

Biological invasions need a strong legal framework at European level!

Resolution adopted by the participants of the “4th European Conference on Biological Invasions” of the working group NEOBIOTA

Biological invasions matter!

Biological invasions are a serious threat to biodiversity, human health and economy alike. In Germany for example, the economic losses caused by only 20 analysed alien species, are estimated to reach 156 mio € annually! Invasive alien species (IAS) continue to arrive in Europe, casual species become established and species already present expand their range. As a consequence, the impact of IAS is increasing within Europe. This trend is exacerbated by land use change, pollution, eutrophication, climate warming, and the increasing global exchange of goods, which is one of the major pathways of invasions. The transboundary character of biological invasions must be dealt with at a supra-national level, especially owing to the significant role of trade where measures cannot be taken at national level.

Act now, not (too) late!

It is wise and cost-efficient to prevent biological invasions or to deal with them at an early stage of invasion, as costs for management of IAS that are already wide-spread are often prohibitive. Thus, the guiding principles on IAS of the CBD (www.biodiv.org), adopted by COP 6 (www.biodiv.org/meetings/cop-06.asp), urge all member states to “pay particular attention to the prevention of the impacts of IAS”. This precautionary approach, agreed by the EC and by its member states, needs to be addressed in a European level to become reality. This is also recognised by the EC and its member states. Accordingly, IAS are identified as key pressure and as priority for action in the recent biodiversity statement by the EC, the Millenium Ecosystem Assessment, and the recently finished report “Scope options for EU-action on IAS”. Existing EU and European activities and legislation already address single habitats, organismic groups or pathways, but more ambitious activities are needed to reach the “2010 target” to halt the loss of biodiversity.

Meanwhile, scientifically sound knowledge of the impacts of IAS and management options for regulation of IAS are increasingly becoming available. Notably, EC-funded projects like DAISIE (www.daisie.se) and ALARM (www.alarmproject.net) and networks like NOBANIS (www.nobanis.org), ERNAIS (www.zin.ru/rbic/projects/ernais) and EPPO (www.eppo.org) are delivering data on which policy and stake-holders should base their judgments. Thus, the time is ripe for a concise operational structure addressing IAS at a European scale!

Tackle the problem of IAS at European level!

To substantially reduce the impact of IAS on European ecosystems and biodiversity and to reach the 2010 target, the participants of the 4th European Conference on Biological Invasions, representing 350 experts in the field of biological invasions, coming from more than 50 countries, strongly encourage policy, administration, and legislation in Europe and the EC to:

- to complement existing European activities to close gaps in pathways, habitats and taxonomic groups in order to build a cooperative legal framework and to address IAS at the appropriate level
- rapidly implement the recommendations of the report “Scope options for EU-action on IAS”, to close gaps in management and legislation of IAS
- establish an effective early warning system for IAS at pan-European level to allow implementation of the precautionary approach and other relevant provisions of the CBD

The European working group NEOBIOTA as a European network of scientists and experts for biological invasions offers support and advice to science-based decisions and measures for European stakeholders.

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