

The Strategy Guide

the Clearing-House for the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy

Annex 2

Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy

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Justification of focus of the Action Plan on landscapes, ecosystems and species

Currently, there is an overall negative trend for many landscapes, ecosystems and species, which has effects on the quality of human life. To redress the balance and find the appropriate response on the international level, it is important to focus the Strategy on ecosystems and landscapes of nature conservation value for the whole of Europe and its regions. Such nature conservation value is determined according to the following criteria:

Biological Diversity: Actions should be prioritized in areas of greatest biological diversity, which are determined according to:

- Naturalness: minimally man-altered areas, where the ecosystem and species composition is closest to the original natural habitat;
- Diversity: areas with a wide range of habitats, species and/or genotypes; including those maintaining the genetic diversity of traditional varieties and races;
- Representativeness: areas with habitats that are typical of a region;
- Threat or rarity: areas with types of habitats, species and/or genomes that are suffering environmental stress;
- Size: areas that are large enough to be sustainable for biological and landscape diversity in Europe;
- Endemism: populations restricted to local areas or to Europe;
- Cultural biodiversity: including habitats/species of cultural, aesthetic or regional identity.

Landscape Diversity: Actions should maintain and enhance natural and cultural landscapes of European significance, determined by:

- the main geological land forms that characterize the geological/climatic zones based on four criteria: rarity, uniqueness, representativity and naturalness. Geological features may include untouched river systems, pingos, eskers, dune systems, coastal barriers, dolines, domes and fossil biota;
- the combined application of ecologically sound processes and sustainable use of natural resources;
- the non-intensive management of semi-natural habitats for fauna and flora;
- regionally and culturally distinct land use and settlement patterns, including field systems, terraces, historic houses and estates. Cultural features can include rural vernacular architecture, historic parkland estates, ancient drove routes, canals and ditches, moats, fishponds, man-made waterways, traditional settlement and field system patterns;
- outstanding scenic quality representing the visual characteristics of the natural and cultural landscapes of the continent.

Criteria concerning nature conservation value can be interpreted to demonstrate that the focus of the Strategy concentrates in priority on:

- *Ecosystems of greatest biological diversity*: forests, mountains, European rivers, grasslands, inland wetlands, coastal and marine systems;
- *Land/seascapes of most significant European-wide concern*: tundra, taiga, uplands, bocages, open fields, steppic/arid landscapes, regional landscapes and artificial landscapes;
- *Species under threat of extinction*.

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