



REVERSE CHARTER

Commitment to protect biodiversity in Europe

Biological diversity, better known as biodiversity, is the variety of life on Earth (microorganisms, plants, fungi and animals) **and the natural patterns it forms.** Three different and interrelated levels of biodiversity are commonly defined: **genetic diversity** (i.e. the range of genes in all individuals as well as between individuals), **species diversity** (i.e. the range of species within and between populations) and **ecosystems** (i.e. the range of habitats, communities and ecological processes, including intra-ecosystem variations). Although this is not easy to quantify, all levels are important to ensure evolution and adaptation of individuals to a changing environment. Besides being the basis of our natural resources and being responsible for regulating climate, we are also emotionally and culturally bonded with biodiversity and, thus, it is also the source of our wellbeing in the widest sense.

For decades now, biodiversity has been under threat, mainly due to human activities. Biodiversity is declining, despite the efforts employed in changing that trend. That should not discourage us, on the contrary: we now know how to prevent biodiversity loss. Therefore, **reversing biodiversity loss remains a major challenge at global, European, regional and local level.**

This Charter aims to help in that shared goal, putting forward key actions in three decisive sectors: agriculture, land planning and tourism. It is the result of the three year European interregional cooperation project called Reverse, which has involved 14 partners from seven different countries. We invite you to join us on this common effort by signing it and acting in favour of biodiversity.



← AGRICULTURE AND BIODIVERSITY

CHALLENGES FACED

Biodiversity is the basis of agriculture, and agriculture is a way of **managing biodiversity**. Sustainable agriculture both enhances and is enhanced by biodiversity, but agriculture can also have negative impacts on the environment and it is a major driver of biodiversity loss.

Sustainable agriculture needs to be promoted. To do so, **awareness** of both negative and positive impacts of agriculture on biodiversity is necessary. The benefits of **responsible agriculture** need to be acknowledged and supported by society and policy makers. On the other hand, the **negative impacts** of some agricultural practices on biodiversity need to be perceived also by the agricultural sector itself and need to be controlled and minimized or eliminated. Moreover, farmers are custodians of **agricultural biodiversity** together with the **associated knowledge**, all of which has to be protected and promoted as a **common heritage**, and needs to be considered within global biodiversity conservation strategies.

→ → → → KEY ACTIONS WE SUPPORT

- Establish a system that allows the impacts of agricultural production processes and farm managements on biodiversity to be made visible and **quantified**, and define **correction and compensations measures** (*European Farm Evaluation System*).
- **Raise awareness** in the agricultural sector and among the general public about the importance of **preserving natural and cultivated biodiversity** and of **mitigating the impact** of agriculture on biodiversity. **Communicate** the environmental, technical and economic advantages of cultivating biodiversity and of biodiversity friendly agricultural practices by means of **participatory projects**.
- Link public **financial support to good agricultural practices** related to biodiversity conservation, facilitate access to **Rural Development Program** funds to farmers who actively maintain these practices, and promote the **payment for ecosystem services**. Favour **credit access** to farmers who **limit negative impacts** and enhance positive impacts.
- Maintain, promote and enhance **High Nature Value farmland** through economic support and an increase in the protection level, as a key to the survival of **natural biodiversity**, the **maintenance of landscapes** and **rural vitality**.
- Protect existing biodiversity of agricultural interest as well as the heritage of knowledge and culture linked to it. Preserve and maintain genetic resources by **supporting both *ex situ* collections and *in situ/on-farm* conservation**, as well as the establishment of **networks of stakeholders** for the exchange of **knowledge**.
- Promote dynamic on-farm conservation of genetic resources applying protocols of **participatory plant breeding**. Support the **characterisation** of technical, nutritional, organoleptical, social interests of these new genetic resources to allow their **promotion** among agricultural stakeholders and final consumers.
- Legally recognize **farmers' right to exchange** and market their own propagation material for biodiversity conservation, dynamic management or plant breeding purposes.
- Implement specific and coordinated **marketing strategies and actions** (including labelled certification) as a means of promoting on farm-conservation of endangered local varieties and local breeds.
- Recognize and support the establishment of **GMO-free territories**.



← LAND PLANNING AND BIODIVERSITY

CHALLENGES FACED

Land planning is strongly related to biodiversity. On one hand, **land use changes** are amongst the major threats to biodiversity and, on the other, land planning offers a unique opportunity to reverse biodiversity loss, enabling this issue to be taken into account in a **cross-sectoral** way.

Trends in biodiversity loss show that a **comprehensive approach** is needed in order to halt it, a view which takes into account the whole territory and its wide ecological functions. In order to fulfil this major goal, first we need to improve the **coherence and full functionality** of the networks of protected areas, where the conservation of biodiversity plays a leading role. Secondly, we need to effectively **integrate biodiversity in all land planning processes** beyond the networks of protected areas. Finally, **knowledge and awareness** of biodiversity need to be improved among all stakeholders involved in land planning, as well as the general public.





→ → → → KEY ACTIONS WE SUPPORT

- **Identify** and **protect** all relevant areas of biodiversity value, develop adequate **management tools** for them, and allocate sufficient **resources** to manage and **monitor** them.
- Assess **connectivity needs**, identify and protect **corridors** and **buffer zones** around protected core areas, establish adequate **resources** for their **management**, and promote **research** on the effects of **climate change** on this issue.
- Enhance the ecological qualities of **landscapes**, establishing a functional European **Green Infrastructure**, developing **guidelines** regarding the successful integration of biodiversity into land planning, promoting **cross-sector cooperation**, and improving **governance**.
- Develop specific **tools** allowing land planners and promoters to integrate biodiversity into their **everyday practices**, and **evaluate** the effectiveness of the instruments applied through appropriate **monitoring**.
- Establish **conditional funding** for planning initiatives, encouraging promoters, land planners and public authorities to **explain** and **justify** the **positive effects** of plans and projects on biodiversity. Describe also how the **impacts** of infrastructures are **prevented** and **minimized** and apply **compensation** measures where needed. **Reform** public **subsidies** and **incentives** that are harmful for biodiversity.
- Create and disseminate a **shared view** on why biodiversity is important and how it affects our lives, **improving knowledge** about biodiversity, encouraging **information sharing**, and promoting the use of **common** standards, methodologies and tools.
- Raise **public awareness** of biodiversity and encourage **active involvement** in its conservation, improving **public access to information**, integrating biodiversity into **education**, and producing **guidelines** regarding **public action** towards biodiversity **conservation**.
- Promote land planning **stakeholder awareness** regarding biodiversity and encourage **commitment** to the **conservation** of biodiversity, through **benchmarking** strategies. Transfer applicable **knowledge**, communicate the foreseeable **effects** of taking *versus* not taking biodiversity into account in land planning issues, and disseminate how to **“work with nature”** and not “against it”.

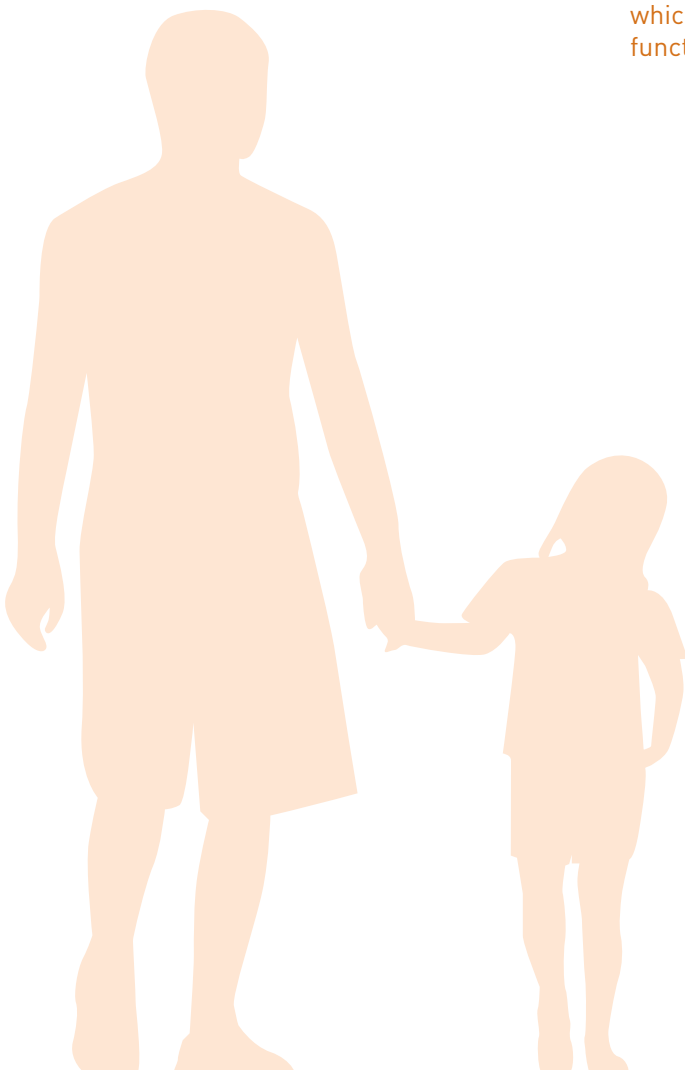
← TOURISM AND BIODIVERSITY



CHALLENGES FACED

The EU is the world's **leading tourist destination**. Tourism is the major beneficiary of biodiversity in Europe as it provides a great variety of landscapes and rich natural areas that are attractive for tourists. And at the same time, the **rapid growth, complexity and fragmentation** of the EU's tourism industry puts a significant **pressure** on biodiversity.

Thus, we need measures that will support the development of **sustainable tourism**, a tourism sector that takes into account and promotes the conservation of biodiversity. European tourism can greatly benefit from a sustainable approach, as it will enable the **differentiation** from less respectful tourist products elsewhere. At the same time, biodiversity can profit from practices that bear in mind conservation as their major goal, and can even find in **biodiversity-oriented tourism** innovative sources of financing for biodiversity conservation. Furthermore, green tourism has positive impacts on **local communities**, which often play a key role in the conservation of ecological functions and values in rural landscapes.





→ → → → KEY ACTIONS WE SUPPORT

- Increase efforts to **integrate** biodiversity in **tourism policy and legislation**, including measures and actions regarding the protection and enhancement of biodiversity into the **European Tourism Strategy**, as well as integrating **biodiversity experts** in the tourism sector.
 - **Upgrade** the **Eco-label criteria**, in order to take into account **biodiversity protection**, integrating **common indicators** on biodiversity in the European Eco-labelling system for sustainable tourism, establishing a **common label** in tourist areas regarding biodiversity conservation, and creating a **prize** for European tourism companies that promote biodiversity conservation.
 - Raise **awareness** and **knowledge** on biodiversity among **tourism stakeholders**, examining consumer attitudes towards **eco-tourism** and **agro-tourism**, organising awareness **campaigns** targeted at tourists, supporting **training** for tourism stakeholders on how to be biodiversity-friendly in their activities, and improving **information** aimed at the general public regarding **biodiversity-friendly destinations**.
 - Develop and improve **tools** to facilitate sound **environmental management of businesses** in the tourism sector, promoting the implementation of the **European Charter for Sustainable Tourism** within protected areas, creating an equivalent tool for landscapes beyond protected areas, and creating adequate **guidelines** to manage major tourist areas respecting local biodiversity.
 - Promote **tourist activities** and **agro-tourism** that contribute to **biodiversity conservation**. Support and develop **eco-tourism** activities that will raise awareness and knowledge on biodiversity. Ensure that part of the **income** produced by tourism is **invested in biodiversity conservation**, and reinforce the **perception** of the EU as a set of high quality and **sustainable destinations**.
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Underline your commitment to protect biodiversity
by **signing the adjoining page** and sending it to:

CONSEIL RÉGIONAL D'AQUITAINE

Direction de l'Agriculture, de l'Agroalimentaire,
de la Forêt et de la Mer - Projet Reverse

14 rue François de Sourdis
33077 Bordeaux Cedex
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or a scanned copy to reverse@aquitaine.fr

This Charter was produced within the Reverse project: 14 partners from Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Slovakia and Spain took part in the project. Several experts and technical staff from the Directorates-General of the European Commission who specialise in the fields the Charter covers have been consulted during the process.

More information on:

www.reverse.aquitaine.eu



This project is cofinanced by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
and made possible by the INTERREG IVC programme