



Inclusive dialogue: “How to improve the implementation of biodiversity targets through participatory approach methods”

Hosted by MEP Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg

*Online Event
24 February 2022*

Speakers

- **MEP Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg** (Greens/EFA)
- **Prof. Christopher Raymond**, ENVISION Project Coordinator and Guest Professor, Department of Landscape Architecture, Planning and Management, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
- **Alberto Arroyo Schnell**, Head of Policy and Programme, IUCN European Regional Office
- **David Reynolds**, President of the George Wright Society and WCPA Focal Point for the USA
- **Erika Stanciu**, WCPA European Regional Vice Chair
- **Joseph van der Stegen**, Policy Officer, European Commission, DG Environment, Nature Protection Unit

The discussion was supported by the use of the interactive platform Slido.

Mr. Ilias Grampas, Deputy Director, Secretariat of the EP Intergroup on "Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development" welcomed the speakers and the audience to the event. He then announced a slight change in the agenda and gave the floor to Prof Christopher Raymond.

The ENVISION Project

Prof Christopher Raymond, ENVISION Project Coordinator, and Guest Professor, Department of Landscape Architecture, Planning and Management, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Mr Christopher Raymond introduced the ENVISION: the project, by using multi-methods conservation approaches, has developed a range of methods for considering different visions for protected area (PA) management and the consequences for biodiversity, human wellbeing, and equitable governance. In this context, several learning platforms were also established to help different stakeholders and to inform biodiversity and protected area management policies globally. Mr. Raymond stressed that the main policy-relevant finding is that in practice, inclusive conservation inherently leads to tensions. Tensions are multi-layered and can be caused by multiple factors, including scale mismatches and power relations. The ENVISION project has found that such tensions can be softened by enabling conditions for reflexivity, which crucially means forging partnerships between stakeholders to reframe tensions. To foster inclusive conservation, other key policy lessons derived from the ENVISION project are the effective involvement of all stakeholders in the designation and management process, the creation of space for dialogue and social learning, and the promotion of creative engagement tools to inform conservation decision-making.

Setting the scene & welcoming remarks

Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg (Greens/EFA) - hosting MEP

Ms. Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg started her welcoming remarks by highlighting the interconnection between nature and biodiversity, human wellbeing, societal wealth and cultural needs. She stressed the crucial role of natural ecosystems and the services they provide. Multiple factors put these ecosystems under pressure, increasing the need for common action and new ideas to tackle this environmental crisis. She underlined the importance of the Habitat Directive, a key legal instrument for the European Union's biodiversity policy. The impact of the wolf's return was given as an example to highlight the importance of this science-based framework to overcome common narratives in conservation. She then concluded by recognizing the inclusive conservation and participatory practices as powerful tools for policymakers to better understand stakeholders and promote needed change in conservation approaches.

Panel discussion: “How can inclusive conservation help in the implementation of the biodiversity targets?”

Speakers that took part in the panel discussion:

- **Joseph van der Stegen**, Policy Officer, European Commission, DG Environment, Nature Conservation Unit
- **Erika Stanciu**, WCPA European Regional Vice Chair
- **David Reynolds**, President of the George Wright Society and WCPA Focal Point for the USA
- **Prof Christopher Raymond**, ENVISION Project Coordinator, and Guest Professor, Department of Landscape Architecture, Planning and Management, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

The panel discussion was moderated by **Alberto Arroyo Schnell**, Head of Policy & Programme of the IUCN European Regional Office.

To open the discussion, **Mr Arroyo Schnell** asked Mr van der Stegen about the recently developed European Commission (EC) guidance towards the achievement of the PAs targets in the EU. In specific, he asked how does the EC intend to achieve the EU Biodiversity targets, among others as regards PAs, and address the challenge of the lack of ownership of biodiversity targets.

Mr Joseph van der Stegen reminded the audience that the EU possesses a strong legal framework regarding biodiversity, mainly consisting of the Birds and Habitat Directives from which stems the Natura 2000 network. He then continued by saying that the European Commission is well aware of the need for more action to reach the final objectives of its legal framework, which is why it has worked out the highly ambitious EU Biodiversity strategy. One of its main objective is to speed up the implementation of the Birds and Habitat Directive thanks to new initiatives such as a nature restoration law. Mr van der Stegen underlined the potential of better participatory and bottom-up approaches in the implementation of nature conservation policies. This should entail investments in communication about the benefits of biodiversity conservation, dialogue with stakeholders at all levels of governments, building partnerships between different types of people or organisation sharing an interest in nature (e.g. NGO-land user or landowner), giving responsibilities to stakeholders (e.g. result-based payment schemes), inclusive consultation processes, and the promotion of voluntary contributions to nature as done by the LIFE project European Network for Private Land Conservation.

Mr Arroyo Schnell then asked to Ms Stanciu how has protected area management changed in Europe in the past 10 years, and how does it still need to change, in particular, he asked her how she sees a role for inclusive conservation in PAs management

Ms Erika Stanciu remarked that protected area management has to be participatory to be successful in its conservation objectives. An inclusive approach was triggered by the Natura 2000 network and has been considered important in Europe for decades, even if the reality on the ground has not always followed. Ms Stanciu underlined several elements that need to be

in place so that inclusive conservation and participatory management can happen. First, a legal framework is important, even though in many Eastern European countries participatory management is happening de facto without this. Second, managers skilled in working with stakeholders and facilitating a discussion are necessary but rare. Finally, funding support from the Commission to specifically improve participatory governance of protected areas is also desirable. Ms Stanciu said that authorities and protected area managers are very aware of the need for inclusive conservation. Currently, most protected areas still rely on central governance, but a slow trend towards more inclusive, joint, and even private conservation is underway.

Mr Arroyo Schnell then gave the floor to Mr. Reynolds, asking him what are some ways the US and Europe can work together to advance the 30x30 conservation target.

Mr David Reynolds highlighted three general ways how the EU and the US can work together to reach the 30 by 30 targets. The first one, consists in sharing plans to achieve the conservation target; the second one, includes exchanging information on new and existing collaborative programs, while the third one focuses on building institutional capacity to strengthen existing relationships between protected areas and protected areas institutions, and create new relationships between the EU and US land and water stewards on all levels.

Last but not least, the moderator asked Prof Christopher Raymond how he thinks project like ENVISION can help building a better science policy interface.

Mr Raymond stressed that to recognize biodiversity and the parallelism of values about nature, a reframing what biodiversity means in the policy interface is needed, as well as rethink what types of values we mention and how to combine these values in a decision context.

The panel discussion was supported by the use of Slido. Here below the questions made to participants and relative answers:

- **Where are you from?**

All the participants were from Europe.

- **What is the first word that comes up to your mind when you think of PAs?**

7 votes for *biodiversity*, 6 votes for *nature*, 2 votes for *stakeholders*, 1 vote for *ecosystem services*, *peace*, *clean air*, *freedom*, *sustainability*, *compromise*, *heritage*, *irreplaceable*, *management*, *essential*, *non monetary values*, *multi actor governance*, *nature services*, *barrier*, *landowner*, *beauty*, *protection*, *prohibition*, *burden*, *untouched*, *pressure*, *future*, *too few*, *conservation*, *challenge*.

- **Would you agree that the current PA management is enough inclusive?**

The general answer to the question was a clear no. According to participants:

- o *There is plenty of room for improvement*
- o *Protection and management measures/plans should be always decided on a site-by-site basis and in a participatory approach.*
- o *In many cases biodiversity would benefit from traditional management, for which the local community is crucial. And in some cases, it may need to be more exclusive, i.e. keeping out detrimental impacts without discussion.*
- o *Local communities are informed and listened but their complaints/suggestions are not effectively included and they also do not take an equal role in the decision process.*
- o *More regards for indigenous communities is needed.*

Q&A session with the audience

In answering how to consider constant change and global trends in global decision making, Ms Stanciu stressed the lack of skills and capacity on how to translate global trends to local stakeholders from the protector's management side.

The moderator then asked the academia representative, Mr Raymond, how this could be addressed. Mr Raymond underlined that different key areas of knowledge have brought local insight into the science-policy interface. This results in an assessment and steps for biodiversity decision making that not only considers western literature but includes case studies from different communities all over the world. There is a range of different knowledge coming together.

Mr van der Stegen replied to a question asking about the potential setting of international standards for protected areas managers that ensure that enough knowledge is provided. He highlighted that there is often not a single manager for a Natura 2000 sites where you deal with a large set of stakeholders. However, finding ways to inform them, to create a dialogue, and ensuring appropriate training of the services in charge of supervising the good management of the sites is of course essential. Mr David Reynolds agreed with Mr van der Stegen, to let the participants know that there is a competency manual that was developed by WCPA of the competencies for park professionals (from rangers to top level) available online.

Another question from the audience for Mr Reynolds focused on the work that the US is doing to protect its biological diversity to meet the spirit of the CBD goals (the United States has not ratified the Convention). Mr. Reynolds stressed the fact that while the convention is not ratified, it does not mean that the goals and spirit of the convention are not being pursued. There are several ways the United States protects its biological biodiversity and therefore meeting the convention goals, like funding conservation projects both at local and federal government level. California, for example, developed its own programme that address the same goals that the CBD has. The current federal Administration is putting money in programs that do address many of these goals: a month ago, 1.5 billion dollars was allocated for funding outdoor recreational and wildlife habitat efforts, across the whole country. Mr Reynolds explained how the money goes out to the States who then spread it out to the local communities.

Ms Stanciu then explained ideas to support the challenges which need to be addressed in protected area management. Ms Stanciu explained that the WCPA membership will be keen to contribute by sharing experience knowledge and start with working groups to assemble tools, information packages that can supplement the lack of capacity of protected area managers.

From the Commission's perspective, Mr van der Stegen explained how the European Union can promote a more inclusive approach in the designation and management of protected areas. Mr van der Stegen stressed the biogeographical process where the member states and the stakeholders will discuss the pledges made by the member states to reach the EU



Biodiversity Strategy objective on protected areas and include the questions of understanding and principles as well.

Mr. Raymond underlined that inclusive conservation in the context of the ENVISION Project consists of looking at how we converge the goals of biodiversity, equity and justice. This implies working together with stakeholders to manage potential conflicts, trade-offs, and power relations and develop a range of methods in order to address these.

Closing remarks

Closing remarks were made by Mr. Alberto Arroyo Schnell, Head of Policy and Programme, IUCN European Regional Office, and Mr Ilias Grampas, Deputy Director, Secretariat of the EP Intergroup on "Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development".