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## IEEP Newsletter

### Summer 2006

With the heat wave refuelling awareness of climate change, one of the other great challenges for the European environment can slip out of sight. This is the commitment to halt biodiversity loss by 2010, just four years away. Given the dismal trends of recent decades this would be a considerable achievement.

The Commission has been trying to put biodiversity on the map. 'Biodiversity is Life' was the theme of the Green Week conference in May this year. It echoed the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment which posited that biodiversity is the foundation for ecosystem services and so is essential to sustain life on Earth. May also saw the launch of a new Biodiversity Communication by the Commission, setting out an action plan aimed at meeting the 2010 commitment. With the target date looming, the pressure is now on the European Institutions and Member States to take the necessary steps.

The institute sees biodiversity as a major priority. We have a long track record of work both on nature conservation policy per se and on those policies, including agriculture and fisheries, that have a strong bearing on biodiversity.

Recently completed projects include a review of the European legal and policy framework for invasive alien species; a project examining the social and economic costs that can arise when biodiversity and associated ecosystem services are lost; and analysis of potential funding opportunities for Natura 2000 in the 2007-2013 funding period (more details in the newsletter below).

Work on a range of policies includes a new focus on marine protected areas in Europe, consideration of the biodiversity impacts of large scale biofuel production and a new project paving the way for agri-environment incentives for farmers in Turkey.

In the same way that climate concerns cut across much of the policy agenda so too should biodiversity. More commitment is needed if there is going to be much to celebrate in 2010.

*P.S* - IEEP will be one of the first organisations to use the new '.eu' website domain names, when [www.ieep.eu](http://www.ieep.eu) goes live at the end of July. We are strongly focussed on European issues and staff come from all over the continent and beyond. The new domain name reflects this identity - and should be easy to remember.

*David Baldock*  
Director

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## 1. Species from Mars?

OK – it may not be a 'War of the Worlds' style invasion being repelled single-handedly by Tom Cruise, but the problem of invasive alien species (IAS) is nevertheless getting European farmers, aquaculturalists and conservationists increasingly worried.

Invasive alien species include plants, animals and even microscopic organisms of all varieties – from aquatic weeds that clog waterways, to the American grey squirrels that are implicated in the decline of Europe's native reds. IAS have been identified as a key threat to Europe's native species and habitats. The EU is obliged to minimise the effects of IAS according to its commitments under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

IEEP has recently carried out a review of Europe's legal and policy framework relating to IAS (commissioned by DG-Environment), to establish whether stronger measures are needed. The review concluded that there are gaps in the current framework at all levels (international, European, and Member State), but that some groups of organisms (eg animal diseases affecting livestock) tend to be well regulated. The review will assist the Commission in identifying areas for future work on IAS, and contribute towards actions identified in the recent Commission Communication on Halting Biodiversity Loss (COM(2006)216).

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## 2. EU's 'Renewed' Sustainable Development Strategy Debated at IEEP Forum in European Parliament

Hot on the heels of its adoption by EU heads of state and government at their mid-June Brussels summit, the 'Renewed' EU Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) was the focus of a well-attended public event organised by IEEP on 22 June. Over 100 people participated in this forum hosted by the European Parliament and entitled 'From Lisbon to Gothenburg and back again? Perspectives on the renewed EU SDS'. The keynote speaker was Ms Els Van Weert, Federal State Secretary for Sustainable Development and Social Economy in Belgium.

IEEP Senior Fellow Marc Pallemmaerts gave his perspective on the background and evolution of the SDS from its launch at the Gothenburg European Council in June 2001 and prior to that, in the wider context of the Union's ambiguous commitment to sustainable development. This is the theme of a recently published book *The European Union and Sustainable Development: Internal and External Dimensions*, presented at the IEEP-IES event, that Marc co-edited with Albena Azmanova of the Brussels School of International Studies.

In the concluding panel discussion, representatives of EU institutions and other stakeholders deplored the general lack of ambition of the SDS but welcomed the fact that, thanks to the Austrian Presidency, the Strategy is now in the form of a single, more readable document clearly stating principles as well as operational objectives in seven priority areas of sustainable development (including the social and external dimension).

Further details and ordering information on the book *The European Union and Sustainable Development: Internal and External Dimensions*, published by VUB Brussels University Press (2006) can be found at <http://www.ies.be/activities/060622-info.html>

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## 3. The cost of biodiversity loss

Where would we be without biodiversity? Most environmentalists would argue that biodiversity is valuable for its own sake, but beyond this it's clear that healthy ecosystems also provide a variety of services that directly contribute to human well-being. Biodiversity is directly used as a source for food and other extractable resources and plays an important role in maintaining, regulating or supporting ecosystem services. These include the regulation of climate, floods, disease, wastes and water quality, and the fulfilment of people's cultural and spiritual needs.

So it follows that the loss of biodiversity imposes economic and social costs – an issue addressed in a recent IEEP study on the value of biodiversity, commissioned by DG-Environment. The report presents examples of where biodiversity loss in the EU has led to the loss or degradation of related ecosystem services, leading in turn to economic and social problems. For example, the transformation of Danube

Delta into intensive agricultural system has resulted in destruction of natural ecosystems and led to a loss of US\$500 million per year in the 1980s.

The study has fed into the recent Commission Communication on *Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 – and beyond* and it is hoped that the insights from the study will encourage and assist policy-makers take greater account of ecosystem services in future policy development.

The full IEEP report is available at <http://www.ieep.org.uk/whatsNew/newsitem2.php>

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#### **4. Is the UK a leader or a laggard on climate change policy?**

The UK needs to reinvent its approach to policy making in relation to climate change, according to a new report by the Institute for European Environmental Policy. The report *Climate Change Action – The UK: Leader or Laggard?* was produced for the All-party Parliamentary Environment Group (APEG) and was launched at a meeting at the Houses of Parliament in London on 24 May. It is based on a review of the revised UK Climate Change Programme (CCP), which was published in March, and assesses whether the UK is really a leader on climate change policy, as is often claimed, or whether it is, in reality, a laggard.

The report concludes that there are examples of where the UK is a leader in climate change policy. It is on course to meet its Kyoto target and has introduced some groundbreaking domestic policies, eg the domestic emissions trading scheme and CO<sub>2</sub>-based reform of vehicle taxation. However, the CCP admits that the UK is not on course to meet its domestic CO<sub>2</sub>-reduction target, and has not even set out to rectify this. The CCP even suggests that this target will not be met until at least 2015. The UK's aspirations and achievements on renewables are poor; transport emissions are still on the increase; and action in the domestic sector has been slow. The report concludes that it is sometimes difficult to square the urgency of the rhetoric on climate change with the approach taken in the revised CCP.

A summary of the report summary and related press release can be found on [http://www.ieep.org.uk/press/24\\_05\\_06.php](http://www.ieep.org.uk/press/24_05_06.php)

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#### **5. IEEP supports sustainable economic growth based on 'green foundations'**

Future economic prosperity and high environmental and social standards must go hand in hand. This is the message of a report launched in the House of Commons (UK) on 6 June 2006. Written by IEEP on behalf of the Aldersgate Group, *Green Foundations: Better Regulation and a Healthy Environment for Growth and Jobs* aims to nail the myth that 'better regulation for growth and jobs' must mean cutting environmental standards in order to reduce burdens on industry.

The report also marked the official launch of the 'Aldersgate Group' – a group of business and industry leaders, NGOs, trade associations and environmental regulators – with the shared belief that there are wide ranging economic and social benefits arising from high environmental standards. Far from undermining the UK economy, as often argued by some industry representatives, these high standards are essential for the UK's long-term economic competitiveness and a high quality of life.

See the full press release and download the report at [http://www.ieep.org.uk/press/7\\_06\\_06.php](http://www.ieep.org.uk/press/7_06_06.php)

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#### **6. Simplifying the implementation of environmental law**

Environmental law can impose considerable costs on businesses through various administrative requirements. These include the costs of getting permits and undertaking monitoring. However, there are also many different ways in which governments can simplify these requirements and lower costs. In particular, IEEP, with Ecologic (its partner institute in Berlin), has undertaken a study of approaches in many European countries for the European Commission. Administrative simplification covers a wide range of possibilities including removing unnecessary regulations, merging regulations into a more manageable form and resolving inconsistencies within or between regulations. It also includes reducing

the burden of paperwork and the time taken dealing with information requests. The aim of simplification is to reduce regulatory burdens wherever possible but without removing necessary protection for the environment or workers.

The Business Environment Simplification Task Force (BEST), led by the European Commission's DG Enterprise and Industry (DG Ent), brings together Member State representatives to share experience of different approaches to administrative simplification. IEEP has recently produced a report for DG Ent which

- describes 76 examples of concrete actions taken to streamline and simplify environmental regulation across 24 countries;
- identifies the elements of each action which represents best or good practice;
- describes 26 examples of best practice actions which are particularly innovative in reducing administrative burdens; and
- makes a series of recommendations to the Member States and the Commission on how the results of the report can be used in national simplification programmes to reduce administrative burdens on businesses subject to environmental regulation.

The report was launched at a conference on 22 June in Brussels which showcased some of the examples; Andrew Farmer of IEEP presented the results of the work.

For more information on the conference see:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/environment/index\\_home/best\\_project/intro.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/environment/index_home/best_project/intro.htm)

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## 7. Promoting an agri-environmental Programme for Turkey

Agri-environment programmes reward farmers for undertaking more sustainable forms of agricultural land management. These practices, often based on more traditional and extensive forms of farming, can deliver a range of environmental goals for important habitats, biodiversity, water and soils. And the development of agri-environment programmes similar to the EU model helps countries aspiring to EU membership to demonstrate that they are ready to accede. It is in this context that IEEP has written an agri-environment manual for Turkey. The manual aims to generate interest in the concept of high nature-value farmland and agri-environment policy, and presents the environmental benefits that an agri-environment programme can bring to Turkey. It also outlines a number of key steps that need to be considered in order to develop a successful programme.

The manual was warmly welcomed by Ministry officials and environmental groups at a workshop in Ankara on 20 June. Over the coming two years IEEP will support a Working Group in setting up two pilot agri-environment schemes in areas where traditional agricultural practices have been beneficial to wildlife, and a national agri-environment programme. The project is being run in conjunction with the Dutch organisation Avalon, and the Turkish NGO Bugday.

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