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## Our response to the Biodiversity Strategy to 2030

**Better implementation and enforcement of EU environmental policies, ambitious goals for the conservation of protected species, and a revised Action Plan against wildlife trafficking: the Biodiversity to 2030 Strategy of the European Union's Green Deal was presented on 20th May 2020, and represents a promising step forward for wildlife in the EU and beyond, while still missing a clear commitment to better regulate the EU trade in wildlife.**

With the aim of making Europe the first climate-neutral continent, the European Green Deal lays out a series of actions for the coming years. The Deal's Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 presents an opportunity to set a brand new course for the EU in protecting biodiversity, the health of people and animals, and their welfare.

While devastating, the emergence of COVID-19 and the consequent states of alarm and lockdown we've now been experiencing for months did offer one glimmer of hope: that the Commission would have to take the pandemic into account during the drafting of this strategy, and see it as a timely warning that it's not a minute too soon to strictly regulate the wildlife trade.

Wild and domestic animals have carried viruses and bacteria for millennia. What has changed is the way we humans interact with them. The legal and illegal wildlife trade, urbanisation and the destruction of wildlife's natural habitats for agricultural purposes, especially for the intensification of animal farming, are combining to push humans, wildlife and other animals closer than ever before – and heightening the risk of pandemics like the one we're suffering now.

Last week, an [open letter](#) from Eurogroup for Animals and its member organisations asked the European Commission to take our recommendations for both strategies on board, and our members also mobilised to drum up support at national level as part of our "Stop Pandemics – Start Here" campaign – and it seems that the Commission has indeed taken most of this to heart. The **Biodiversity to 2030 Strategy** takes most of our [recommendations](#) on board, and indicates the following commitments:

- The EC will keep existing environmental policies strong and stimulate enforcement and implementation of the **Birds and Habitats Directives**, with ambitious goals in terms of conservation status of protected European species. Member States are requested to not deteriorate the conservation trends and status of protected habitats and species, like large carnivores.
- A minimum of 30% of the EU's land area and 30% of its sea area will be protected, with at least one third of the whole network of protected areas – representing 10% of EU land and 10% of EU sea - covered by strict protection.
- At least 25% of the EU's agricultural land must be **organically farmed** by 2030.
- The EC will propose a further tightening of the rules of the **EU ivory trade** in 2020.

- By 2021, it will revise the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking to step up efforts to combat the **illegal wildlife trade**.
- The EU will enhance its support to global efforts aimed at applying the **One Health** approach, by promoting better protection of natural ecosystems coupled with efforts to reduce wildlife trade and consumption, to improve resilience to possible future diseases and pandemics.
- The Commission will further promote tax systems and pricing that reflect environmental costs, including biodiversity loss, and will adopt a delegated act under the Taxonomy Regulation to establish a common classification of economic activities that substantially contribute to protecting and restoring biodiversity and ecosystems.
- There are several references to the fact that this strategy will work in tandem with the new **Farm-to-Fork Strategy** and the revised Common Agricultural Policy. The Commission will ensure that the strategic plans of the CAP lead to the use of sustainable practices such as organic farming, agro-ecology and stricter animal welfare standards.

The strategy highlights that efforts to reduce wildlife trade and consumption is crucial to both prevent and build resilience to future zoonosis outbreaks. However, a clear commitment in this sense is missing. To ensure that the strategy is implemented effectively, the Commission should also regulate the legal wildlife trade. The unregulated trade in live wild animals is associated with an impact on global biodiversity, animal welfare and health risks to EU citizens that cannot be ignored. In recent years, the potential for the transmission of zoonotic diseases and the introduction of invasive alien species in the EU has significantly increased, due to a growing trend for exotic pet keeping. Specific measures to better regulate and limit the trade in wild animals in the EU need to be promptly adopted.

An EU-wide 'Positive List' for exotic pets, specifying which animal species are suitable and safe to be kept as pets subject to strict criteria, would be an important component of such measures. Such an instrument would offer a much needed precautionary approach, given the continuous shifts in species and numbers of animals in trade, and would be coherent with the "Do no harm" principle promoted in the strategy.

Finally, the strategy acknowledges that for a just transition to a more biodiversity-friendly society, biodiversity protection and restoration and climate action need to become an integral part of all relevant EU programmes and financing instruments for all Member States. Since wildlife rescue centres and sanctuaries in Europe play a critical role in supporting Member States' effort to fight against wildlife trafficking and in ensuring the welfare of confiscated wild animals, the Commission should ensure that they receive adequate EU financial support.

**Contact:**

Ilaria Di Silvestre, Wildlife Programme Leader  
i.disilvestre@eurogroupforanimals.org