



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 at www.encanetwork.eu.

Supporting a Transformative Change for Nature

ENCA Engagement Piece

Key Messages

- There is an urgent need for proactive transformative change to achieve national and international targets for biodiversity, climate and sustainable development for 2030 and beyond.
- Nature provides the basis of human and non-human existence and wellbeing and must therefore stand at the core of the transformative change agenda. Biodiversity and climate are strongly and intrinsically connected, which means that the interdependent crises of biodiversity loss and climate change must be addressed jointly.
- Action for nature provides important solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation, for example through nature-based solutions that provide substantial climate related benefits.
- Climate change impacts are major threats to biodiversity and will aggravate biodiversity loss - so climate action that has negative impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem services must be avoided.
- Limiting global temperature change to the Paris Agreement targets is still likely to be very damaging for nature - we need to explore how to make nature more adaptive – especially as changes are happening faster than nature can respond to them.
- There is a need to focus on aspects that will drive transformational change at scale – for example through financial institutions and mechanisms to help change capital flows focusing purely on profit to incorporating more sustainable and biodiversity friendly outcomes.
- The purpose of this paper is to provide a ‘common-ground’ starting point to encourage engagement that can be developed further through more targeted or focused dialogue.
- The European Network of Heads of Nature Conservation Agencies (ENCA) and each of its national member agencies offer an extensive range of knowledge, experience and information to support national, EU and international transformative change discussions and development of actions through decision-making bodies and processes.
- We are keen to engage decision-makers and others across all sectors and especially those looking to have a more active dialogue about biodiversity within their own interest areas, as well as with the general public.
- ENCA and its members want to engage about transformative change for nature to help develop roadmaps for combined policy action and implementation and to identify key next steps with different sectors and stakeholders.

Context

Nature and ecosystem services are becoming increasingly recognised as the underpinning basis for our well-being and economic activities (IPBES 2019, WEF 2020, Dasgupta 2021). Yet we face multiple, interconnected crises that endanger human life on this planet, which must all urgently be addressed. Climate change and biodiversity loss are the greatest socio-ecological risks and challenges of our time, sharing many root causes that also exacerbate each other (Pörtner et al. 2021). Beside climate change, land and sea use change and degradation, direct exploitation of ecosystems and organisms, pollution and invasive alien species are the most important drivers of the current unprecedented biodiversity loss globally (IPBES 2019; UN Environment 2019). The 2020 IPBES Workshop Report on Biodiversity and Pandemics recognised that some of the underlying causes of some emerging infectious human diseases and zoonoses, including the COVID19 pandemic, are the same as those that drive biodiversity loss, land degradation and climate change, and that pandemic risk can be lowered by targeting such drivers and highlighting the interconnectedness of human and environmental health (*One Health approach*, IPBES 2020).

An increasing number of high-profile reports, including the *Scientific Outcome of the IPBES-IPCC co-sponsored workshop on biodiversity and climate change* (Pörtner et al. 2021) and *The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review* (Dasgupta 2021), clearly indicate that to truly address the global biodiversity crisis, we need to go beyond the more traditional conservation management policies and strategies that we have been relying on up to now. The conclusion is that **we need to pursue transformative change for nature with action at all levels and across all sectors** as part of achieving a paradigm shift in behaviour and decision-making to support nature recovery (Díaz et al. 2019).

The need for transformative change is now increasingly recognized at an international level. Beyond the reports already cited, the [EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030](#) dedicates a chapter specifically to ‘*Enabling Transformative Change*’, while the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) further underlines the need for transformative action. The First Draft of the CBD’s Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework supports this approach, asserting that urgent action ‘is required to transform economic, social and financial models so that the trends that have exacerbated biodiversity loss will stabilize in the next 10 years (by 2030) and allow for the recovery of natural ecosystems in the following 20 years’ (CBD 2021). Furthermore, the global Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 were published under the title ‘*Transforming Our World*’, and a recent IPCC special report highlights the need for ‘transformative systemic change’ to meet the 1.5°C climate target (IPCC 2019 on 1.5°C, p. 14; EEA 2019).

Yet the urgency and scale of transformation required to meet global and EU-level targets for 2030 and 2050 (biodiversity and others) still need to be mirrored in implementation actions. The reality is that historical and current policy deficits in relation to nature conservation mean many key drivers affecting biodiversity loss across the globe still need addressing. We recognise that pursuing transformative change for nature adds a new and essential dimension to existing biodiversity policy and thinking to also address the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss (IPBES 2019).

What do we mean by Transformative Change for Nature?

Transformative change is defined as ‘*a fundamental, system-wide reorganization across technological, economic and social factors, including paradigms, goals and values*’ (IPBES 2019). There are several important aspects to achieving this: focusing on system level changes, changing the structures causing harm and establishing appropriate enabling conditions, and an [EU policy support briefing](#) provides further detail on these and key principles to support them.

As nature and the many functions and services it provides form the basis of all human existence, it needs to stand at the heart of the urgently required transformation agenda. Successful transformative change means that the conservation, protection, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services and nature’s contributions to people are fully integrated into all

other agendas. Thus all transformative change discussions and activities must necessarily include being ‘for nature’.

For the nature conservation sector itself, transformative change requires high ambitions. Developing and incorporating new and adaptive nature conservation and capacity development approaches is essential for managing and restoring nature through landscapes and biological diversity at a global, pan-European, EU-wide and national scale. This means more ambition and taking bigger steps in relation to nature conservation, restoration and biodiversity management – particularly about the consumption of nature’s resources – to deliver nature positive outcomes needed now and into the future.

Moreover, transformative change for nature needs to be mainstreamed into all parts of institutional, economic, societal and other decision-making processes to address the negative drivers impacting biodiversity. This includes governance and culture as well as behavioural, political, demographic, scientific, technical and technological aspects, among others. The first strategic goal in the current global Aichi targets was to “*Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society*”. This has not yet been achieved and biodiversity mainstreaming will continue to be a crucial prerequisite for transformative change for nature. The first draft CBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework also acknowledges the importance of transformative change and mainstreaming.

A key element of more sustainable future policies is for global financial and economic systems to evolve and build a global sustainable economy, steering away from the current limited paradigm of economic growth. The IPBES Global Assessment and the Dasgupta Review on the Economics of Biodiversity highlight the urgent need to incorporate the values of nature (natural capital accounting) as a decisive factor for all economic decision-making.

There are several key issues that need targeting through transformative change to truly tackle direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss. This includes a transformation of the main land and sea use sectors, for example to reduce biodiversity impacts of energy and food systems (*Dorninger et al. 2020*). Pursuing synergies and minimizing trade-offs with climate change mitigation and adaptation actions is crucial. The energy and transport sectors, for example, have a key role in supporting significant changes from prevailing consumption patterns towards more sustainable ones. Equally, nature still needs to be physically restored throughout our landscapes and other areas including urban ecosystems and supported through more biodiverse cultural landscapes.

As transformative change cannot be implemented without strong citizen support, communication, education and awareness among the general public and target groups using current marketing and new public relations methods is crucial. A ‘whole-of-society’ approach is the new agenda we have to work on.

Recognizing the challenges

As European nature conservation agencies we recognise the challenges with promoting such transformation to fit into the efforts for biodiversity conservation to 2030 and beyond. We are aware that nature conservation means not only protecting, conserving and restoring nature for nature’s sake and its intrinsic values, but also needs to be done for the benefits for people. Nature is the provider of all the services and benefits that we rely on, with the greatest risk that we will destroy the basis of the life-support systems we have been taking for granted, unless we put nature’s needs at the heart of everything we do.

So far, nature conservation has often been regarded as a side-issue and we need to collectively break out of this ‘silo’ perspective. At the EU level, the European Green Deal has already placed ecosystem conservation and restoration and developing the right enabling conditions for biodiversity improvement high on the political agenda, yet we still have a long way to go to achieve true sectoral and cross-sectoral policy integration.

Establishing dialogue with new audiences is essential. We need all sectors, institutions, businesses and other interests to care about biodiversity and develop better understanding about protecting and restoring nature and how to develop stronger nature-inclusive policies and strategies.

A priority is to examine the possibilities for creating integrated solutions that tackle multiple crises jointly and to outline how these will contribute through future governance and policy options and mechanisms.

Existing policy challenges and the direction of CBD and UNFCCC negotiations clearly indicate that transformative change for addressing climate change and biodiversity loss is highly dependent on the design of new models that embrace the focal point between climate and biodiversity, capable of integrating multi-actor and multi-scalar governance mechanisms. Nature-based solutions are valuable options for addressing biodiversity loss, increasing resilience, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, while providing multiple benefits in economic, social and environmental sectors through broader landscape and also urban areas.

While scientific evidence confirms the importance of addressing biodiversity and climate problems whose drivers and solutions are similar and interconnected, existing governance frameworks for addressing these reveal significant barriers and challenges to maximising the potential of nature-based solutions.

Managing the land and sea (including for nature conservation) to simultaneously mitigate to a 1.5°C world while alongside adapting to a temperature spike for an even warmer world will sharpen thinking about the transformative changes that are needed.

That also means recognising there will be trade-offs, conflicts and difficulties to reconcile. These might include land-use conflicts (e.g. when it comes to land availability for ecosystem restoration), different value concepts (e.g. promoting 'sufficiency' vs. continued consumption) and conflicts related to the inherent complexity of the risks and challenges we face e.g. recognizing that some proposed climate change mitigation or adaptation activities harm nature and may currently pose no viable solutions. We must change and we must also pay certain dues in relation to these challenges and conflicts, and while addressing this aspect might be unpleasant, we have to embrace it as part of what we need to achieve.

The role of ENCA and its member agencies in the transformative change agenda

We as European Nature Conservation Agencies are looking to play a leading role and actively participate in the transformative change agenda by offering our organisations' individual and pooled knowledge and experience and our stakeholder and technical networks.

We want to engage others and through our knowledge and advice help guide and steer transformative change for nature. We recognize there are current policy deficits associated with addressing nature issues and biodiversity decline and we are open to conversations about how to work collectively with others about pro-biodiversity thinking and action.

We shall open new conversations about how to work collectively with others, and reach into policy areas and practices currently untouched by what needs to be done for nature.

Taking a '**transformative change for nature**' approach to how resources are managed would transform the use of the land and sea and turn current decision making from having to justify nature-based solutions against the status quo of fossil-fuel based management and the externalised costs to nature. This would be a significant step in relation to Dasgupta's call for 'embedding the economy in nature'.

Transformative change needs to be a participatory democratic and socially sensitive process fostering acceptance of constituents and may also need regulation support in recognition of associated conflicts and restrictions. With these aspects in mind, we want to work with other decision-makers about how we can collectively be more ambitious and generate more substantial

nature recovery action by targeting urgent key aspects to focus on and how subsequent key issues need dealing with.

We are looking to reach out and engage with national, EU and global institutions and business, cities and regions, finance sectors and civil society actors to establish dialogue and support pro-biodiversity thinking and action across all sectors and levels of society. Moreover, there are several key initiatives already underway at the global and EU level, which ENCA is already looking to help, support and steer to ensure their associated processes fully support nature recovery.

We as European Nature Conservation Agencies can share through our networks what we see as the big issues around biodiversity, providing science-based advice and information and concrete recommendations at regional, national and international levels.

We also acknowledge the very valuable role that small first steps (guided by a larger vision) can play in overcoming initial barriers, creating positive momentum and paving the way for transformative change for nature. Breaking issues down, avoiding people potentially being overwhelmed by such big issues and finding positive next steps means that every time we do this we help make progress. However, it is essential we do not stop there, but aim for true, long-lasting, systemic transformations.

Part of the path to transformative change is to recognize, embrace and support adaptive management by using lessons-learned, monitoring change and its effect, sharing information and highlighting relevant next steps that can be taken. ENCA and its national nature conservation agency members are happy to work together with others via broader discussion platforms for example or other mechanisms including more focused engagement to help develop roadmaps to combine policy action and implementation and to identify key next steps with different sectors and stakeholders.

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Vienna, February 2022

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