

Position on biodiversity



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THIS POSITION STATEMENT
WAS APPROVED BY
THE ECSITE BOARD
ON 30 MARCH, 2012.

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Ecsite, The European network of science centres and museums is at the interface between society and science, with 400 institutional members in 50 countries, connecting with 32 million people annually.
Our specific contribution to a European scientific culture and our insights into the issues that concern citizens mandate us to engage with the important scientific issues of the day.

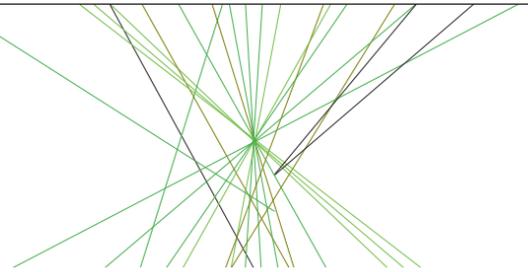
1 The Aichi Targets of the UN CBD
COP10, 2010
<http://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/>

2 Our life insurance, our natural capital:
an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020
[http://ec.europa.eu/
environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/pdf/](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/pdf/)

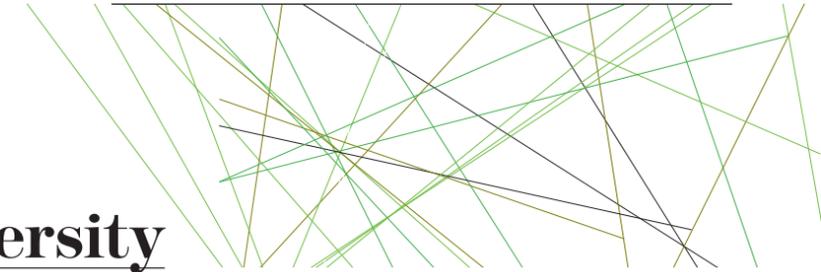
3 Millennium Ecosystems
Assessment
[http://www.maweb.org/
en/index.aspx](http://www.maweb.org/en/index.aspx)

4 The Economics of Ecosystems
and Biodiversity (TEEB)
<http://teebweb.org/>

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Ecsite recognises that biodiversity loss and its consequences will be one of the defining issues of the coming decade. If unaddressed, these losses will undermine global efforts to combat climate change and of achieve the Millennium Development Goals, in turn undermining the health, wealth and wellbeing of society at large.

Ecsite supports the international targets set for the coming Decade 2011-2020 by the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity¹, and the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020², which aims to reverse biodiversity loss and speed up Europe's transition to a resource efficient and green economy.

Ecsite notes the particular importance of addressing biodiversity loss within Europe, recognising the importance of its varied ecosystems which provide habitats for numerous and diverse indigenous and migratory species.

Ecsite recognises humanity's environmental impact on an international scale and in its own member's regions. Geographical Europe has been one of the most intensively managed parts of our planet and has a significant global economic and ecological footprint. Ecsite recognises the impact of humans and seeks to empower its members by facilitating insightful communication and using the power of its network to raise awareness and stimulate action.

Ecsite recognises both the science of biodiversity and the emerging economics of ecosystem services which highlight how the planet's extraordinary variety of ecosystems, species and genes are Earth's life insurance. We support and endorse the understanding that has emerged since the work of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment³ and the efforts of The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB)⁴ which provide new tools and incentives to value and protect nature.

We rely on ecosystem services to provide us with food, shelter, fuel, medicine, and for delivering the regulatory services that give us clean air to breathe and fresh water to drink. Natural ecosystems help mitigate natural disasters such as floods and drought and aide the management of pests and disease. Ecosystems also capture carbon—which helps mitigate the effects of climate change—and provide cultural services: Aesthetic, spiritual, educational and recreational uses which are also central for our health, wealth and wellbeing. Yet this natural capital is depreciating at an unprecedented rate – mostly as a result of human impact. The implications of this loss will challenge future food and water security. This scenario will mean an increased likelihood of political insecurity as global resources are threatened and human populations are put under strain.

Ecsite commends the European Union vision to ambitiously address biodiversity loss and, in particular, supports the need for mainstream public understanding of the issues. Ecsite appreciates the EU's emphasis on widely disseminating the science of environmental preservation in the interest of making it relevant to people's lives and to the personal decisions they make. The ultimate goal is to combat the loss of biodiversity and encourage a sustainable Europe.

Ecsite will harness the power of its diverse network which shares the common goal of making science accessible and relevant to the public. Ecsite institutions are visible and trusted hubs of knowledge in their communities which encourage activity, dialogue and discourse around science and society issues. These institutions have significant informal learning impact on their visitors while also bolstering formal learning through strong ties with school systems. In some cases Ecsite members also contribute to knowledge through their research outputs and collections resource.

The Ecsite community is critically positioned to help share understanding of the value of nature with the citizens of Europe; its diverse audience comprises, but is not limited to, students, policymakers and the media.

Ecsite will advocate for an approach of integrating biodiversity and ecosystem economics education into social governance mechanisms. Through this, the hope would be to align policy and environmental concerns so that the challenges of the coming decade for people and the environment can be overcome.

Ecsite recognises that biodiversity will become increasingly prominent in green infrastructure provision and in developing more resource efficient, low-carbon and climate resilient approaches. Ecsite will use this exciting opportunity to create educational resources in support of the transition toward a more green, sustainable and equitable economy. Ecsite is well positioned to promote Europe's intellectual capital which underpins primary areas for research and innovation and the development of new skills, jobs and business opportunities.

Ecsite will encourage more active citizenship to advance the European Union's aims to improve the level of biodiversity monitoring and reporting and of developing a framework for action for the coming decade. Ecsite member institutions are part of civil society and perfectly positioned to transfer knowledge about biodiversity to European citizens across cultures.

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Ecsite will use its powerful pan-European network to encourage policy developments and public engagement initiatives that support biodiversity protection.