

Pollinating insects: Commission proposes actions to stop their decline

The new measures include a new indicator to improve monitoring and data, and better coordination of EU action across different sectors and policies to address the social and economic implications of the decline in pollinating insects.

Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Karmenu **Vella** said: *"Pollinators are an excellent ecosystem health check. If they are not doing well, we can be sure biodiversity in general is not doing well and this is bad news. We are already doing a lot to stop the decline of pollinators in the [EU Natura 2000 network](#) of protected areas. But with the worrying status of pollinating insects, particularly of bees and butterflies, it is clear we have to step up our game. This is what this initiative is all about."*

Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Phil **Hogan** said: *"Our farmers' future and the wellbeing of our rural communities depend on healthy ecosystems with rich biodiversity. The tireless work of insect pollinators enables that richness. While their work comes for free, it is invaluable in maintaining the flow of goods and services from nature that underpin our existence. We need to act urgently to stop their decline."*

Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Vytenis **Andriukaitis** said: *"Following the Commission's proposal, the EU recently banned the outdoor use of three pesticides known as neonicotinoids that have been proven to be harmful for both honeybees and wild bees. Today's initiative further demonstrates our utmost commitment to protect pollinators through a broad range of actions."*

Pollination is one of the key processes in nature which enables the reproduction of plants. In the EU alone, four in five crop and wild flower species depend on insect pollination. Pollinators are mainly insects, in particular bees and hoverflies, but also butterflies, moths, some beetles and other flying insects. Almost €15 billion of the EU's annual agricultural output is directly attributed to insect pollinators. Besides productivity, pollinators support the variety of food sources enabling diverse and nutrient-rich diet. Action is necessary to safeguard biodiversity, agriculture and food security.

The Commission is proposing:

- **Measures to improve knowledge of pollinator decline, including the causes and consequences.** An EU monitoring process for pollinators will provide quality data on the status and trends of pollinator species. The Commission is also proposing a list of habitats important to pollinating insects, and assessment of their condition based on reporting of Member States under the Habitats Directive. In addition, the Commission is also proposing to launch a project to monitor the presence of pesticides in

the environment. Horizon 2020 will continue to promote research and innovation in this area.

- **Measures to tackle the causes of the decline**, such as action plans for the habitats of the most threatened pollinating insects and identifying conservation and management approaches to help Member States. The Commission is also proposing to mitigate EU action across health, agricultural, research, cohesion, climate and environmental policies to achieve better results.
- **To raise awareness, engage citizens and promote collaboration.** The Commission will guide and incentivise businesses, in particular in the agri-food sector, to contribute to conservation. Educational material on pollinators will be provided to schools and through the European Solidarity Corps, and volunteering in projects that benefit communities and the environment will be encouraged.

This new initiative on pollinators is the Commission's response to calls by the European Parliament and Member States for action to protect pollinators and their habitats and to mitigate their decline.

Next Steps

The objectives of the EU Pollinators Initiative set a long-term perspective towards 2030, with a number of short term actions to be implemented until 2020. By the end of 2020, the Commission will review the progress on the implementation and, if necessary, propose further action.

For the full list of measures and their timeline, see the Annex to the Communication [here](#).

Background

The EU has already in place a range of measures to help pollinators, in particular under environment and health policies (e.g. the Birds and Habitats Directives and the EU legislation on pesticides) as well as under the Common Agricultural Policy, cohesion policy and research and innovation policy.

The decline of pollinators has continued, demonstrated by the [European Red List](#) assessments. The [mid-term review of the EU biodiversity strategy to 2020](#) also showed that the pollination service provided by insect pollinators might be already significantly decreasing as well.

The initiative is part of the EU efforts to halt the loss of biodiversity and degradation of ecosystem services by 2020 and contribute towards commitments made under the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

For More Information

[A European Pollinators Initiative: Questions & Answers](#)

[EU Pollinators Initiative](#)

[Commission staff working document](#)

[Factsheet](#)

[EU Pollinators Initiative website](#)