

conf.univ.dr. FLORIN FĂINIȘI

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protection and transport in
European Union**

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1 European Union and environmental protection law

1.1 Integrating the environmental science and computer science in global and european policies of biodiversity¹

Biodiversity contains the variety of genes, species and ecosystems which constitute life on earth. The UN Convention on biological diversity states that biological diversity is the variability of living organisms from all sources including, among others, terrestrial ecosystems, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and ecological compounds they are part of; this includes diversity within species, between species and ecosystems.

We ask ourselves why biodiversity is so important for us. Biodiversity is essential for the “ecosystem services”, i.e. the services provided by nature: climate, water and air regulation, soil fertility and food production, fuel, fibres and medicine. This is essential for maintaining agriculture and fishing viable on the long run and is the basis for several industrial processes and for the production of new medicine.

Currently, we are witnessing a constant loss in biodiversity, with profound consequences on the natural world and welfare of people. The main causes are the changes in the natural habitat. These are the result of intensive agricultural production systems, quarry exploitation, excessive exploitation of forests, oceans, rivers, lakes and soils, foreign species’ invasion, pollution and – more increasingly – global climate change.

For example, it is a fact that throughout the world, over a billion people depend on fishing for food and livelihood. However, half of the natural fishing areas have been overexploited. A great part of the

¹ Paper presented at 1st IISHSS International Conference on the Economics and Psychosociology of Intercultural Relations in the Contemporary Mediascape, Cambridge, UK, February 15–18, 2011

current commercial fishing is risking collapse by 2050 should the present trend continue. On land, tropical forests are being decimated for food (for example, soya and beef production) and bio-fuels (for example, palm oil) – developments which do not take into account the many precious ecological services which forests offer us.

In the past 20 years, the butterfly populations in Europe dropped by 60%². The butterflies are valuable environment indicators as they are sensitive to the slightest changes in their habitat. Their disappearance indicates a far greater change in the environment, which we are barely starting to understand.

Humanity is itself a part of the biodiversity and our existence in the world would be impossible without it. The quality of life, economic competitiveness, labour force and security are all based on this natural capital.

In Europe, human activity created biodiversity ever since the spread of agriculture and livestock, over 5000 years ago. Agricultural and industrial revolutions have determined dramatic and accelerated changes in land use, agricultural intensification, urbanization and land abandonment. In turn, these have led to the decline in many practices (for example, traditional agricultural methods) which helped maintain landscapes rich in biodiversity.

High consumption per capita in Europe and waste means that our impact on the ecosystems extends far beyond our continent. European lifestyle relies heavily on the import of resources and goods from all over the world, often encouraging unsustainable exploitation of natural resources. All these lead to the loss of biodiversity which, in turn, is detrimental to the main natural resources on which economic and social development is based.

In 1992, the **UN Convention on biologic diversity** (CDB) marked the commitment of the international community to solve the issue of the loss of biodiversity. In reply, the pan-European strategy regarding biological and landscape diversity was approved. Included in the Ministerial conference the “Environment for Europe”, this

² www.cbd.int/convention/articles.shtml?a=cbd-02

strategy constitutes the only pan-European cooperation platform regarding the loss of biodiversity.

The UN convention on biologic diversity underlines the obligation to plan biodiversity at a national level. The countries must develop national strategies which reflect the way in which the objectives of the Convention are carried out, and the related action plans must present the measures to be taken for carrying out these objectives.

It has three main objectives:

- conservation of the biological diversity (or biodiversity);
- the use of its components in a sustainable manner;
- correct and fair division of benefits resulting from the use of genetic resources.

In other words, its goal is to develop national strategies for the conservation and the sustainable use of biological diversity, the Convention being considered the key document on sustainable development.

The Conference of the Parties is the head body of the UN Convention on biological diversity and contributes to the implementation of the Convention by the decisions taken in the periodic meetings presently taking place every two years. This year the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties was held in Nagoya, Japan, 18-29 October 2010.

In 2002, the UN Convention on biological diversity and the Summit regarding sustainable development in Johannesburg have approved the global objective to significantly *reduce* the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. The European Union has taken a step further and has pleaded for *total cease* of biodiversity loss in Europe by 2010, and in 2003 the environmental ministers at pan-European level have agreed to stop the loss of biodiversity by 2010 via the Kiev Resolution regarding biodiversity. However, an evaluation of the European Environment Agency (AEM)³ shows that, despite the

³ <http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/progress-towards-the-european-2010-biodiversity-target>

progress achieved in some areas, the EU objective cannot be achieved. Indeed, the loss of biodiversity is taking place at an unprecedented rate.

The year 2010 was declared by the United Nations as the International Biodiversity Year, this subject being examined and intensely debated on during the year. The fact that the goal was not reached has already produced serious discussions within the European Union regarding the necessary actions to conserve biodiversity.

Nevertheless, Europe has made some progress with regards to the protection of biodiversity. In the past 30 years, the European Union has developed a network of almost 25,000 protected areas⁴ in all the member countries of the Union in the attempt to protect biodiversity. This represents around 880,000 km², which is 17% of EU territory. This vast site area, called Natura 2000, represents the largest protected area network in the world.

The legislation regarding atmospheric emissions (air pollution), the quality of fresh water and the treatment of used waters has also had positive results for biodiversity. For example, acid rain which has devastated forests in northern Europe no longer represents a major issue. Agriculture is becoming more and more in-harmony with the environment, although there is still a lot to be done. Generally, the quality of the water has improved in what fresh water is concerned.

But biodiversity continues to be lost at all levels. Glaciers in the arctic seas are getting smaller and thinner during summer, faster than ever before. In 2007, the surface of the ice was half that measured in 1950. This fact has consequences on all living organisms which populate the area – from microscopic ones in the ice to polar bears and humans. Similarly, glaciers melt in Europe's mountain ranges, this phenomenon having important consequences upon tens of millions of Europeans.

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/db_gis/pdf/area_calc.pdf

The loss of biodiversity is mainly caused by sector activities. “The 1998 strategy regarding biodiversity in the European Community” focuses especially on integrating biodiversity issues in sector policies, including conservation of natural resources, agriculture, fishing, regional policies and territorial planning, forests, energy and transport, tourism, economic cooperation and development.

In the “Sustainable development strategy of 2001”, the EU set the objective to stop the loss of biodiversity and to rebuild the natural habitats and systems by 2010. “The European Commission Report on biodiversity from 2006” provides the main policy frame, it has given a very necessary impetus for achieving the 2010 objective, underlining in a clear manner the responsibilities of EU institutions and member states and providing an ambitious policy approach and a plan of action which proposes concrete measures.

The EU policy on nature conservation is based on two main legislative acts:

- Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (this is the codified version of Directive 79/409/EEC with subsequent modifications) and
- Council Directive 92/43/CEE of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and on wild fauna and flora.

Both directives offer the basis for the Natura 2000 Network, a natural reserve network extending within the Union with the aim of protecting species and habitats of special European interest. The EU policy on nature conservation benefits from a specific financial instrument, the *Life-Nature* fund.

The enlargement of the European Union by two other member states (Romania and Bulgaria) in 2007 produced modifications of the two acts of the European Union in the area of nature conservation, by introducing the annexes containing the lists with types of habitats and species of birds. It is known that Romania is one of the European countries with an extremely diverse and well preserved natural capital due to the interference in its territory of five bio-geographical