, for the benefit of sustainable management of biodiversity and ecosystems. The aim was not only to inform about the IPBES process but also about other relevant initiatives such as Sub-Global Assessments, the Programme on Ecosystem Change in Society (PECS), the CBD initiatives, cultural revitalization projects carried out by communities, NGOs, and others.

The following primary principles were brought forward: respect of diverse knowledge systems, trust, reciprocity and equal sharing. The participants focused in particular on validation, documentation, sharing of knowledge and co-production of knowledge. Validation of diverse knowledge systems where one knowledge system applies its validation methods on another system is not desirable; it comes at a cost with respect to the integrity and complexity of knowledge systems. Approaches that were discussed and developed during the workshop included: a dual-based evidence approach, alternative protocols for validation, co-production of knowledge, connecting and learning across scales, and starting from bottom-up mapping of knowledge and ecosystems.

It was recognized that knowledge systems are dynamic, and databases and other kinds of documentation may give a static picture, landscapes are living libraries of knowledge. Free Prior Informed Consent should always be applied, and clear agreements on mutual terms have to be made between the community/knowledge holders, and external researchers.

The results of the workshop helped inform the second session of the plenary meeting to build IPBES in Panama. Texts in the decisions from the IPBES session include both stakeholders and knowledge holders. For example, “the platform should collaborate with networks of knowledge holders” and the platform should “recognize and respect the contribution of Indigenous and local knowledge to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems”. Regarding the inter-sessional work and the preparations for an initial work programme, the Secretariat was requested to compile a critical review of assessments including experiences with the integration of knowledge systems.



Science for IPBES: Top priorities for biodiversity research

Dr Anne Larigauderie, DIVERSITAS and IPBES representative to ICSU

Dr Larigauderie recalled that IPBES will synthesise and critically evaluate the knowledge that has already been published, but will not generate new knowledge. This will continue to be the responsibility of the research community which must therefore work hand in hand with IPBES in order to

produce the knowledge that will be relevant to future IPBES assessments.

The research community will need to focus on two main directions, in the context of IPBES. The first include documenting current trends as biodiversity information is plentiful but fragmented. There is a lack of coordination and data are complex to combine consistently. Tools are inadequate and there is no mechanism to fill the gaps. Nevertheless, there are some good examples of globally coordinated indices, such as the living planet index, which assesses the abundance of many populations of vertebrate species around the globe. In order to address this gap, the Group on Earth Observations (GEO), has launched GEO BON, the global biodiversity observing system, which represents the biodiversity component of GEOSS, the Global Earth Observing System of Systems.

The second direction will need to focus on informing future choices. The scientific community should in particular strengthen its work on models and scenarios and develop a better understanding of possible thresholds and tipping points for biodiversity and ecosystem services, building on the work performed for the Global Biodiversity Outlook 3 of the CBD.

The scientific community has accompanied the IPBES consultation over the past years, and now stands ready to generate the scientific knowledge relevant to IPBES.



An economist's point of view on IPBES: How can assessments of ecosystem services benefit decision-makers?

Patrick ten Brink, Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP)

Mr ten Brink stated that the value of biodiversity and ecosystem services is not fully reflected by the market, the prices and policies. As a result, the decision making fails to take into account the local and global benefits, contributing to a loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. According to Mr ten Brink, assessing the benefits of ecosystem services is critical for policy making. IPBES constitutes a great opportunity to assess the value of nature for people, society and economy and to develop the evidence base needed by policy makers.

Mr ten Brink explained that talking about biodiversity is talking about genes, species and ecosystems. The value of biodiversity is intrinsic and lies in part on diversity. For pharmaceuticals and food security, diversity matters more than quantity. On the other hand, for carbon storage, fish stock, flood control and water retention it is the quantity that matters more than diversity.

Another dimension that deserves to be taken into account is that some benefits such as pollination are local, while others such as pharmaceuticals or ecotourism are more national or global. Other complications come from the issue of scarcity or the one of tipping points. Those elements have to be taken on board because they are crucial for economic assessment. Making an economic analysis is quite complex and it is crucial to establish a clear final purpose and to define the level of precision.

There are many examples of assessments which identify where ecosystems can provide goods and services at lower cost than by man-made technological alternatives. It is critical to discover where the nature can be useful to save public money.

Economic assessments can help decision making in many ways: by encouraging decisions or reducing opposition, by adding evidence base that clarifies the trade-offs in decision-making, by encouraging synergies and good governance and finally by supporting the design, implementation and enforcement.

To conclude, assessing the value of nature improves the evidence base for decisions. Qualitative, quantitative, spatial and monetary analyses have to play a role. This approach has proven to be useful for decision-making.



Science-policy needs and the added value of IPBES

Dr Thomas Koetz, European Commission Directorate General for Environment

Dr Koetz's presentation was focused on the added value of IPBES to the EU and vice versa.

IPBES can contribute to improving and better implementing the EU Biodiversity Strategy and its six targets. The implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy should be based on the best available knowledge and in this regard an effective implementation also depends on engagement with the scientific community. In this regard, there is the need to know more about ecosystem services in the EU.

The EU has ample potential to contribute to the IPBES, as well. The knowledge shared through IPBES is mainly based on local and regional knowledge and activities. It is of paramount importance to use a bottom-up approach given that the knowledge is coming from the bottom level (research programmes, universities, NGOs, and such).

IPBES is beneficial in linking the regional with the national and the global level. According to Dr Koetz, this is another area where the EU can play an important role. It seems that in the general framework between the stakeholders, Member States and IPBES, a European Mechanism interfacing science and policy is missing. European Commission DG Environment has launched a call for tenders in order to explore possible institutional solutions.

Regrettably, the issue of membership and participation of regional economic integration organizations such as the EU remains unsolved.

Involvement of EU Member States: Lessons from the IPBES hosting country Germany and from the European perspective

Carsten Neßhöver, Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research

Mr Neßhöver said that IPBES a multi-scale topic. He highlighted the concept of network of knowledge that goes from the local and regional level to the national level. He also stressed that there is an excellent experience on policy measures on biodiversity in the EU and this experience should be incorporated in IPBES in order to formulate the right policy tools.

One of the key challenges is addressing IPBES at the national level. According to Mr Neßhöver, the best solution is the national platforms. For example, in Germany the national platform is based on a network of research disciplines and a forum to integrate policies. Many activities have been carried out through the platform such as information service for scientists, the first national meeting on IPBES capacity building and collection of feedback.



There is a lot of work to be done in terms of research integration and a lot of progress has already been made at the EU level. There are more than 100 “biodiversity” research projects, three successful networks of excellence and have been many developments in the European Research Area under the Fifth to Seventh Research Programmes (FP5-FP7). Mr Neßhöver expressed the hope that in the future Horizon 2020 could support biodiversity projects.

Mr Neßhöver presented the project he is coordinating called “[Biodiversity Knowledge](#)”, funded by the European Commission. The objective is to develop a prototype of an open network approach to boost the knowledge flow between biodiversity knowledge holders and decision makers in Europe.

In his view, it is crucial to incorporate European research into IPBES as the European dimension is essential. The EU has the knowledge on biodiversity and an effective EU mechanism is needed to further develop the EU research and link it to IPBES. He also stressed the importance of the national dimension and the role of national platforms in order to increase the involvement of scientists and decision makers.

He concluded that networking European knowledge actively will not only profit IPBES, but also serve the European policy for the 2020 goals.





Discussion with the audience

MEP Franco pointed out that forests are home for an incredible biodiversity. Tropical forests are the richest in terms of biodiversity and they are disappearing at an alarming scale. According to Mr Franco, the EU needs a forestry strategy to achieve satisfactory results on biodiversity. He asked how the huge amount of data and research on biodiversity that already exist can be used to develop effective policies.

Dimitri Harmegnies, DG DEVCO, asked how stakeholders can be integrated in IPBES to make sure that the civil society and the local communities are represented, especially in implementing the capacity-building activities of the platform.

Mr Commenville replied that the IPBES is a new mechanism, which is not meant to create legally-binding agreements or to perform capacity-building on its own. However it will facilitate such activities implemented by others. The focus should be on strengthening existing centres of excellence, exchange programmes and infrastructures in order to improve access to training of interested stakeholders. By setting the standards for capacity-building activities related to biodiversity and ecosystem services, IPBES should promote transparency and take into account all levels of knowledge for policy-making, from local to global.





List of Participants

European Parliament		
Gaston	Franco	MEP
Martina	Mrukova	MEP Pavel Poc Assistant
Vincenzo	Salerno	MEP Véronique Mathieu Assistant
European Commission, European Institutions and Agencies		
Dimitri	Harmegnies	European Commission DG DEVCO
Adrian	Peres	European Commission
Martin	Sharman	European Commission
Ralf	Tinga	Council of the EU
Thomas	Koetz	European Commission DG ENV
Permanent Representations and Ministries		
Maximiliano	Arienzo	Mission of Brazil to the European Union
Patricia	Carvalho	Perm. Rep. Portugal
Monica	Cruz	Costa Rica Embassy
Jeanine	Ferreira	Federal Minister of the Environment
Maré	H. K.	Mission of Norway to the EU
Nina	Jul Larsen	Greenland Representation
Claire	Range	Representation of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia to the European Union
Kathrin	Sommer	Representation of the State of Baden-Württemberg to the EU



Stakeholders		
Shulamit	Alony	IUCN
Angel	Angelidis	Geostratin
Salvatore	Arico	UNESCO
Frans	Arijs	Food Public Health
Dominique	Benzaken	IUCN
Anete	Berzina	IUCN
Cécile	Blanc	French Foundation for Research on Biodiversity
Alison	Boyes	Rise Foundation
Ariel	Brunner	BirdLife
Roxana	Bucioaca	IUCN
Charile	Butt	CEMEX
Yoni	Choukron	Michelin
Pierre	Commenville	IUCN
Miguel	Desnerck	D Desnerk Media
Sandrine	Devos	UEPG
Christina	Dimopoulou	Regioeuropa
Delphine	Dupeux	ELO
Eszter	Fay	EEA
Irina	Franken	Representation of the Land Brandenburg to the European Union



Maria	Freitas	EP
Enitsa	Gabrovska	IUCN
Leen	Gorissen	VITO
Maria Carolina	Hazin	Bird Life
Raphaelle	Hennekinne	ClientEarth
Monica	Jacobs	IUCN
Amalia	Kafka	Opera indicators
Ana	Klenovšek	ACE
Anne	Larigauderie	DIVERSITAS/ICSU
Olli	Lipponen	Metsähallitus, Eastern Lapland
Thierry	Lucas	UNEP
Laura	Maiz-Tome	IUCN
Jaques	Malache	International Press
Angel	Martin	ECPA
Federico	Minozzi	EUROPARC
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Patrick	ten Brink	IEEP
Marijke	Thoonen	INBO
Chris	van den Bilcke	UNEP
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Janice	Weatherley	A Rocha International
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