



European Network of Heads of Nature Conservation Agencies (ENCA). ENCA is an informal network which fosters exchange of information and collaboration amongst its partners, identifies future challenges and offers information and advice to decision-makers in the field of nature conservation and landscape protection. ENCA brings together scientific evidence and knowledge of practical application together with experiences in administration and policy advice in the context of biodiversity and ecosystem goods and services.

More details can be found under [www.encanetwork.eu](http://www.encanetwork.eu).

Statements are positions approved on by ENCA's active participants for communication to a wider public.

## **ENCA Position Statement 2/2009**

### **EU White Paper 'Adapting to climate change; Towards a European Framework for Action'**

#### **Executive Summary**

Europe is already feeling the effects of climate change on its natural environment. The IPCC fourth assessment report identified that 89% of significant observed changes in European biological systems were consistent with warming, and 94% of physical systems. In the future, a temperature rise of 2-3°C above pre-industrial levels could lead to up to one third of European species being at risk of extinction. Many ecosystems may also turn from carbon sinks to sources, further worsening climate change. The EU, through its 2010 target to halt the loss of biodiversity has recognised the importance of protecting Europe's natural heritage for current and future generations, as well as the vital role biodiversity and ecosystem services play in human well-being. Ecosystems also play a key role in regulating the climate and contributing to greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. *Terrestrial and marine ecosystems absorb around half of anthropogenic emissions. Conserving and restoring biodiversity and ecosystem services can also have multiple economic, social and environmental benefits and provide the basis for cost-effective adaptation solutions.* Therefore addressing degradation of biodiversity and ecosystem services is not only an adaptation goal in its own right, but also an indispensable component of any successful strategy to tackle climate change. We need to take urgent action if we are to succeed in this task.

**Statement on the EU White Paper ‘Adapting to climate change; Towards a European Framework for Action’**

**This statement was approved by the following ENCA agencies:**

**Member agencies**

Agency for Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection (Czech Republic)  
Basque Biodiversity Center (Spain - Basque Country)  
Countryside Council for Wales (UK - Wales)  
Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (Germany)  
Federal Office for the Environment FOEN (Switzerland)  
Environment Agency (Austria)  
Joint Nature Conservation Committee (UK)  
Natural England (UK - England)  
Scottish Natural Heritage (UK - Scotland)  
State Institute for Nature Protection (Croatia)  
The Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (MNP) (Netherlands)  
State Service of Protected Areas under the Ministry (Lithuania)

**Agencies with observer or guest status**

Directorate for nature management (Norway)  
European Environment Agency EEA (Europe)  
Staatsbobeheer (Netherlands)

**Comments on the White Paper**

ENCA welcomes the Commission’s White Paper on Adapting to Climate Change and is pleased to see that it sets out a clear framework for European action on this issue. We are particularly pleased that the paper recognises the role biodiversity and ecosystem services can play in supporting human adaptation and the need to ensure that healthy resilient biodiversity is the foundation upon which adaptation strategies are built. It is now vital that the Commission and Member States take urgent and concrete action to adapt to the effects of climate change in a sustainable and integrated manner.

In particular we would like to see:

- A coherent programme of review of all EU policies and programmes to assess their climate resilience and to ensure that they are not promoting maladaptation such as contributing to biodiversity loss and ecosystem service degradation and are taking cross-sectoral effects into account.
- Periodic climate change health checks for sectors (e.g. agriculture, health, energy) to ensure climate impacts are taken into account in all Community policy sectors.
- A firm commitment and action plan to use the CAP to encourage sustainable adaptation practices which maintain and enhance biodiversity and human well-being in the

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face of climate change. This should cover, *inter alia* practices aimed at erosion control, enhancement of soil fertility, pollution control and innovative measures such as the creation of on farm wetlands to provide water storage and flood management.

- Effective and consistent implementation of the activities laid out in the 2006 communication on Biodiversity and the Biodiversity Action Plan with a view to ensuring that biodiversity is able to adapt both within protected areas and in the wider countryside.
- *Full implementation of the Habitats and Birds directives and rapid completion of the Natura 2000 network on land and at sea in order to provide a core of high quality protected habitat for biodiversity. The EU should also ensure continued co-operation with, for example, the Bern Convention and other international agreements*
- *However, without action outside of protected areas our efforts will be in vain. The EU and Member States must take action to address the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the wider landscape through adaptive land-use strategies including the common agricultural policy (CAP), the forestry strategy and the marine strategy.. Although land use planning is not subject to EU policy, it plays a major role in adaptation for climate change. Member states must be supported to take these aspects into consideration and develop an appropriate land use planning*
- *Adequate financing for biodiversity measures to enhance its resilience and thus its role as a tool for tackling climate change. These should not only be put on the political agenda, but also action must now be taken, e.g. within the Green GDP discussion, the implementation of TEEB and similar international activities*
- Effective implementation of the Water Framework Directive and regular review to ensure that the objectives of achieving good ecological status are being met in the face of climate change.
- An action plan to promote and rebuild resilience of marine and coastal ecosystems and fisheries and a review of marine legislation including the Marine Strategy Directive and the Common Fisheries Policy to ensure that they are promoting sustainable adaptation in the maritime economy.
- Review of the SEA and EIA directives to ensure that they require assessment of the climate resilience of projects, including the consideration of climate change impacts on the sensitivity of the environment.
- Action to promote and undertake activities that maintain and enhance ecosystem services and biodiversity to improve the resilience of built infrastructure – for example the

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use of urban greenspace for cooling cities and buffering air pollutants, or restoration of saltmarsh as coastal defence.

- A clear action plan for dealing with the effects of climate change on flora and fauna in the Overseas Territories, following on from the Message from La Reunion in 2008.
- *Further clarification of the purpose, format and management of the proposed clearing-house. We believe that there is a role for an information sharing and knowledge management tool, but it must not duplicate existing mechanisms and must be regularly updated in order to remain useful.*

The ENCA group recognises the importance of the White Paper in setting out a clear framework for EU and Member State action. It believes the Commission has identified the key pillars and set out a clear role for EU action. However, we are concerned at a lack of concrete actions to deliver adaptation throughout the EU and to ensure that adaptation and mitigation actions are sustainable and do not worsen the causes or consequences of climate change. Protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services provide essential life insurance for human society and must be put at the heart of decision-making on climate change. ENCA members look forward to continuing to work with the Commission, in particular to support application of the ecosystem approach to adaptation through the framework set out in the paper.