



Sectoral and Cross-Sectoral Integration of Biodiversity in Cyprus

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1. Introduction

Cyprus reported¹ on the implementation of related strategies for the biodiversity protection is a cross-government responsibility. Aiming to halt biodiversity loss, the strategies seek to involve all related issues to the mainstream of policies and incorporate the relevant biodiversity targets at country level. This note provides information on how Cyprus is bringing biodiversity considerations into decision making and how the different Action Plans and Strategies implemented by the Government take into account the issues of the protection of the biodiversity.

2. Country's Integration Strategies

The integration of strategies to fulfil the targets to protect biodiversity is a responsibility of all Government Departments. To halt biodiversity loss, the strategies should seek to make biodiversity part of the mainstream of policies and incorporate the relevant biodiversity targets at country level. Many actions are being taken at a variety of levels, and often in a cross-cutting manner. The basis for much of this is a statutory requirement on public bodies to take account of biodiversity conservation, when undertaking their functions. The strategies emphasise that healthy, thriving and diverse ecosystems are essential to quality of life and well-being.

The biodiversity related strategies are divided into a number of workstreams to address sectoral and cross-sectoral issues: agriculture; forestry; water and wetlands; town planning; coastal management; marine policy; climate change adaptation; education and public awareness, etc. In addition, information is provided to local authorities and other public bodies in order to implement the statutory duty to take account of biodiversity when undertaking their functions.

Addressing the threats to biodiversity

It is important to ensure that biodiversity considerations are integrated into decision making, by all sectors, thereby making mainstreaming a reality. In some cases a sectoral approach is being used, in others a cross-cutting approach.

The primary threat to biodiversity is the growing demand for natural resources and ecosystem services. Anthropogenic changes in conjunction with natural impacts are causing major alteration on the biotopes. Residential development, infrastructure, tourism, invasive species and quarrying are among the most serious threats that ecosystems are facing today.

3. Agriculture

The reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), was a major breakthrough as it reduced the environmental impact of agriculture by removing an incentive to intensify production. The new CAP also

¹ Cyprus (2009). Fourth National Report to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, Department of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment, Nicosia, September 2010, 69 pp.

requires farmers to comply with the environmental standards under the cross compliance Regulations in order to receive the subsidy payment (the Single Farm Payment).

The main aspects to cross compliance:

- Specific European legal requirements, known as Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs);
- Domestic legal requirements requiring the land to be kept in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) which must be set out according to the framework drawn up by the Commission;

Cyprus is already implementing the cross-compliance guidelines and makes efforts for the effective use of the Commission's framework for Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition. This includes standards to prevent overgrazing, control of invasive weeds, protection of hedgerows and watercourses including protection zones (buffer strips), standards to improve the management of soils and reduce the risk of loss of sediment and pollutants to watercourses, and support for a range of existing environmental legislation, such as the Environmental Impact Assessment.

Specifically the Rural Development Plan (RDP 2007-2013) includes measures relevant to biodiversity conservation and those are:

- Assistance in conserving and increasing diversity of wild plant species associated with protected habitats
- Measures to improve water quality by protecting river margins from livestock damage and protecting riparian habitats.
- Nature Corridors: protection and enhancement of field margins to increase plant and animal diversity.
- Hedgerow Maintenance: hedgerows retained and managed; cutting and burning prohibited during the bird nesting season.
- Traditional Orchards: restoration of tree orchards with native species (citrus, carobs, almond, olives) in order to protect the genetic resource.
- Conservation of Rare Breeds: Assisting farmers to rear animals of specific breeds native to Cyprus, which are in danger of being lost to farming.
- Planting small plots of cereals in open areas as a source of over wintering food for bird species and muflon.

4. Forest

Forest is considered a diverse habitat in terms of species richness. Government policy in protecting and sustainably managing this habitat aims to prevent further loss, improve ecological condition and conserve rare and priority species.

The Government gives priority to managing forests for the benefit of biodiversity, and the relevant Department is closely involved in a range of projects to achieve that.

One of the significant negative pressures is fragmentation, disease, and fire. Over time many forest sites have become fragmented as land has been cleared for agriculture or lost to development.

The objectives for sustainable forest include conservation of the area and improve the quality of forests and other wooded land in general, systematic management of state forests on a sustainable basis, taking into account national priorities and needs, enforcement of the EU acquis and international conventions signed by the country, maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, maintaining and strengthening the social and protective functions of forests and sustainable timber and other forest products to maximize the overall social and economic benefits from forests, expansion of forests, Improving quality of life in communities, particularly in mountainous areas, and enhancing transparency and participation of interest parties on decisions and processes in forest **management**.

5. Water and Wetlands

The main pressures on Water Resources include the continued growth in demand for water for all uses and the deficits found in water balance, thus increasing the gap between supply and demand, the pressures on water bodies by human activities such as point or diffuse source pollution from agriculture, industry, wastewater etc, the demand for potable water supply, the quality objectives for water and the protection of groundwater against pollution and degradation and the reducing the impact of climate change in relation to drought, in particular.

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) of the EU requires the establishment of environmental objectives for 'water bodies' aiming to achieve good status. The WFD also requires actions to be taken, against diffuse pollution from agriculture and urban development, improvement of habitats and ecosystems, by applying the measures and management plans, so there will be wider biodiversity dividends for river catchments.

Significant pressure caused on biodiversity is the construction of dams and the prevention of water flow downstream. Riparian areas have been destroyed due to the water loss and the same time sediment never reaches the coastal area, with consequence of habitat loss. Cyprus by implementing the Water Framework Directive has to manage to downstream water in order to restore protected areas and riparian habitats.

Following the requirements of the Water Framework Directive, Cyprus prepared management plans for drought, for water quality and quantity, for protected areas, for the river basin management and their

implementation will be commence soon. Indicators are used in order to assess the quality of the water (BOD, COD, heavy metals etc.).

The strategic objectives for integrated water resources management are based on the principles of sustainability, the management of drought, the achievement of good ecological and chemical status, the treatment of wastewater and effluent reuse for irrigation and to improve water quality in areas vulnerable to nitrates.

6. Coastal and Marine Environment

The coastal area of the island is subject to changes in land use which adversely affect the landscape and cause deterioration of biodiversity. The rapid development of the tourist industry has left its toll mainly on the coastal zone, with the construction of hotels and tourist complexes. There is an increasing use of natural resources, waste generation, and build-up areas, affecting nature. The threat of climate change, mainly due to extreme weather events and rising sea levels, the development of marinas along the coast in conjunction with tourist villages, are changing the urban fabric with a consequent of negative impact on the environment.

Considering the above it is important that the protection and development of coastal and marine areas (species, habitats, landscapes and seascapes) are integrated into special development strategies for larger areas, under the umbrella of an Integrated Marine and Coastal Area Management (IMCAM).

7. Climate change

The policy of the Republic of Cyprus in dealing with the Climate Change negotiations with regards to the UN Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will continue in 2010 with the objective in the coming months to develop the necessary conditions so that the Copenhagen Accord is transformed into a binding agreement to be adopted by all Members of the Convention at its next meeting in November in Mexico.

Cyprus is fully in line with the positions of the European Union and hopes for a binding agreement to be adopted by all members of UNFCCC, during the negotiations that will take place in Mexico in November, 2010. European Union notes that it is ready to lead the world to mitigate climate change and to deal with the challenge of ensuring safe, sustainable and competitive energy.

To deal with the important issue of adaptation to climate change a study is under preparation that will evaluate the impact of climate change in the different sectors including nature and biodiversity and the financial implications with regards to adaptation measures.

8. Environmental Impact Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment

The Law on EIA, which has transposed the provisions of the relevant EU Directive (85/337/ECC), is implemented since 2001. In 2005, this Law was replaced by a new one in order to comply with the new requirements of the European Union on public participation and access to justice and also to

incorporate some necessary changes for the better implementation of the Law. The EIA law foresees for an environmental study to be carried out for the projects included in its 2 appendices, before a permission is given by the planning authority. The issues of nature and biodiversity protection are being taken into consideration during the decision making and in the case whereas a planning permit is being granted for a specific plan, special terms and conditions are being included aiming the biodiversity protection.

The same applies with the SEA Law, that transposed the relevant EU Directive (2001/42/EC), where the competent authority to promote a plan or a program, needs to proceed with an environmental study which is being evaluated by the environmental authority. The issues on nature protection play an important role during the decision making.

Also the Habitats Directive, sets the framework for the Appropriate Assessment, concerning the projects/ plans/ programmes that are being proposed to be implemented in a Natura 2000 site, or might have a negative impact on the species and habitats of a Natura 2000 site. This procedure that is included in the Nature Protection Law (that transposed the Habitats Directive), ensures the protection of the important species and habitats of the Natura 2000 sites.

All plans include biodiversity (or related issues such as impacts on habitats and species) as a matter for consideration in Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). These considerations apply through development of control regulations associated with land use planning, infrastructure development, and natural resource management laws.

Similarly Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is carried out for all those plans or programs as required by the law, through constraints analyses as a precursor to statutory regional and local land use or resource management planning. SEA may also apply to non-statutory instruments that execute policies at a broad scale and design criteria at the local scale. Application of SEA is through planning regulations, Ministerial directions, state policies and administrative.

The Habitats Directive of the EU foresees the evaluation of the possible negative impacts of a project, plan or program to the sites included in the Natura 2000 Network through a procedure known as appropriate assessment. This procedure ensures that the final decision for the promotion of a project, plan or program takes as a determinant factor the protection of species and habitats of the Natura 2000 site.