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November 2020

Priority to Nature:

An assessment of the implementation of Greece's National Biodiversity Strategy

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Assessment of the implementation of Greece's National Biodiversity Strategy

Executive Summary

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The project “Priority to nature” is being implemented under the Active citizens fund in Greece by the Green Tank.

The Active citizens fund in Greece is supported through a € 12m grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway as part of the EEA Grants 2014 – 2021. The program aims to develop the sustainability and capacity of the civil society sector in Greece, and to strengthen its role in promoting and safeguarding democratic procedures, active citizenship and human rights. The Fund Operator for the Active citizens fund in Greece is Bodossaki Foundation in consortium with SolidarityNow.

For more information: www.activecitizensfund.gr

About the EEA Grants:

The EEA Grants are jointly financed by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The EEA Grants are available to the 13 EU member countries that joined the EU and the European Economic Area (EEA) in 2004, 2007 and 2013 as well as Greece and Portugal. The decision-making body of the EEA Grants is the Financial Mechanism Committee, which is composed of representatives of the Foreign Ministries of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

The Fund Operator for the Active citizens fund programme in Greece is Bodossaki Foundation in consortium with SolidarityNow.

About Bodossaki:

The Bodossaki Foundation is one of the most respected privately-owned public benefit organizations in Greece. The Foundation is the culminating point of its founder's brilliant course in life and remains the carrying vessel of the values and ideas that he faithfully served throughout his eventful life.

The Foundation was established in 1972 by Prodromos – Bodossakis Athanassiades who decided to donate his entire fortune to support health care, equal opportunities, quality in education, scientific progress and environmental protection. The Foundation has a deep knowledge of social needs in Greece and has administered so far more than €450m supporting its causes.

The Bodossaki Foundation also supports NGOs working with socially vulnerable groups and has lately set the strengthening of civil society as one of its primary objectives. Since 2013 it administers the regranting facilities of the EEA Grants for civil society in Greece.

For more information: www.bodossaki.gr

About SolidarityNow:

SolidarityNow (SN) is a non-governmental organization established in 2013 to respond to the needs, and advocate for the rights of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, indiscriminately. SN's Headquarters are in Athens, with large operations in Thessaloniki and activities across the country. The organization's vision is to improve people's lives and to empower them to create a just and inclusive society. SN's actions fall under three main strategic priorities: a) Promoting safety and protection; b) Catalyzing livelihoods opportunities; c) Strengthening the independence of civil society and defending open society values. SN has supported 300,000 people to date, both through direct project implementation and through regranting programmes. Through its regranting initiatives, SN has supported 73 different programs and provided a total funding of € 14.4M to support Greek civil society organizations.

For more information: <https://www.solidaritynow.org/>

Executive Summary

Scientific data on the state of biodiversity at global, European and national levels show that nature is under threat and so is human health and well-being (Chapter I). The COVID-19 pandemic, tragically, has shown how strong and at the same time how vulnerable the relationship between humans and nature is. It is encouraging, however, that in the same reports that the scientific community presents the dramatic state of nature, recommendations for the required response are also identified. If the necessary measures are taken for the conservation, sustainable management and restoration of nature, scientists claim, nature can recover.

2020 had been marked as the year of biodiversity, as it was expected that the global community, under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, would agree on a new framework of biodiversity policies and measures. However, due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the relevant negotiations were delayed. An overview of developments in nature conservation policy reveals, on the one hand, that the scientifically substantiated ecological crisis is being recognized at the political level and, on the other, that it is becoming increasingly clear that radical change is needed to address it (Chapter II). Nonetheless, challenges still remain particularly in relation to the response time and the degree of implementation of the commitments made.

In this framework, this report assesses Greece's biodiversity conservation action, starting from the approval of the country's first National Biodiversity Strategy in 2014 until 2020. In particular, the report assesses the implementation progress for each one of the actions foreseen in the country's first Action Plan under each general or specific target of the National Biodiversity Strategy (Chapter III and Annex of the full report). The results of the assessment per specific target are presented in the following Table.

General and specific targets of the National Biodiversity Strategy	Assessment
General Target 1 Increasing knowledge about the assessment of biodiversity status	
Specific Target 1.1 Facilitate access to scientific knowledge (regarding Greek flora and fauna) and filling the gaps in scientific data	
Specific Target 1.2 Facilitating access to information on actions for biodiversity conservation and monitoring, as well as implementing the national strategy	
General Target 2 Conservation of national natural capital and ecosystem restoration	
Specific Target 2.1 Conservation of species and habitat types in Greek terrestrial and marine ecosystems, to promote the goal of sustainability	
Specific Target 2.2. Restoration of important species and habitat types	
General Target 3 Organisation and operations of a National System of Protected Areas and enhancement of the benefits from their management	
Specific Target 3.1 Effective organisation of the administration and management of protected areas and implementing preventive measures in protected areas	
Specific Target 3.2 Application of exemplary and innovative practices in the productive sectors and tourism based on the areas management plans for biodiversity conservation and management	
Specific Target 3.3 Design, and possible integration, of ecological corridors of special designation status and their effective management.	
General Target 4 Conservation of the genetic resources of Greece-Facilitating access to genetic resources-Fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from their utilisation	
Specific Target 4.1 Ensuring access to scientific records of genetic resources and filling gaps in scientific data	

Specific Target 4.2. In situ and / or ex situ conservation of Greek genetic resources	
Specific Target 4.3 Facilitating access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilisation of genetic resources	
Specific Target 4.4 Study, prevention and reduction of the impact of Genetically Modified Organisms on biodiversity	
General Target 5 Enhancing the synergies among the main sectoral policies for the conservation of biodiversity -Establishing incentives	
Specific Target 5.1 Effective integration of biodiversity conservation at all levels of spatial planning	
Specific Target 5.2 Minimise impacts of large infrastructure projects	
Specific Target 5.3 Ensure the compatibility of residential and industrial development activities (including conventional energy production) with biodiversity conservation	
Specific Target 5.4 Ensure the compatibility of tourist activities with biodiversity conservation	
Specific Target 5.5 Ensure the compatibility of agricultural, fisheries, and forestry activities with biodiversity conservation	
Specific Target 5.6 Ensure the compatibility of energy production activities and infrastructure (including renewable energy) with biodiversity conservation	
Specific Target 5.7 Ensure the compatibility of mining activities with biodiversity conservation	
Specific Target 5.8 Ensure the compatibility of other activities (like hunting, collection of plants or animals) with biodiversity conservation	
General Target 6 Conservation of landscape diversity	
Specific Target 6.1 Completion of integration of conservation landscape diversity policy into all sectoral policies	
Specific Target 6.2 Maintaining the diversity of the landscape both inside and outside of protected areas	
Specific Target 6.3 Conservation of unique landscapes	
General Target 7 Prevention and minimisation of the impacts of climate change on biodiversity	
Specific Target 7.1 Maintaining the diversity of the landscape both inside and outside of protected areas	
Specific Target 7.2 Take action so that the components of biodiversity will be able to adapt to climate change	
Specific Target 7.3 Reduce the impacts of actions established to address climate change on biodiversity	
Specific Target 7.4 Enhance the role of forests in mitigating the effects of climate change	
General Target 8 Protection of biodiversity from invasive alien species	
Specific Target 8.1 Prevention, early detection, and controlling the introduction and spread of invasive species.	
Specific Target 8.2 Taking action to restore the impacts of invasive alien species on biodiversity	
General Target 9 Enhancing international cooperation for biodiversity conservation	
Specific Target 9.1 Substantially enhancing the effectiveness of international, regional and transnational cooperation for the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services	
Specific Target 9.2 Enhancing transboundary cooperation for biodiversity conservation	
General Target 10 Upgrading the quality and efficiency of public administration on biodiversity conservation	
Specific Target 10.1 Improving public administration in organisational issues, scientific issues and decision-making processes for the effective implementation of policies,	

measures and legislation on biodiversity	
Specific Target 10.2 Ensuring adequate funding for biodiversity conservation.	
General Target 11 Integration of biodiversity conservation into the value system of society	
Specific Target 11.1 Integrating biodiversity issues in formal and non-formal education and the promotion of the value of biodiversity	
Specific Target 11.2 Promoting environmental awareness in biodiversity conservation	
General Target 12 Citizen participation in biodiversity conservation	
Specific Target 12.1 Establishment of cooperation among citizens, scientists and public administration in the decision making process and monitoring of its implementation	
Specific Target 12.2 Promoting the accountability of companies in the context of biodiversity conservation	
General Target 13 Appreciation of ecosystem services and the promotion of the value of Greek biodiversity	
Specific Target 13.1 Valuation of ecosystem functions and services in social and economic terms	
Specific Target 13.2 Promotion of the value of biodiversity and the services provided by biodiversity and ecosystems	
Specific Target 13.3 Promotion, establishment and maintenance of natural green infrastructure	

Table 1. Assessment of the implementation of Greece's National Biodiversity Strategy and its 1st Action Plan during its first implementation period 2014-2020.

Red: minimal progress, Orange: partial progress, Green: significant progress

From the assessment of the progress during the first implementation period of Greece's National Biodiversity Strategy and its Action Plan (2014-2020), the following conclusions are drawn (Chapter IV):

- None of the general or specific targets of the National Biodiversity Strategy demonstrates significant progress.
- Greece follows the global trends regarding the inadequacy of measures to respond to biodiversity loss.
- Even in those targets that are linked to the nature conservation, partial progress is noted.
- Partial or minimal progress is noted in those targets linked to responding to new threats and challenges and promoting new approaches.
- The targets that demonstrate the least implementation progress are those that concern synergies and horizontal integration of biodiversity across the productive sectors.
- The National Biodiversity Strategy has not, to date, become a lever for the transformation of the Greek economy and society
- The Ministry of Environment and Energy's supervisory and coordinating role is absent.
- While the Greek state faces significant difficulties and delays in implementing the Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, significant interest and mobilization is noted among other stakeholders, whose actions, however, remain isolated.

The conclusions of the assessment of the implementation progress of Greece's National Biodiversity Strategy and its first National Action Plan can contribute to **the strengthening of the country's national biodiversity policy**. Such a strengthened national policy would correspond to Greece's natural richness.

Given that Greece's national policy is inextricably linked to international and European developments, over the coming period, **Greece must strongly support the elaboration of an ambitious post 2020 framework for biodiversity.**

In parallel, Greece, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment and Energy must proceed, without delays, with the timely preparation and adoption of the second National Biodiversity Action Plan and immediately afterwards, with its activation and implementation. In this framework the following recommendations are made:

- **The new Action Plan must lead to the implementation of existing commitments, aiming to strengthen nature conservation.** Greece has a wide range of institutional and regulatory framework that is implemented inadequately. Consistent implementation of such commitments as the complete designation of protected areas, the conclusion of the land cadaster and the adoption of forest maps are of crucial importance to ensure significant progress in nature conservation.
- **Targeted response is needed to explore and address new threats**, such as invasive alien species, **and to adopt holistic approaches**, including taking on actions on the conservation of genetic resources and the integration of actions linked to protecting landscape diversity, areas in which only partial progress is noted.
- Great **emphasis on nature restoration** is needed. This will restore natural ecosystem services, such as flooding protection, will promote nature-based climate solutions, especially in relation to climate adaptation, and will highlight new opportunities for sectors of the economy, which, as of yet, have not been tested in such an approach.
- Beyond above actions, the new Action Plan must include actions that will promote its **protected areas as models of sustainable development**. Hence, it must include communications, education and capacity building actions in parallel with actions for the creation of a national nature brand (e.g. Nature Greece) which will grant added value to local products and offer new opportunities for the tourism sector.
- **Promote the transformation of the Greek economy by integrating biodiversity across sectoral policies.** The new Action Plan must lead to the strengthening of synergies with spatial planning, the primary sector, tourism, etc. Indicatively, setting measurable targets such as halving the use of chemical pesticides or increasing organic farming to cover 25% of all cultivated lands in line with the corresponding targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy, can speed up the transition of Greece's agriculture to sustainable practices.
- **Immediate preparation of the new Action Plan so as to direct in a binding way the planning of the new programming period 2021-2027 and the Recovery Fund.** As the infrastructure, agriculture, and fisheries sectors of Greece are dependent, to a great extent, on European funds, the integration of biodiversity conservation and restoration actions must be provided for already during the planning of the new programming period. The coincidence that the drafting of the new Biodiversity Action Plan and the planning of the new co-funded programmes take place at the same time creates a rare opportunity for Greece to plan the transformation of its economy on a sustainable basis. With early planning, Greece can achieve even earlier than envisioned (2024) the commitment to dedicate 7.5% of the annual EU budget to biodiversity, reaping the corresponding relevant benefits.

- **Strengthen the position of Greece in the European and global nature policy sphere.** In the unfolding European and international developments, Greece must demonstrate a leading role, a par with its biodiversity richness.

For all above actions, the Ministry of Environment and Energy must take on a coordinating and supervisory role, by consolidating the collaboration among all ministries that share responsibility on biodiversity conservation and networking all engaged stakeholders. In addition, the Ministry of Environment and Energy must also create a reliable system of regular monitoring of the implementation progress of the National Biodiversity Strategy and the new Action Plan.

You can read the full text of the report in Greek «[Προτεραιότητα στη φύση: Αξιολόγηση της υλοποίησης της Εθνικής Στρατηγικής για τη Βιοποικιλότητα](#)».



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