



IUCN Europe Work Plan

2021-2024

About IUCN

IUCN is a membership Union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organisations. It provides public, private and non-governmental organisations with the knowledge and tools that enable human progress, economic development and nature conservation to take place together.

Created in 1948, IUCN is now the world's largest and most diverse environmental network, harnessing the knowledge, resources and reach of more than 1,400 Member organisations and some 18,000 experts. It is a leading provider of conservation data, assessments and analysis. Its broad membership enables IUCN to fill the role of incubator and trusted repository of best practices, tools and international standards.

IUCN provides a neutral space in which diverse stakeholders including governments, NGOs, scientists, businesses, local communities, indigenous peoples organisations and others can work together to forge and implement solutions to environmental challenges and achieve sustainable development.

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Foreword

The environmental challenges we face come as no surprise. During the past decades, the prioritisation of economic growth has placed environmental protection at the bottom of the political agenda and promoted a socio-economic model incompatible with our planetary boundaries. We are well aware of the ground-breaking scientific reports which clearly demonstrate the detrimental state of the environment and how human life is fundamentally altering the delicate balance of our planet. The past two years have seen an unexpected new element: the global pandemic. This crisis has been a clear example of how deep the interlinkages between humans and nature are, and it demonstrated how **we cannot live a healthy life on a sick planet.**

We have all the information, and this includes the fact that **some steps in the right direction have been taken.** The EU Green Deal and most of its attached policies, such as the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the Circular Economy Action Plan or the Farm to Fork Strategy, have generated unprecedented political momentum both at the EU level and beyond. It is evident that we need to move away from business-as-usual scenarios and promote a more holistic approach to nature conservation, working towards synergies between sectors. Intersectoral dialogues are increasingly being convened, normally including the environmental voice.

So why are we not achieving our targets? The reason is simple: **action taken so far is far from enough, and it is not happening at a fast enough pace. We need a transformative change and this will need the joint efforts of all of us,** but also clear science-based targets and a focus on the effective implementation of environmental policies and legislations. Moreover, to address the intertwined crises of biodiversity loss and climate change, we must tackle them jointly.

It is in this context that the IUCN European Work Plan 2021-2024 has been elaborated. This is **the way forward for the IUCN constituency - Members, Commissions and Secretariat - to achieve the mission of a just Europe that values and conserves nature.** This document outlines the framework in which IUCN Europe will operate in the European region, in line with the overall IUCN Nature 2030 Programme. It highlights the core principles which we will focus on: leadership by example, informing EU policies, convening and consensus building with partners and members, and improving IUCN's impact through knowledge tools such as the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions, the Red Lists and the IUCN Protected Areas management categories. The Work Plan will underpin our work to ensure a just transition to a more sustainable world which puts our planet on the path to recovery.

The urgency of the environmental crises has never been more apparent, but we have the tools to put us on the path to a greener and more sustainable future. **The IUCN European Regional Work Plan 2021-2024 signals the direction for a better future** for people and nature. We must be ambitious and bold, and most of all we need to work together as a Union: for us, for the future generations and for the planet.

Alberto Arroyo Schnell

IUCN European Regional Programme Coordinator



1. Summary

The IUCN Europe Work Plan for the period 2021 – 2024 is the response of IUCN to the environmental crises we are facing: it is the implementation means of the global IUCN Nature 2030 Programme in the European Region. It is also a work plan for the Union: for Members, Commissions and the Secretariat. This plan reflects not only **the action foreseen in the European region**, but also the influence that this region can have in the rest of the world. Therefore, we follow the general principle of “leading by example”. Also fundamental is the work with others and the need for partnerships. This means the inclusion of sectors in environmental conversations, and even more importantly the inclusion of the environmental voice in the sectoral discussions.

Keeping in mind that humans are a pivotal component of the ecosystem which is our planet, we will focus on **convening and consensus building** with public and private stakeholders, knowledge products such as the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based

Solutions or the IUCN Red Lists, and the policy context, including the implementation of the EU Green Deal and the external influence of the European region. In this context, Nature-based Solutions are a good example which can be mainstreamed in all our areas of work, to provide benefits for people, the planet and the economy. Through a number of areas of work, we will pursue the sustainable use of land and its restoration, the integrating of nature in cities, a reshaping of our economy and future healthy oceans, and tackling climate change.

The Work Plan aims to guide action and **strengthen collaboration between IUCN Members, Commissions and National Committees in the region**, as well as between IUCN Secretariat offices and the related programmes, especially the IUCN Mediterranean Cooperation Centre in Málaga and the Eastern Europe and Central Asia Office. The Work Plan will underpin our work to ensure a just transition to a more sustainable world which puts our planet on the path to recovery.



2. The path to 2030: A new Work Plan for transformative change

The current societal **production and consumption patterns**, especially in the Global North, including the EU, coupled with a growing human population have **exceeded our planetary boundaries and accelerated the biodiversity crisis**. By prioritising economic growth, we failed to consider the key aspect of environmental health. Actually, the COVID-19 pandemic showed how fragile our societies can be and how interconnected our health is to the

surrounding environment. It is fundamental that future efforts are guided by the One Health principle.

It is clear that we need transformative change to protect the planet and ourselves.

The year 2020 was hailed in the international environmental arena as the Super Year for Nature. It also marked the beginning of the UN Decade on Ecosystem¹ Restoration (called by

The EU Green Deal: the way forward for the EU

To ensure the transformative change happens there is the need for clear examples of leadership and commitment. It is within this framework that the European Union leads the way with its new growth strategy: the EU Green Deal. Presented in December 2019, the European Commission's flagship initiative has been constellated by a series of thematic policies aimed at ensuring a fair, economically viable and sustainable transition towards a greener future. The new Circular Economy Action Plan, the Farm to Fork Strategy, the Zero Pollution Action plan for Water, Air and Soil are all elements of the EU Green Deal which bring new hope that the EU is finally addressing holistically the dual crisis of biodiversity loss and climate change. One of the crucial components of the Green Deal for IUCN's work is the new EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030, which aims to ensure that Europe's biodiversity will be on the path to recovery by 2030, in line with other international commitments. Supporting the implementation, in an inclusive and fair manner, based on the commitments included in these strategies will constitute a priority for IUCN Europe in the upcoming four years.

The European Union's influence on international policy has been steadily increasing over the past years and the EU is now considered one of the main geopolitical actors. Through the European Economic Area, the Neighbourhood Policy and a series of bilateral agreements the EU is able to greatly influence countries bordering its frontiers. For example, the internal strategies of the EU 27 Member States shape pivotal environmental conventions such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention to Combat Desertification, the Bern Convention, the Alpine Convention, the Carpathian Convention, and the regional seas conventions (OSPAR, HELCOM, Barcelona and Black Sea Conventions).

¹ <https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/>

world leaders at the SDG Summit in September 2019) and the UN Decade of Action²² (a ten-year period to spur effective measures and develop inclusive policies aimed at reconciling human society with the natural environment, leaving no one behind in the transition). In these challenging times, we can only hope we have finally realised how important it is to preserve and protect our natural heritage for our own health and survival on earth. **This should be the beginning of our recovery and should pave the way towards a new era for nature conservation.** But, this should only be the start. We believe that **every year from now on should be a super year for nature.**

2021 is also be the beginning of our new IUCN European Work Plan, which will guide the Union's activities on European territory for the next four years, in harmony with the global Nature 2030 IUCN Programme, which for the first time, sets its ambition in a decadal time frame (2021-2030). This longer-term outlook ensures alignment with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, which will be adopted during the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties at the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) soon. In parallel, the plan will also be aligned with other relevant international environmental processes under the UNFCCC and UNCCD.

2 <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/decade-of-action/>

3. IUCN leadership

IUCN Europe will follow the five pathways to transformative change outlined in the [IUCN global programme Nature 2030](#): Recognise, Retain, Restore, Resource and Reconnect. Cross-sectoral and multidisciplinary collaborations will be fostered to ensure the importance of a whole-of-society approach to today's environmental crises. Complementary to this first pathway, there is the need to stress the concept of ownership, understood as the need for all segments of society to feel responsible for enabling a just and fair transition to a more sustainable future. Based on the key programme areas defined in this document, IUCN will relentlessly work to retain and restore our natural capital. Our work to protect Europe's habitats and species, tackle the drivers of biodiversity loss and enhance the uptake of nature-based solutions will contribute to IUCN's vision of a just world that values and conserves

nature. Moreover, the upcoming four years and beyond will be marked by the recovery from the global health and economic crises. An unprecedented amount of resources will be available to rebuild our societies and IUCN will ensure that funding will be positive for nature and that the EU answers the demands of European citizens for action on the twin crises to truly build back better. Synergies with national, European and international policies will therefore be fundamental in determining a successful and efficient coordinated approach. The reconnect pathway to transformative change is of particular importance as it is well connected with the IUCN Europe's objective to increase our presence and visibility of our ambition for a green recovery and investment in nature amongst decision-makers, researchers, businesses and civil society.

3.1. Leading by example

The impact of the European region, in particular the European Union in the environmental field reaches far beyond its borders. It influences neighbouring countries, such as those in the European Economic Area, and the entire Eurasian region. 2020 coincided with the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU, marking yet another event of this tumultuous year. The strong historical relationship between the UK, the EU and IUCN, however, will not cease with the ratification of the agreement. A priority for the IUCN European Work Plan will be to continue fostering collaboration opportunities, promote the development of joint projects and support a united front in key international environmental negotiations with relevant institutions in the UK. IUCN can and will be an example of how a mutually beneficial post-Brexit cooperation should look like, through the work of the European Regional Office and the

IUCN Cambridge Office, as well as with constant exchange of views with our British members.

Furthermore, it is important to remind how the global reach of the European Union is also linked to the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) and Outermost Regions (ORs). From the poles to the tropics, the EU Overseas are amazing gateways and critical strategic actors of cooperation in the Pacific, the Caribbean and Amazonia region, the Atlantic and the Macaronesia region, the Indian Ocean region and the polar regions of the world, an ever-increasing focus for future efforts. With its regional offices, IUCN bolsters the environmental European Union external action and contributes to the implementation of the European Green Deal beyond the EU borders. The BIOPAMA programme is in this regard a key example. Through the BIOPAMA partnership, 79 countries in Africa, the Caribbean and

the Pacific benefit from tailored support on protected area management and governance to achieve their international commitments.

Beyond the pan-European region and its corresponding instruments (such as the Bern Convention, but also the marine Regional Conventions), it is undeniable how the work of IUCN Europe is inextricably linked with the European Union and its institutions. The current European Parliament and European Commission will continue until 2024, therefore the European's agenda is closely aligned with the IUCN Work Plan 2021-2024. The EU

Green Deal and the IUCN Programmes are mutually reinforcing and their synergies provide a concrete framework in which IUCN action can be of the utmost effectiveness.

Thus, **IUCN Europe aims to play a key role in the upcoming four years in supporting an adequate implementation of the EU Green Deal, which remains the key challenge.**

Furthermore, its operations in the Brussels 'bubble', heart and hub of European politics, facilitates the European Office's tasks in fostering relationships with a wide array of institutions and stakeholders in the capital of Europe.

3.2. Enacting the IUCN Global Programme, Nature 2030, in Europe

The first priority area of IUCN's Nature 2030 programme concerns **People**. The key objectives to be pursued in this area include the realisation of equitable and effective natural resource governance, the enforcement of the environmental rule of law, the advancement of the rights, roles and obligations of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs), women and girls, and youth in relation to the conservation and sustainable use of nature. The European Union has declared its intention to ensure a fair and green transition for all, and supported its claims in the environmental field with important initiatives such as the European Climate Pact and the Just Transition Mechanism. A multi-stakeholder approach, fostering the participation of the youth with concrete measures, respecting the fundamental principle of gender equality, and ensuring the full and effective participation of IPLCs, is the only way forward to achieve IUCN's vision of a just world that values and conserves nature. Partnerships with the private sector, a renewed focus on sustainable finance and the promotion of practices such as natural capital accounting will also play a crucial role in the achievement of IUCN's vision.

The second and third areas of IUCN's Global Programme regard **Land and Water**, which aim to safeguard key nature conservation areas, conserve and recover species, restore

ecosystems and the services they provide, ensure the sustainability of production landscapes, promote equitable access to water resources for all, and strive to include nature values in water governance, law and investments. In this context, IUCN [welcomed the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030](#), which includes both a commitment to protect 30% of Europe's land and sea, as well as the proposal for legally binding restoration targets aimed at safeguarding key EU ecosystems which will benefit both biodiversity and climate change. Upscaling the use of Nature-based Solutions will continue to be one of the main priority areas of work to enhance climate change resilience, restore the natural functions of land and water ecosystems and to create regenerative business models that ensure health and wellbeing. The EU Farm to Fork Strategy has the goal of redirecting our food systems to greener and more socially just production and consumption patterns. The implementation of these Strategies will determine how important the EU considers tackling the biodiversity crisis. IUCN will monitor and help to ensure the implementation is effective. With regards to the agricultural and food system, IUCN Europe will maintain engagement in supporting a transition towards a more sustainable model. Finally, the EU's environmental objectives concerning urban ecosystems are strongly aligned with IUCN's mission to deliver

sustainable solutions to urban challenges and to IUCN Europe's leadership and efforts within the IUCN secretariat to promote the health and conservation of green urban areas and to restore the connectivity between cities and their surrounding ecosystems.

The fourth area of work for the next four years concerns the protection of the world's **oceans**. An important component of the marine work during the upcoming years will relate to the 30% protected areas target included in the EU Biodiversity Strategy, which foresees tripling the current Marine Protected Areas (MPA) surface. Furthermore, and going beyond the marine context, our work on circular economy and the marine plastic litter challenge is embedded here. In this context, the EU Circular Economy Action Plan is fundamental, but also the foreseen Zero Pollution Action Plan for air, water and soil - both elements of the EU Green Deal. Finally, IUCN Europe will support the global work on issues such as ocean governance, the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction and the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030, reinforcing the international focus on the marine environment.

The key objective pursued by IUCN in the fifth area of work, **Climate** change mitigation and adaptation, reflects both the political

momentum at the international level, its relevance and the crucial interrelation between the key environmental priorities. The restoration of forests and ecosystems, for example, should become an integral part of national climate action plans and nationally determined contributions (NDCs). Being a frontrunner in environmental protection, IUCN has already developed tools to support tackling the dual crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. A very important tool is the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions, which strives to ensure that the full potential of addressing socio-environmental challenges is reached. Therefore, one of the priorities of the future efforts will be the promotion of the integration of such tools into all European policies related to the adaptation, mitigation of climate change and for natural disaster risk reduction. In the European Union, the fight against climate change has been elevated to the responsibility of the EU Executive Vice-President who is also leading the actions for the EU Green Deal. As part of the Green Deal, the EU has pledged to become carbon neutral by 2050 and has presented a set of measures to achieve this, including: The Climate Law, the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change, and several policies aimed at decarbonising the industry sector. Similarly to other elements of the Green Deal, the proper implementation of these policies remains an important focus of IUCN's future efforts.



4. Partnerships for nature

IUCN provides credible, trusted knowledge, convenes and builds multi-stakeholder partnerships for action, has a global-to-local and local-to-global reach, sets and influences standards, practices and global policies impartially, and draws on a vast network of volunteer scientists and expert practitioners worldwide. IUCN's scientific strength, convening power, global presence, broad and diverse membership, and, underpinning all of this, our partnerships, are integral to the work and functioning of IUCN. This allows for the union to respond at the scale needed for positive, timely, and transformative action for a more sustainable future.

Towards the delivery of the IUCN European Work Plan, the respective roles, capacities and unique features of its constituency – Members, Commissions and Secretariat – in partnership with a diversity of sectors engaged in the sustainable development agenda, will be leveraged. In addition to engaging its constituency, IUCN will continue to work with its partners in science, business, policy and practice, and will also seek to strengthen existing partnerships and diversify into new and innovative collaboration with a wide range of actors. **IUCN will continue to reach out across sectors to promote constructive dialogue** and find common ground in order to build partnerships and coalitions that commit to ensuring nature recovery and mainstream natural capital.

IUCN Europe is a trusted partner of the EU institutions (the European Commission, European Parliament, and Council of the EU, among others), as well as key EU policymakers and stakeholders from NGOs to representatives of private interest groups, scientific networks and business and practice associations, all of which are instrumental to the co-creation and implementation of EU policy related to nature. We will continue to sustain and strengthen

these vital relationships, as we help pave the way for the implementation of the IUCN European Work Plan.

Underpinning all of IUCN's partnerships is the common goal of preserving nature. While the diversity partners may follow different pathways for action, it is this common goal that will continue to serve as guidance for cooperation. IUCN Europe will continue to convene stakeholder dialogue on nature conservation, practicing inclusive and participatory approaches. With the main goal of mainstreaming biodiversity in all relevant policy areas - particularly with regards to the different elements of the European Green Deal - **IUCN Europe will continue to advise on and help determine the EU policy agenda for nature.** We already nurture many important relationships with private sector actors, many of whom have been increasing their commitments and action plans for nature and biodiversity, towards gaining ownership and leading the way to achieving goals shared by IUCN. **Engaging with the business community and ensuring their true commitment to a greener future through clear measures is fundamental to achieving our 2030 goals in line with the whole-of-society approach of IUCN.**

IUCN Europe will enhance its cooperation with these partners, particularly in the fields of agriculture and land use, forest ecosystems, infrastructure, financing, the circular economy, and urban development, establishing important linkages with our policy work and with a focus on upscaling the implementation of Nature-based Solutions. We will seek to form new partnerships with private sector actors, land users and managers, urban authorities, civil society and youth networks and others, to help align our actions for nature, achieve our goals and commitments, and deliver IUCN's programmatic priorities.

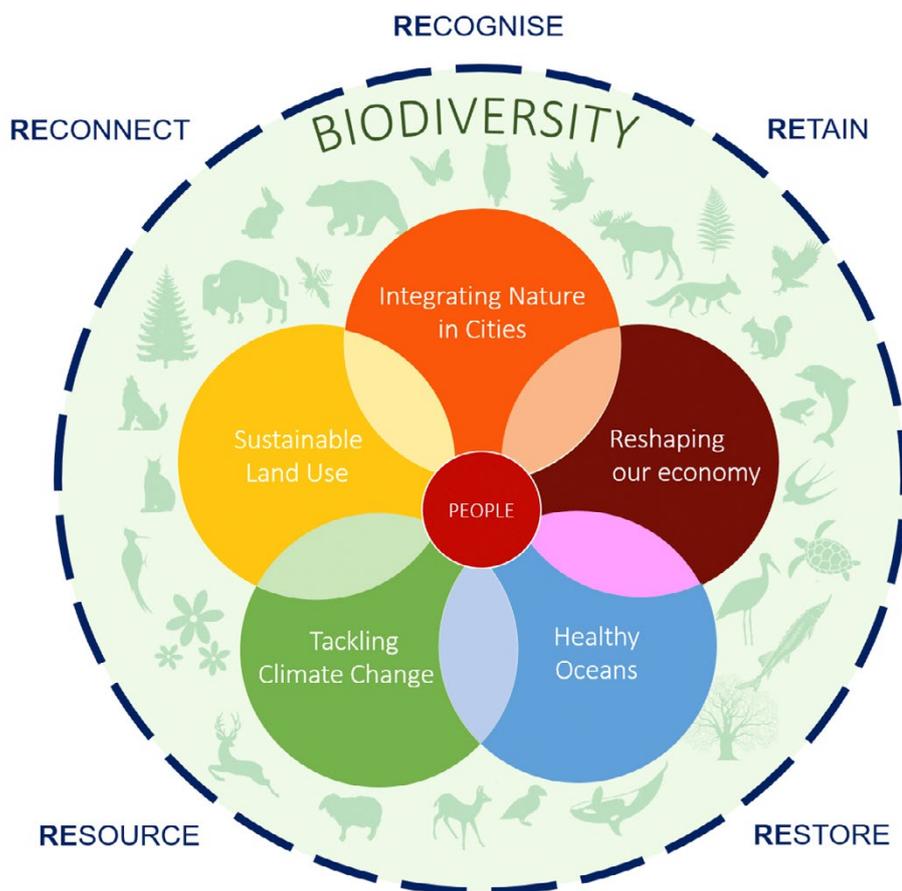


5. The European Work Plan

The IUCN Nature 2030 Programme is the framework within which the Brussels office will operate in order to achieve the mission of a just Europe that values and conserves nature. The foundation of our action will be based on people: our members, our experts, our staff and all of those who will join us to protect nature. The following figure represents the areas of work, the means and overall direction of the work of IUCN Europe. The diagram highlights that humans are a pivotal component of the

ecosystem which is our planet. Convening and consensus building, knowledge products and policy settings will be the means for IUCN Europe to foster nature conservation and implement measures to counter climate change and land degradation. Nature-based solutions are the perfect example of scalable tools which can be mainstreamed in all our areas of work, to provide benefits for the people, the planet and the economy.





Modelled on the IUCN Nature 2030 programme – under our overall IUCN focus on recognition, retention, restoration, resourcing and reconnecting – our work will contribute to five overarching goals:

- Sustainable land use and restoration
- Integrating nature in cities
- Reshaping our economy
- Tackling climate change
- Healthy oceans

The following colour code will be used in the following pages, for each Area of Work, as they

contribute to each of the aspirational goals / headlines above:

- Reshaping our economy
- Integrating Nature in Cities
- Sustainable Land Use
- Tackling Climate change
- Healthy Oceans

5.1. Enhancing IUCN tools and their use

5.1.1. Enhancing the use of the IUCN Global NbS standard and practices



The EU's 2030 Biodiversity Strategy, a key pillar of the European Green Deal, includes a nature restoration plan that can boost the uptake of nature-based solutions. Nature-based solutions are also highlighted in the EU [strategy on adaptation to climate change](#) that was recently adopted by the European Commission.

Effective implementation of nature-based solutions in Europe requires development of technical standards, increased knowledge of potential trade-offs, integration across policy sectors, collaborative governance, capacity building and financing.

IUCN will continue to create awareness and build capacity to implement effective NbS. The Global Standard can help to strengthen engagement of new target audiences who have major impact on protection, restoration actions of landowners, infrastructure sector, finance sector and the public and media. By organising dialogues and establishing partnerships for exchange of knowledge, bringing together evidence, mapping policy and practice guidance for NBS across ecosystems at EU and national level, new investment and implementation of NbS will be promoted.

The efforts and learning of IUCN Members and partners who implement NbS in Europe provide inspiring stories to encourage others to strive for real change through implementing and investing in Nature-based Solutions.

5.1.2. Continue the work on developing and updating the IUCN Red Lists



Information about biodiversity is critical to achieve European environmental protection objectives. At the global level, the European Red

Lists are specifically relevant to achieving many of the Aichi targets. At the European level, the Council of the EU committed to a long-term (2050) vision and it is the EU who is showing the ambition to reverse biodiversity loss, lead the world by example and by action, by helping to agree and adopt a transformative post-2020 global framework at the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. In parallel, as already mentioned, in 2020 the European Commission adopted the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 which provides a framework for action for Europe's biodiversity and its path to recovery.

IUCN is the lead authority in developing and implementing the Red List Categories and Criteria Standard and has applied this Knowledge Product worldwide to a variety of taxa. To date 15,060 species have been assessed on the European Red List with around 24% of these listed as being threatened. These include all vertebrate species (mammals, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and freshwater and marine fishes) and a range of invertebrates (including all aquatic and terrestrial molluscs, grasshoppers, dragonflies, butterflies and bees), and plants, lycopods and ferns, crop wild relatives, aquatic plants and medicinal plants). In addition, selected saproxylic beetles and endemic vascular plants (262 species) have been assessed. Individual assessments can be searched and viewed on the IUCN Red List website and from the European Commission European Red List. Currently, IUCN is assessing all of the European native hoverflies, with the European Red List of Hoverflies expected to be published towards the end of 2021.

Despite the European Red Lists completed to date and many other important initiatives, information on biodiversity that is readily available can sometimes be limited in scope and accuracy and may be out of date. IUCN Red Lists need to be updated every 10 years to ensure they remain reliable and contribute to the best available evidence supporting the conservation status of a species. The vision of the European Red List is to produce reliable

information on the status of biodiversity available to support the work of policy makers and practitioners. Red List data are primarily used as indicators of biodiversity trends at the species level but can also be extrapolated for use as indicators of trends at the habitat or ecosystem level. Except for birds and freshwater fishes, no other European species groups (out of the 20 already covered by the European Red List Initiative) have been reassessed. IUCN's work in this coming period in Europe will focus on a large-scale Red List reassessments.

Developing an updated European Red List for species groups will provide a more precise overview of the status of biodiversity in Europe, identify changes to the main threats to them and make recommendations for further research and conservation action needed.

Via its work on the reassessments, IUCN will provide a European scale snapshot of the progress made so far to conserve these species in Europe, as well as the contribution of past conservation measures to reduce the extinction risk of these species while helping identify priority sites for further conservation action. The European-level reassessments can also be used to produce a Red List Index for key taxonomic groups, and this aspect will also be tackled during the reassessment work.

Overall, IUCN will maintain its focus on species and habitats via its work on the European Red List, as well as strengthen expert networks (taxonomy) in Europe. This work will continue in Europe, especially in support of the implementation and monitoring of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. IUCN Europe will facilitate the conservation of even more species by moving them from assessment, through conservation planning and onto effective action, by working with partners to identify opportunities for Assess – Plan – Act workflows and partnerships” as outlined in the IUCN Species Strategic Plan 2021-2024. The European Red List is compiled by IUCN's Global Species Programme in collaboration with the IUCN Species Survival Commission and other partners and experts.

In Europe, IUCN will continue engaging with Member States and the European Commission, in efforts to further promote the take up of one of its key knowledge products in European countries and have the number of species present on the Red List to continue increasing. This refers also to the Red List for Ecosystems: a related exercise was completed in 2016 in Europe, and can serve as a base for future related action.

5.1.3. Promote the uptake of IUCN tools in the designation, classification and management of Protected Areas



Protected areas (PA) play an important role in nature conservation in Europe. Effectively managed systems of protected areas are critical instruments in achieving policy objectives in Europe. The EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 defined important targets for the designation, classification and management of Protected Areas. Its ambition is to strengthen the Natura 2000 network aiming to protect and effectively manage at least 30% of EU land and 30% of sea area, of which 10% should be strictly protected through an EU wide network of ecologically representative protected areas by 2030.

This network of ecologically representative protected areas consists of Natura 2000 sites as well as national PA types. The ambition is to enlarge existing areas and designate areas of very high biodiversity and climate value to strict protection (i.e. following IUCN protected areas (PAs) management categories I and II). It is also of importance to create a system of interconnected biotopes between the existing protected areas. Furthermore, IUCN Europe will continue its efforts towards an enhanced use of the IUCN [“Global Standard for the Identification of Key Biodiversity Areas”](#). Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) will also play a fundamental role in achieving a truly coherent and ecologically representative European PA network. The Brussels office will work to support its members, the EU institutions and other key stakeholders in integrating the IUCN guidelines on OECMs

within the PA discussion at the international, EU and national level. Achieving these ambitious targets will require increased efforts by Member States to effectively implement the EU's Birds and Habitats Directives and improve management approaches.

The IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas (the 'IUCN Green List Programme') aims to promote effective management of PA. In the European context, IUCN Europe worked to adapt the IUCN Green List Sustainability Standard to Natura 2000 sites by developing specific indicators in line with the requirements of the EU's Birds and Habitats Directives. The work was implemented in the framework of

an EU project which ended in 2019. It assessed the benefits and constraints of setting up a Green Listing process specifically tailored for Natura 2000, considering technical, economic and operational feasibility and synergies with existing instruments. This remains an important area of work and knowledge product, which IUCN will continue developing and further disseminating in Europe.

IUCN will continue its collaboration with the IUCN Global Protected Areas Programme (GPAP), where the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas (GLPCA) is the most important area of interest in the European context.

5.2. Impact areas

5.2.1. Integrate nature efficiently and effectively in urban planning and infrastructure



Protecting and enhancing biodiversity should not only focus on pristine habitats in remote areas, but on creating space for nature in the places where people live. With almost 75% of Europe's citizens living in urban areas, there are multiple benefits to improving and strengthening NbS in cities:

- Improvement of biodiversity by creating more and better habitats for animals and plants;
- Better quality of the living environment for citizens by making the city a more enjoyable, clean and healthy place to live and work during times of crisis and normal daily life;
- Effective climate adaptation, as flood and heat mitigation, drought prevention, carbon storage and improved air quality, food, water and energy supply.
- A more attractive city environment supporting economic development, health, investments and green jobs.

Translating this to the challenges of our increasingly urban world and the growing momentum for greening and reforestation, climate change resilience as well as circular and sustainable lifestyles, it is important to consider for which animal, plant and tree species we create a home in our city streets, roofs, parks and backyards. Cities do not only harbour a significant fraction of the world's biodiversity, but will also be more liveable and resilient for all living creatures, through nature-friendly urban design, and learning from nature.

To strengthen action to integrate the values of nature in urban planning and development and to mobilise investment in nature-based solutions for cities, ambitious cities that lead the way in this transition require additional resources and capacity to work towards these objectives.

An important ambition of IUCN is to catalyse the much-needed support for cities to access state of the art knowledge and best practices, exchange experiences, join forces in mobilising financial resources to implement nature-based solutions to their most urgent societal challenges and to inspire others to follow suit.

Cities play a leading role in the green recovery actions that are currently under development in response to Covid-19 and will need to combine health and nature objectives with benefits for jobs and the creation of a pipeline of sustainable innovative new projects that can be implemented quickly while creating long-term resilience.

Urban green and blue spaces provide billions of dollars in cost savings in preventing flooding and other climate related disasters, while improving quality of life and resilience of cities. Trees, rivers, parks, wetlands, soils, aquifers, urban forests and other vegetation reduce air pollution, limit flooding, improve water quality, store carbon and improve health and climate.

IUCN will support cities with knowledge, capacity building and peer to peer learning to improve nature through its integration in urban design, planning and practice and upscaling the implementation of nature-based solutions to societal challenges. The cities will be supported with strategy development and action, have access to IUCN knowledge, experts and tools and to mobilise funding, create awareness and engagement of citizens, set up educational programmes, development of strategies for urban planning and implementation of nature-based solutions and support research and monitoring on the value of urban natural assets and their benefits for responding to societal challenges. This will result in cities with enhanced urban biodiversity and nature, improved health and liveability, social justice, more local food production, circular economy and better climate adaptation and mitigation to build back better.

These activities are linked to the objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy and EU Green City Accord: To bring nature back to cities and reward community action, the Commission calls on European cities of at least 20,000 inhabitants to develop ambitious Urban Greening Plans by the end of 2021. These should include measures to create biodiverse and accessible urban forests, parks and gardens; urban farms; green roofs and walls; tree-lined streets; urban meadows; and urban hedges. They should also help improve connections between green

spaces, eliminate the use of pesticides, limit excessive mowing of urban green spaces and other biodiversity harmful practices. Such plans could mobilise policy, regulatory and financial tools.

The IUCN Urban Alliance envisages a world in which nature thrives in urban areas providing solutions to multiple environmental, social and economic challenges. In its initial phase of development (2019-2021), we are working towards three objectives:

- To create a platform for debate and knowledge exchange on urban dimensions of nature conservation;
- To catalyse new projects and partnerships for greener cities; and
- To develop an 'Urban Nature Index' to measure change and drive action.

To achieve these goals, we are collaborating with a range of IUCN constituents – Members, Commissions, National Committees and Secretariat Units.

5.2.2. Develop a circular economy model that integrates biodiversity



The focus on the broader circular economy discussion is now consolidated: after years of participating in the high-level assemblies of the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform, IUCN Europe was recently elected a member of the Platform's Coordination Group, where our mandate for the upcoming years will be to more closely integrate nature and biodiversity into the circular economy discussion. In the EU policy arena, the European Green Deal has set out a number of important objectives and targets for biodiversity and the circular economy, chief among them the Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 and the new Circular Economy Action Plan, respectively. While the actions under the Green Deal must be coherent and integrated, the relationship between the circular economy and biodiversity remains underexplored, both in theory as well as in policy and practice. Globally, and for IUCN, the

circular economy is gaining prominence. In the upcoming years, it will be important to closely align the two fields of sustainability action, and IUCN Europe will play a key role in this respect.

Over the next 4 years, IUCN Europe will play an active part in supporting this crucial activity, with a special focus on the relation between the promotion of circular economy and halting the loss of biodiversity, both in terms of policy and on the ground:

- **Knowledge and learning:** As a key activity in the upcoming years, IUCN Europe will engage in knowledge-building to explore and strengthen the relationship between the circular economy and biodiversity. In collaboration with other members of the Coordination Group of the Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform, and in discussions with key stakeholders, IUCN Europe will contribute to the newly-emerging knowledge base to link the two areas, while also providing the crucial focus on policy. This will help support and anchor nature in the political priority for a transition to a circular economy. IUCN Europe will contribute to mainstreaming the use of Nature-based Solutions and the Global Standard towards the implementation of relevant elements under the European Green Deal and the overarching goal of a transition to sustainable production and consumption in harmony with nature.
- **Policy setting:** The upcoming 4 years will be crucial for the EU's circular economy policy, with numerous ambitious objectives under the Circular Economy Action Plan, including a host of legislative and policy developments. These will touch upon sustainable production and consumption, as well as further legislative measures to tackle unintentionally-released microplastics, which have a significant impact on the natural environment. Falling under the umbrella of the European Green Deal, the objectives and targets under the Circular Economy Action Plan will need to align with those in the Biodiversity Strategy to 2030. IUCN Europe will also

support the ambition of the EU to become a global leader in the circular economy and biodiversity alike.

- **Convening and consensus building:** IUCN Europe will continue to be an active member of a number of key platforms, providing an environmental voice to the discussion. These platforms include the Marine Strategy Framework Directive Technical Group on Marine Litter as well as of the European Tyre and Road Wear Particle Platform, which will continue convening over the coming years. Further to this, IUCN Europe will play a key role in facilitating discussions among experts and stakeholders to connect and strengthen the relationship between the circular economy and biodiversity.

5.2.3. Achieving a more sustainable agricultural and food system



IUCN Europe has been actively engaged in the discussions surrounding the greening of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), in particular through the participation in high-level discussions and in the facilitation of stakeholder dialogues to inform the CAP as well as other relevant policies. IUCN has also been active in the debate on the concept of sustainable agriculture, and in the provision of knowledge on the subject, through the recent publication "[Approaches to Sustainable Agriculture](#)"³. The European Green Deal launched a series of strategies and targets, which will be instrumental for the future of agriculture and the food system in Europe as well as globally. The Farm to Fork Strategy, Biodiversity Strategy to 2030, and EU Forest Strategy will (among other important elements) help shape the transition to sustainable agriculture, and will need to be closely integrated into EU agricultural policy.

Over the next 4 years, IUCN Europe will play an active part in supporting this crucial transition, both in terms of policy and on the ground:

- **Knowledge and learning:** The IUCN paper on approaches to sustainable agriculture highlighted the need to better be able to measure the sustainability, in particular environmental aspects, of the approaches and practices outlined. While the various approaches and practices for sustainable agriculture can each be the most suitable given their particular circumstances or environment in which they are implemented, we still lack appropriate and measurable indicators by which we could ascertain and compare the environmental impacts and benefits thereof. To help facilitate the uptake of sustainable agricultural practices and approaches in general, IUCN Europe will work on exchanging and building the knowledge base among agricultural and environmental stakeholders towards a set of mutually recognized metrics for sustainable agriculture. Another key area of work in terms of knowledge and learning will entail mainstreaming the use of Nature-based Solutions and the recent IUCN Global Standard, towards the implementation of relevant elements under the European Green Deal and CAP and the overarching goal of a transition to sustainable agriculture and a sustainable food system.
- **Policy setting:** The upcoming 4 years will be crucial for EU agricultural policy, with the “transitional CAP” in place until the end of 2022, the EU Member States’ CAP Strategic Plans drafted and agreed within this time, with the implementation of the new eco-schemes from 2023, and with the discussions on the CAP post-2027 already kicking off. All of these developments will need to be in line with the objectives as outlined in the umbrella European Green Deal, in particular those in the Farm to Fork Strategy and Biodiversity Strategy to 2030.
- **Convening and consensus building:** Land users and land owners - with a special mention to farmers - are key actors, as they work on the ground they are the ones finally implementing the policies. Rethinking our food systems requires a holistic approach that considers both

the urban and the rural dimensions. In this context, IUCN Europe will continue to convene stakeholders and facilitate exchange, towards building consensus and mutually-agreed ways forward for the transition to sustainable agriculture – e.g. agreeing on metrics and the application of NbS. While our dialogues thus far have primarily explored food production, bringing together environmental and agricultural stakeholders, the transition to sustainable agriculture, and a truly sustainable food system, requires the consideration of a host of other questions. These include *how much food we produce* (linking to the issues of food waste) as well as *what kinds of food we produce* (linking to the issues of health and the environmental impacts of the continued production of certain kinds of food requiring excessive amounts of processing or land). The Farm to Fork Strategy seeks to examine the whole food value chain. Moving forward, IUCN Europe would like to include in our discussions additional stakeholder groups in order to better capture the whole chain (including e.g. the pesticide industry, food processors, wholesalers and retailers, and consumer organisations, while keeping up the participation from farmer and environmental organisations, academia and policymakers).

5.2.4. Support the development of a genuine sustainable finance system



The global pandemic is a reminder of how deeply economy, nature and society are interconnected. Never has it been more clear that a system change is needed to make the health of people and our planet the highest priority on the economic and political agenda.

The rate of global loss of nature has increased extensively in the last 50 years and the degradation of the planet’s ecosystems is undermining its ability to provide vital goods and services that enable our economies to thrive. A substantial part of the world’s

economic growth is dependent on nature, however, the value of natural assets and ecosystem services is not included in the economic equation. The valuation and integration of nature in business, investment and policy decisions and the use of Nature-based Solutions provides new opportunities for business that respect dependence on nature and reduce harm for biodiversity and ecosystems.

The European Green Deal presents a clear pathway for shaping Europe's future actions for growth and development with the strong ambition to integrate the value of nature in all sectors of the economy. Business has a crucial role in delivering the transformative change that is envisioned by this new growth strategy by mobilising investment and establishing unconventional partnerships for action. However, a comprehensive framework of legislation is essential to preserve Europe's natural capital and to achieve the EU's target for net-zero emissions by 2050.

IUCN objectives are to contribute to the development of standards for sustainable investment, through its involvement in the EU Sustainable Finance Expert Group, and to help accelerate mainstreaming of natural capital and to stimulate public and private financing for the upscaling of Nature-based Solutions. In particular by addressing barriers to investment, such as market and institutional failures, the fact that natural capital is considered a high risk investment with long payback periods and high up-front cost, as well as insufficient understanding of the benefits of Nature-based Solutions.

IUCN will bring together representatives of the private sector, the European Union, governments and civil society for exchange and dialogue on the opportunity that biodiversity and ecosystem services offer to achieve the objectives of the European Green Deal with regards to financing. Inspiring examples and innovative ideas for business, nature and people will be shared and practical solutions for a swift and successful integration of natural capital in the business plans and action for recovery and resilience.

In this context, IUCN has been and will continue to be actively engaged within the high-level stakeholder dialogues aimed at developing an EU-wide Sustainable Finance Taxonomy and will support the creation of (public-private) partnerships for action to mobilise investment in upscaling NbS and ecosystem restoration.

5.2.5. Support the restoration of European ecosystems to bend the curve of biodiversity loss



The European Green Deal offers a unique opportunity to bring back the balance between ecology, economy and society and to bring our production systems within planetary boundaries. Making the transition towards agro-ecological ways of production is needed to feed the world, protect biodiversity, and to combat rural poverty and climate change.

In Europe there is an increasing understanding and sense of urgency to halt this ongoing loss of biodiversity and ecosystems degradation. With respect to land management practices, this implies a growing concern with the overall sustainability, land management practices and natural resource management. Systemic solutions for upscaling soil and landscape restoration to increase biodiversity and support a wide range of ecosystem services, as envisioned in the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, is considered essential for a sustainable future. Enhanced land management practices based on natural solutions with action towards sustainability along the food, forest and fibre supply chain lie at the heart of a green recovery.

The gains of landscape restoration will not only be considerable for biodiversity and ecosystems, but also for soil fertility, carbon storage and productivity and a range of other ecosystem services. Land restoration, together with reduced and avoided degradation that increases carbon storage or avoids greenhouse gas emissions in global forests, wetlands, grasslands and croplands could provide more than one third of the most cost-effective greenhouse gas mitigation activities required

by 2030 to keep global warming to below 2°C (IPBES, 2018). It will, however, require public and private financial investment. Even though the knowledge, best practices and solutions are available, to take them to scale, they need to be integrated in land management practices, policy and legal frameworks, and investment and public policy support schemes for farmers, landowners and managers. IUCN will continue to contribute to all these actions that lead to upscaling restoration.

5.2.6. Reverse the decline of pollinators through use of knowledge products and policy efforts



In the European Union, 78% of native flora and 84% of crops are either partially or fully dependent on invertebrates for pollination. The agricultural contribution of pollinators to the EU economy alone is estimated to be EUR 15 billion.

However, scientific studies and monitoring have indicated a concerning trend in the health of pollinator populations. Wild bees such as bumblebees, mining bees and cavity-nesting bees are considered to be the most essential pollinators alongside other species such as the European honeybee (*Apis mellifera*), butterfly and moth species, hoverflies and other insects. The IUCN [European Red List of Bees](#) revealed that over 9% of European bee species face extinction. However, the same report shows that the status of over 50% of bee species in Europe is unknown, which means that a far greater proportion of European bee species could be in trouble.

The EU's Biodiversity strategy 2030 sets a target to reverse the decline in pollinators by 2030 through the EU Nature Restoration Plan and the EU Pollinators Initiative. The latter was launched by the European Commission in 2018 to improve the knowledge on wild pollinators, in particular the causes and consequences of their decline in Europe, and will soon be under review.

IUCN's knowledge product and work on Red Listing contributed to increasing knowledge

on pollinators in Europe. Efforts have focused on developing [European Red Lists of Hoverflies](#) (to be delivered by the end of 2021) and Moths (currently starting to be developed). IUCN and its partners have also conducted a comprehensive examination of current pollination conservation practices and strategies across the EU, developed guidance to tackle pollinator decline for the agricultural industry among others, and worked on showcasing Europe's efforts to tackle the challenge of pollinator decline. Communication efforts have focused on raising the awareness of the wider European community on this issue via a communication campaign which included helping the European Commission develop its EU Pollinator Information Hive.

In Europe, IUCN will continue working on this topic via its Red Listing work, as well as by providing support to the European Commission in the development of Action Plans for pollinators. It will also devise communication and dissemination actions, in order to further its Red Listing work on pollinators as well as contribute to raising awareness levels on this topic in policy settings, as well as in the general public.

IUCN will continue its collaboration with members of the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) Invertebrate Conservation Committee, the IUCN SSC Hoverfly Specialist Group and the IUCN SSC Conservation Planning Specialist Group to deliver this work.

5.2.7. Minimise the impact of Invasive Alien Species in Europe



Invasive Alien Species (IAS) pose a significant threat to Europe's biodiversity as well as to its economy and health. The EU experiences annual damages worth €12 billion as a result of IAS effects on human health, damaged infrastructure, and agricultural losses.

In the European context, the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 target on IAS calls for a 50% reduction in the number of Red List species threatened by invasive alien species by 2030. For

targets to be met, there needs to be increased efforts in the prevention of the introduction of IAS, and also in the eradication and control of IAS that are already established. IUCN's Environmental Impact Classification of Alien Taxa (EICAT) can support the prioritisation of IAS, and also in the evaluation of management action.

In line with meeting the IAS target is the need for effective implementation of the EU IAS Regulation, which requires Member States to prevent the introduction of, rapidly eradicate and manage IAS of Union concern.

In Europe, IUCN, together with its Species Survival Commission (SSC) on Invasive Species Specialist Group, will continue to provide scientific knowledge contributing to the implementation of the EU Regulation on IAS and IAS management practices in Europe through the development and communication of technical guidance, analysis and good practices, and capacity building in IAS management.

Currently IUCN provides scientific support and advice to the European Commission on the implementation of the EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species (IAS) via dedicated projects. IUCN is expected to continue to be active in the EU on IAS in the coming 2021-2024 period.

5.2.8. Promote the protection and restoration of forest ecosystems



In the upcoming four years, IUCN Europe will continue to ensure the conservation, protection and restoration of European forests. Some positive signs have been shown in the last 20 years; in Europe the area of forests designated for biodiversity conservation has increased by 65% and the area designated for landscape conservation by 8%. Nevertheless, these vital ecosystems are under continuous threat because of unsustainable forestry practices, conversion of forests, the effects of climate change, forest fires and other natural

disasters. Hence, there is the urgent need to step up our efforts. The European Green Deal has highlighted once again the importance of forests through several of its components. The EU Biodiversity Strategy aims to protect all remaining old-growth forests, enhance the resilience of forests across the continent and plant an additional 3 billion trees in line with ecological principles. Furthermore, the Farm to Fork Strategy underscores the importance of agro-forestry and the new EU Climate adaptation strategy mentions the need to integrate adaptation considerations in forest management. In addition, the newly released EU Forest strategy includes commitments to protect and restore forests, while supporting the bioeconomy through an enhanced sustainable forest management concept. It also highlights the link between forests and agriculture, e.g. by promoting forest-related interventions in the future CAP (2023-2027), and underscores the need to focus on synergies across pivotal policy areas.

International processes such as the Conferences of the Parties of the three Rio Conventions scheduled for 2021, the start of both the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the UN Decade of Action will ensure that forest conservation is maintained at the top of the global conservation agenda.

IUCN Europe will continue its efforts in ensuring higher standards in forest conservation through a multilateral approach. On one hand, the Brussels office will closely monitor the policy debate at EU level, supporting the implementation of the EU Green Deal and its strategies, and ensuring an alignment with IUCN position in these discussions. A particular focus will be placed on the objective of strictly protecting all the remaining old-growth forest and on the restoration target envisioned in the EU Biodiversity Strategy. On the other hand, IUCN Europe will ensure that the potential of forests as carbon-sinks and nature-based solutions is fully unleashed, in line with the principles outlined in the IUCN Global Standard on Nature-based Solutions. The current work under the multiple NbS oriented projects, such as the [SINCERE](#) programme that promotes forest ecosystem services and new business

and governance models for sustainable forest management, will continue.

Forests showcase how everything in nature is deeply connected. Their role as a bridge between biodiversity and climate change leads to the integration of forest ecosystems in numerous policy and conservation areas. In addition to the examples above, IUCN Europe will pay particular attention to forests with regards to the agricultural discussion (EU Common Agricultural Policy, National Strategic plans and DG Initiative on Agriculture) and in the land-use change debate ([Terranova project](#)).

Financing for climate and biodiversity needs to be jointly developed as forests have an essential role in curbing temperature rise within the limits of the Paris Climate Change Agreement. It is of the highest importance that the restoration of forests and ecosystems is part of national climate action plans and nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and that NbS are integrated in risk management and climate and energy plans.

Planting new forests, restoring degraded forests and enriching existing forests helps to re-establish the multiple functions of forests and in that way contribute to climate change adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction.

Restoring forest ecosystems, with appropriate species and connectivity between habitats, is critical for biodiversity – approximately 29% of assessed forest species are threatened with extinction, according to IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species.

The engagement with our members (national governments, user and conservation non-governmental organisations), as well as with IUCN Commission experts and regional offices, will ensure that IUCN Europe's work will reflect the divergences and synergies of its broad membership. However, the red line guiding our efforts will continue to be the conservation, protection and restoration of key forest ecosystems all across Europe.

5.2.9. Support halting illegal deforestation globally



In the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 and the Farm to Fork Strategy, the EU Commission recognised the need to address Europe's global footprint with a particular focus on imported deforestation through policy and legislative efforts. The Commission followed this up with the Communication on Stepping up EU action to Protect and Restore the World's Forests, further reiterating their commitment. The challenge is to tackle rising greenhouse gas emissions, global deforestation and biodiversity loss as well as human rights violations linked to deforestation within the EU's economy and trade. IUCN Europe has been and will continue to engage in the discussion surrounding global deforestation and will monitor the European policies on the pressing issue. The EU is embarking on an ambitious process towards policy and regulation to bring down its footprint with a particular emphasis on agro-commodity trade. The consumption of agro-commodities such as soy, palm oil and cacao contributes to the EU's large impact on climate and biodiversity, especially through deforestation and conversion of ecosystems. In the future work plan, a particular focus will be given to the upcoming legislative proposal with the first announcement expected from the Commission in the second half of 2021. This will then be followed by the standard legislative process involving the European Parliament and Council of the EU. To ensure an effective and impactful legislation on deforestation, IUCN Europe will provide input to all of the EU Institutes on best practices to reduce their impact.

Given that action on global deforestation is not solely a role for the environment directorate of the EU Commission, also concerning trade and human rights issues among others, IUCN Europe will engage with the Directorates of the Commission which deal with trade, justice, and due diligence. Also important in this context is to tackle environmental crime, especially through an enhanced implementation of environmental legislation. Our expert, cross-cutting knowledge will play a pivotal role in

ensuring robust, holistic legislative and policy proposals from the EU on deforestation in the coming years.

Increasing IUCN Europe's visibility is an additional target for our policy work. We will represent and coordinate IUCN's input to the EU Commission's multi-stakeholder platform to tackle global deforestation and forest degradation. Drawing knowledge from IUCN's Commissions and Members, our input is and will continue to be based on sound science and expert advice. We will also use our position to engage all stakeholders, such as the EU Member States, industry and civil society, on the topic and provide concrete solutions to the problem of deforestation on the global level and within Europe too.

5.2.10. Support the protection of biodiversity in EU Overseas Territories



EU Overseas biodiversity is exceptionally rich and is recognised as being of international importance. Outermost Regions (ORs) and Overseas Countries and Territories are part of international biodiversity hotspots and are key actors for the implementation of international and regional conservation targets. Their geographic spread underlines their strategic role to foster regional cooperation in crucial areas of the world.

In July 2008, the first conference on “The European Union and its Overseas Entities: Strategies to counter Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss” was held in La Réunion under the French Presidency of the European Union resulting in the “Message from Reunion Island”. The [BEST initiative](#) is one follow-up to the “Message from Reunion Island” and its importance was again highlighted in the 2014 “Message from Guadeloupe”.

IUCN has been an important part of the roll-out of this pilot initiative and was selected by the European Commission to conduct a wide collaborative analysis of the challenges

but also opportunities in terms of actions and investments. The first [Regional ecosystems profiles](#) and Regional investment strategies for the EU Overseas have been thus elaborated identifying new key biodiversity areas and niches for investments. From knowledge to action, IUCN has been deploying a dedicated and tailored re-granting mechanism aiming at unlocking the potential of new conservation and sustainable development in the ORs and OCTs. The result of the calls showed a real responsiveness and that stakeholders, countries, territories and regions are not only willing to tackle their own challenges but can also innovate. To date more than 100 projects have been funded thank to this facility, with 58 of them having demonstrated a great leverage effect, expanding their activities beyond the lifespan of the BEST grants.

The EU BEST Initiative has been a fundamental pilot programme demonstrating the real virtues of a new model to support biodiversity and ecosystems conservation in the face of important crisis. The Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories, partners of this initiative, have paved the way of a valuable support and delivery model. They have illustrated their capacity to advance approaches and solutions that can be scalable.

IUCN is glad to see this model soon implemented at the level of another important European flagship programme: [the Green Belt initiative](#).

IUCN will continue its support to the ongoing [BEST 2.0+](#) and LIFE4BEST programmes. This programme is willing to yield greater involvement and ownership of EU overseas biodiversity stakeholders in supporting them to design and implement new initiatives on the ground. New projects will be funded in 2021, thus expanding the scope of activities of the BEST Programme and enlarging its community with new beneficiaries.

It is highly desirable that these efforts will have a follow up in the longer term, and IUCN stands ready to support their continuation.

5.2.11. Monitor policy development and support biodiversity protection in the Arctic



The Arctic region is emblematic of the threat that the ever-increasing warming of the planet poses both to people and nature. Safeguarding its rich marine and terrestrial biodiversity, as well as ensuring the protection of the communities depending on the Arctic ecosystems, especially of indigenous peoples and local communities, will be essential in the upcoming years. Aside from the environmental concerns for the polar region, the Arctic also represents a geopolitical strategic interest that will shape the future of international diplomacy for years to come. The European Union, through its constant engagement in the region, will continue to play a crucial role in shaping the policies that govern the Arctic and will release in 2021 its updated EU Arctic Policy. As five of the eight

Arctic States are geographically located within the European Economic Area (Norway, Finland, Iceland, Denmark and Sweden) and are currently members of IUCN Europe, we are in a privileged position to engage with these pivotal actors to promote stronger science-based biodiversity policies in the Arctic context. As part of the EU Green Deal, the European Union also committed to help broker an agreement on the designation of three vast Marine Protected Areas in the Southern Ocean in Antarctica.

Through its observer status at the Arctic Council, its scientific expertise, and especially the work of the IUCN Global Marine and Polar Programme (GMPP), IUCN can play a role in this debate, follow policy developments in this region - including in relation with the European Green Deal diplomacy - and engage in constructive discussions on how to effectively safeguard some of the world's most threatened ecosystems.

6. Implementation of the European Work Plan

The European Work Plan 2021-2024 guides the implementation means of the IUCN Global Programme in Europe and identifies regional priorities in the framework of the global IUCN Programme. It aims to **guide action and strengthen collaboration between IUCN Members, Commissions and National Committees in the region, as well as between IUCN Secretariat offices** in Belgrade, Málaga, Bonn and Cambridge. This Plan is setting a direction, and in this sense it is rather orientational than prescriptive. In any case, to help its monitoring and follow up, a system to collect information about implementation actions or projects from members is foreseen, using the IUCN portal. This information will feed into regular updates for members.

In particular, a **strong coordination is foreseen with the Mediterranean Cooperation centre in Málaga as along with the Central and Eastern European Office (ECARO) in Belgrade**. The strength of IUCN, as highlighted throughout this document, consists in a coordinated and multilateral approach. The work of one office would not be as effective without the support of and coordination with the other IUCN offices all around the world, especially those in the same geographical region. IUCN Europe's work covers the entire European continent, going beyond the borders of the European Union, thus we are constantly in contact with the ECARO office and with the Mediterranean office. Therefore, to ensure that IUCN displays a united voice within the European continent, the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, the European Regional Office and the Eastern Europe and Central Asia regional office will establish a steering coordination group to highlight synergies and to oversee the implementation

of their respective programmes. The group will consist of one representative from each office and will meet on a regular basis, once every three months, to discuss the progress to date, discuss the feedback from members and to improve the mainstreaming of IUCN priorities. This coordination mechanism will help identify opportunities to collaborate and will provide a platform to address one of the key priorities for all the offices: stronger members' engagement. For this purpose, and to facilitate the process, the development of common methodology to gather members' inputs and proposals will be explored. The new steering coordination group will also ensure that each office's strengths and priorities will be better supported by the other components of the secretariat. It will also make it possible for work areas of common interest, such as agriculture, protected areas, restoration and NbS in urban the environment, to be addressed jointly.

IUCN leadership and influence in environmental conservation would be greatly limited without the legitimacy given to its efforts by the **IUCN members**. In its daily work IUCN Europe carefully considers the priorities and views of its membership, while always striving to raise the ambition for better nature conservation policies and knowledge products. The democratic approval of the IUCN Nature 2030 process is a testimony of the regular interaction and prioritisation of the members' perspectives. These views combined with the Secretariat guidelines have been and always will be representing the basis for IUCN's efforts. Consultations with members are carried out both periodically and on a case-by-case basis. These dialogues can occur in different configurations, one of them being the **IUCN EU**

Policy Advisory Group (EUPAG). Established in 2014, the EUPAG has provided invaluable advice to IUCN Europe in helping to synthesise IUCN's scientific tools into policy relevant positions and messages. Furthermore, IUCN Europe will continue fostering its ties with the National Committees, which are key actors in translating IUCN vision and mission at the national level. In this context, the Working Group for National Committee Development in Europe, North and Central Asia has been very active during the past years, with over 65 meetings organised. This Working Group will continue its work during the upcoming period, including a special focus in a potential future Interregional Committee under discussion.

IUCN is a knowledge-based organisation, and its decade long scientific expertise is reflected in the daily to the work of our office. The input and the support of the **six IUCN Commissions** is central in ensuring that sound knowledge and policy advice guides IUCN Europe's work. While all six commission are regularly consulted, some of them are more actively engaged with

the Brussels office due to the focus of our regional work plan. For example, due to the prominence of the protected areas discussion in the EU, members of the World Commission on Protected Areas support IUCN Europe in developing its position and this synergetic consultation allows IUCN to present a strong and united scientifically credible expertise and advice. The Species Survival Commission is fundamental to the work of our biodiversity conservation unit, assisting IUCN Europe in building knowledge on the status and threats to species across the continent. Furthermore, the advice of the Commission on Ecosystem Management is paramount in endorsing our work on ecosystem-based approaches for landscape conservation and in mainstreaming the uptake of Nature-based Solutions.

For a better uptake and mainstreaming of the work plan, IUCN Europe will also engage with the youth movement, especially with those organisations active in biodiversity conservation within the European continent, striving for collaboration in conservation and

BOX: Enhancing our communications

Effective and strategic communication is an essential component of policy advocacy, public relations, project dissemination and general awareness raising with the public. The EU 'bubble' is a particular landscape consisting of a mix of technocrats and policymakers with a varying degree of knowledge, industry lobbyists and NGO advocates. Many of the topics which IUCN Europe covers are technical but also highly relevant to the work of the EU Institutions and those working around them. Communication which translates complex policy and scientific messages into understandable language is key to impact. With that in mind, IUCN Europe aims to increase its visibility and engagement with Brussels-based media as a first communication objective. Our voice is unique, convening many stakeholders and experts, industries and NGOs and can be a calm voice amongst a sometimes turbulent policy world with many opposing voices. The 'bubble' has an extremely targeted small group of news outlets which are read by key targets, such as those within the EU Institutes. IUCN Europe will first engage with these media outlets as a primary group with the longer term aim to bring the European messages to the global level. Liaising with the IUCN Global Communications Unit will also be fundamental to bring global messages into the EU bubble and vice versa. With recently new communications capacity and with the aim to increase it steadily over the coming years, IUCN Europe will develop a longer-term vision for our communications work. With an increasingly digitalised world, social media and website management will be a key part of the work. Over the next 4 years we will improve our social media presence, increase website visits and general communications outputs. Promoting our attendance at offline events will also be integrated into the vision to raise awareness of the diverse role IUCN Europe plays in the EU bubble, covering a wide array of topics.

policy work, as well as capacity building. These efforts are in line with IUCN's initiatives at the global level, such as the IUCN Academy. Furthermore, IUCN Europe remains committed to the principles of gender equality and equity. Following the exemplary efforts of the IUCN's Global Programme on Governance and Rights (GPGR), the Brussels office will support women empowerment in environmental decision-making and programming, both internally and externally. The IUCN European Work Plan 2021-2024 will follow the principles of the IUCN Nature 2030 Programme, which states that "to enable gender-responsive action, IUCN will work to empower women's full and active

participation in environmental decision making, promote the access of women and girls to lands and natural resources that provide a foundation for their economic empowerment, and enhance awareness and capacity for gender-responsive action at multiple levels".

To ensure that all the commitments and objectives included in this four-year work plan will be efficiently and effectively achieved, IUCN Europe will present a final evaluation in 2024, in advance to the launch of the next IUCN European Work Plan beyond 2024. The engagement of IUCN members and commissions will be sought for its elaboration.



Annex: Work Plan Impact Framework

IUCN Europe Work Plan		IUCN Nature 2030 - Global Programme														
Impact Areas	People			Land			Water			Oceans			Climate			
	P.1	P.2	P.3	L.1	L.2	L.3	W.1	W.2	W.3	O.1	O.2	O.3	C.1	C.2	C.3	
Nature-based Solutions				●		●	●				●			●	●	●
IUCN Red Lists				●			●				●					
Protected Areas	●	●	●	●			●				●					●
Urban Nature		●				●	●	●					●	●		
Circular Economy				●	●			●	●		●					
Sustainable Agriculture		●		●	●			●								●
Sustainable Finance		●	●		●				●							●
Ecosystem Restoration				●		●	●				●			●	●	
Pollinators				●	●	●										
Invasive Alien Species				●			●				●					
Forests					●									●		
Deforestation			●	●	●											
BEST		●		●			●				●	●		●	●	
Arctic	●										●	●	●			

IUCN Europe Impact Targets

Enhancing the use of the IUCN Global NbS standard and practices

Continue the work on developing and updating the IUCN Red Lists

Promote the uptake of IUCN tools in the designation, classification and management of Protected Areas (IUCN Green List, IUCN PA management Categories)

Integrate efficiently and effectively nature in urban planning and infrastructure

Develop a circular economy model that integrates biodiversity

Contribute to the advancement of a more sustainable agricultural and food system

Participate in the sustainable finance discussion to ensure a positive outcome

Support the restoration all European ecosystems to bend the curve of biodiversity loss

Reverse the decline of pollinators through knowledge products and policy efforts

Minimise the impact of Invasive Alien Species in Europe

Promote the conservation, protection and restoration of key forest ecosystems

Advocate to halt of illegal deforestation globally

Ensure support for the protection of biodiversity in Overseas Territories

Monitor policy development and support biodiversity protection in the Arctic



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