

EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions

**Multilevel-governance of our natural capital:
the contribution of regional and local
authorities to the EU Biodiversity Strategy
2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets**

- Part B: Recommendations -

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It does not represent the official views of the Committee of the Regions.**

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List of Abbreviations

CBD	UN Convention on Biological Diversity
CBD X/22	CBD Decision X/22
CEPA	Communication, Education and Public Awareness
CoR	Committee of the Regions of the European Union
COP	Conference of the Parties
DG ENV	Directorate-General Environment of the European Commission
EU	European Union
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
LA	Local Authority
LAB	Local Action for Biodiversity
LBSAPs	Local biodiversity strategies and action plans
LRA	Local and regional authorities ¹
MEA	Multilateral environmental agreement
MS	Member States of the EU
NBSAPs	National biodiversity strategies and action plans
RBSAPs	Regional biodiversity strategies and action plans
SBSTTA	Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

¹ The report uses the term "local and regional authorities" as it is used in the EU context. Within the context of the UN and CBD, where regions are understood as supra-national/world regions, this means "local authorities and subnational governments".

1 Scope of the document

The present document provides a set of recommendations as commissioned by the Committee of the Regions (CoR) of the EU under the framework contract CDR/DE/191/2011: “Multilevel-governance of our natural capital: the contribution of regional and local authorities to the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets”.

The recommendations – addressed at Member States and local and regional authorities - aim at improved achievement of the EU Biodiversity Strategy’s targets for 2020 and the implementation of CBD Decision X/22.

In several Member States, substantial legislative and implementing powers on biodiversity, as well as the management of the operational programmes under the EU Funds are devolved to regional governments and their administrations. Therefore the recommendations partially consider regions together with the national levels as possible actors, but also consider regions together with local authorities as possible partners in cooperation of Member States with LRA.

The recommendations form part B of the final report under the aforementioned contract and are presented in two parts:

- Chapter 2 presents the headline recommendations as result of the analysis conducted by the contractors, based on the results from the online survey and desk research;
- Chapter 3 elaborates on each recommendation presented by providing more detailed explanations and illustrative examples.

2 Headline Recommendations

Local and regional authorities involvement in multilevel governance

1. Member States (MS) should acknowledge, capitalise on and **actively employ the key role of local and regional authorities (LRA)** in implementing biodiversity action and achieving the national, EU and international Aichi Biodiversity Targets.
2. MS are advised to foster implementation of an appropriate and enabling multilevel governance framework by establishing **coherent mandates, roles and responsibilities across all governmental levels as well as coherent and integrated sectorial policies** for LRA to perform under the NBSAPs.
3. MS are recommended to enable, enhance and maintain the **regular participation of LRA in setting up, reviewing and evaluating NBSAPs** and establishing a coherent and integrated monitoring and reporting framework.
4. MS are further recommended to better **coordinate with and involve LRA in policy making and opinion development processes** with regard to EU policies and strategies as well as in preparing for international negotiations under the CBD; their direct involvement should be enabled.

National/regional enabling legislative frameworks, planning and support

5. MS and regions should **provide with legislative and planning frameworks that assist LRA in biodiversity actions and in mainstreaming biodiversity** into all related sectorial policies, strategies and programmes affecting LRA.
6. MS and regions are encouraged to support LRA in their biodiversity related efforts by offering targeted, MS-specific **guidance material (handbooks, online guides etc.) and capacity development platforms and programmes**, including aspects such as development and implementation of biodiversity strategies and measures and integration in policy-making, planning and management procedures.
7. MS and regions should establish, enhance and maintain **national/regional recognition mechanisms to reward LRA efforts to sustainably manage biodiversity**. They are encouraged to note the EU-wide project Capitals for Biodiversity and demand development of a harmonised EU-wide recognition scheme, either as part of or alongside the EU Green Capital Award.

8. MS and regions shall **launch portals for online and up-to-date biodiversity information** to serve as a key reference point for LRA and the interested public, with regular review and maintenance.
9. MS and regions shall offer **tailor-made training and capacity development** opportunities. For LRA, MS should support **peer-to-peer learning and peer-to-peer reviewing** as proven and cost-effective means of peer-driven quality management.

Funding and financing

10. MS and regions are recommended to **establish, advance and maintain financial support programmes and incentives for LRA** to sustain and enhance their biodiversity action. This includes the provision of co-funding schemes for LRA to match EU grants.
11. MS and regions are requested to support LRA in **identifying, piloting and applying innovative financing schemes**, including e.g. partnerships with businesses, funding from private associations, tax incentives, crowd-funding schemes and further innovative approaches.
12. LRA are encouraged to **use existing and creatively seek new funding in related policy areas**, such as environment, agriculture, regional and urban development, energy, resource efficiency and similar fields. LRA should continue developing proposals for innovative biodiversity actions and set up and maintain appropriate programme management procedures to qualify for existing EU and national funding programmes.

Local and regional authorities cooperation

13. MS need to acknowledge the role of LRA collaboration for joint learning and biodiversity action by **organising or supporting networks and platforms and facilitating LRA exchange** at the national, supra-national (European) and global levels.
14. MS and LRA should especially **take care to establish cooperation schemes for LRA for cross-border cooperation** at the macro-regional scales, **and for decentralised development cooperation** to strengthen and capitalise on joint and integrated biodiversity protection and management efforts.

Local and regional authorities key actions

Planning

15. LRA are strongly advised to establish or further **develop their local and regional biodiversity strategies and action plans (RBSAPs, LBSAPs)**. They are encouraged to build upon already existing processes and activities, helping the strategies to be aligned with national, European and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets; regional rather than local-scale approaches should be targeted.
16. LRA are called on to **advance their biodiversity conservation efforts by piloting and integrating innovative approaches and concepts** such as green infrastructure, evaluation of ecosystem services and no-net loss of biodiversity into their policy-making, territorial and spatial planning and development programmes, as well as land-use regulation and building codes.

Awareness raising and communication

17. LRA need to sustain and further increase their efforts to **raise awareness amongst all stakeholders** and the public on biodiversity objectives and - to do so - implement or advance targeted awareness-raising programmes.

Involvement

18. LRA shall **establish, coordinate and maintain effective and appropriate multi-stakeholder partnerships and stakeholder involvement processes** for creating shared ownership and responsibility in developing and implementing their biodiversity strategy/plan and related actions.
19. LRA should **participate in research initiatives** to identify and fill knowledge gaps with regard to biodiversity/ecosystem services valuation and management, and related concepts such as nature based solutions and green infrastructure, greening regional and local economies, and enhancing communities' quality of life.

3 Explanations to Recommendations

The explanations accompanying the recommendations in this chapter are based on information gathered and analysed in both the desk research and the online survey. The policy recommendations follow the structure of the developed typology for multilevel governance approaches as presented in the study (see part A). Furthermore, this chapter follows the order of recommendations as presented in Chapter 2, as outlined below.

Sub-chapter	Overarching category	Recommendations addressed
3.1	LRA involvement in governance process	No. 1-4
3.2	National/regional enabling legislative frameworks, planning and support	No. 5-9
3.3	Funding and financing	No. 10-12
3.4	LRA cooperation	No. 13-14
3.5	LRA key actions	No. 15-19

3.1 Local and regional authorities involvement in governance process

Effective multilevel governance processes are functionalized through different mechanisms that enable LRA to participate in activities on a national level:

- 1. Member States (MS) should acknowledge, capitalise on and **actively employ the key role of local and regional authorities (LRA)** in implementing biodiversity action and achieving the national, EU and international Aichi Biodiversity Targets.*
-

Due to increasing decentralisation and devolution of powers in several European Member States and the nature of biodiversity as a largely ‘localised’ policy area, LRA play an increasingly crucial role in achieving biodiversity goals established at the global, European and national scales.

This role has been acknowledged in European and global policy documents. For instance, both the EU Biodiversity Strategy and the CBD Decision X/22 clearly emphasise the importance of increasing the engagement with and of local and

regional authorities in the implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

Nevertheless, there is a need to once again highlight the key message, namely: Halting biodiversity loss can only be achieved by an effective implementation of actions which are relevant to people's everyday lives and which highlight individuals' impacts on nature. Therefore, there is continuous need for a high commitment of LRA in implementing biodiversity actions. As appropriate implementation scale matters, actions require intense collaboration between the local and the regional levels, while respecting the guiding and coordinating role of the regional level.

*2. MS are advised to foster implementation of an appropriate and enabling multilevel governance framework by establishing **coherent mandates, roles and responsibilities across all governmental levels as well as coherent and integrated sectorial policies for LRA to perform under the NBSAPs.***

Based on the research findings, implementation of multilevel governance for biodiversity is occasionally led by differing policies and institutions, reflecting the fact that biodiversity is addressed in a variety of policy areas including e.g. agriculture or fishery. That indicates a need for further cross-sectorial coordination regarding biodiversity, which applies to all governmental levels, but especially to the national and regional ones serving as normative and guiding authorities.

National governments in particular hold a key responsibility here, as their decisions have a ripple effect throughout all subsequent levels of government and they are foreseen to serve a guiding role to these levels. For guaranteeing continuous development, it is paramount to assign clear roles, responsibilities, leadership and communication protocols, including for one institution to lead in coordinating this process.

Some Member States already have mechanisms in place that steer a reconciliation process between different approaches, taking also the regional and local level into account. Austria, for example, has established a national commission for biodiversity that consists of representatives of national and regional authorities, the scientific community and civil society; this commission coordinates and aligns activities and programs related to biodiversity² and gives guidance for the work on the regional and local level.

² See case study in part A.

3. *MS are recommended to enable, enhance and maintain the **regular participation of LRA in setting up, reviewing and evaluating NBSAPs and establishing a coherent and integrated monitoring and reporting framework.***
-

The National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPS) set national framework conditions and serve as important guidelines for the work at sub-national level. Thus, it is of crucial importance to create or adjust NBSAPS together with LRA.

A number of Member States, including Germany, Belgium, Portugal, Hungary and Austria, were found to have mechanisms in place to involve LRA authorities that may serve as reference. In Portugal, for example, regional authorities are specifically called upon to participate in the design of the national strategies within the context of a working group, as well as to give their advice and attend periodic meetings on the implementation and monitoring of measures.

The reviewed examples have shown that involvement is mainly temporarily established in the phases of developing NBSAPS or reviewing/revising them. These formats seem to work well in most of the cases. Nevertheless, it is important to not only occasionally consult LRA, but to also enable them to participate in ongoing discussion processes and to develop mechanisms that offer constant feedback possibilities to enable LRA to play an active role in all phases of the NBSAPS implementation. These feedback mechanisms could then not only be used for the national strategy, but also for facilitating the input of LRA in the positioning of MS towards the EU Biodiversity Strategy and CBD related activities, such as in negotiations and regarding review mechanisms.

4. *MS are further recommended to better **coordinate with and involve LRA in policy making and opinion development processes with regard to EU policies and strategies as well as in preparing for international negotiations under the CBD; their direct involvement should be enabled.***
-

There is little evidence from the study as to how MS facilitate the input of LRA in positioning towards EU Biodiversity Strategy and CBD-related activities, such as in negotiations and regarding review mechanisms. Furthermore, only limited respondents felt that this participation is supported by their national government.

While in some few MS in particular regions, due to the devolution of powers, are included in SBSTTAs and COPs of the CBD (e.g. in Belgium), it seems that both

the number and variety of LRA included remains relatively little, presenting the risk of side-lining the needs and perspectives of LRA for implementing biodiversity in relevant policy-making and strategy development at EU and CBD level.

It will be important for MS as intermediate levels to establish and proactively promote multilevel governance frameworks and working platforms for maintaining LRA input and feedback in positioning and opinion development in order to widen the scope of experiences, needs and opinions being represented and considered.

Cooperation with LRA associations and networks as multipliers and advocates are considered relevant in this regard. Naturally, LRA will expect these associations and networks to represent them in expert groups and negotiation meetings. Thus, LRA should be considered as being supportive in collecting information, bundling input and providing recommendations of a high quality, but might need to be offered reimbursement for these efforts. In France, for example the French associations of LRA, supported by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), adopted a joint declaration of French cities and community based on the CBD COP 11 decisions³.

3.2 National/regional enabling legislative frameworks, planning and support

National and regional legal and policy frameworks act as an important form of guidance and support for coherent and integrated biodiversity strategies across governmental levels. Therefore, the following recommendations are suggested:

- 5. MS and regions should provide with legislative and planning frameworks that assist LRA in biodiversity actions and in mainstreaming biodiversity into all related sectorial policies, strategies and programmes affecting LRA.*
-

There is a need for diverse and broad strategies aiming at making biodiversity an integrative component of all spatial plans and programmes (including e.g. regional development, urban planning and infrastructure development) in order to meet the ambitious international and European objectives and targets.

Implicitly, MS and other levels would thus need to adapt legislation, funding programmes and building codes by including innovative concepts such as ‘green

³ <http://www.uicn.fr/declaration-collectivites-cop11.html>

infrastructure' to support this aim, addressing the spatial structure of natural and semi-natural areas and other environmental features which enable citizens to benefit from the multiple ecosystem services provided.

In France the national legislative framework set by the Grenelle de l'Environnement enables regional development planning to support the establishment of green and blue corridors across the country⁴. This includes the setting up of a consultative, steering and decision-making body steering the multilevel implementation process on the national level taking the LRA into account. The region of Valencia is taking Green Infrastructure as the central concept for reforming their legal and structural framework for landscape, environment and urban planning⁵.

6. *MS and regions are encouraged to support LRA in their biodiversity related efforts by offering targeted, MS-specific **guidance material (handbooks, online guides etc.) and capacity development platforms and programmes, including aspects such as development and implementation of biodiversity strategies and measures and integration in policy-making, planning and management procedures.***
-

Questionnaire responses and identified examples mainly address specific aspects of practical implementation and the monitoring of biodiversity (such as invasive alien species). Limited guiding material was identified which supports the organisational set-up and process development of biodiversity planning and strategy building. However, the analysis shows also that in several countries no support is available from either level.

MS and regions sometimes commission their national and regional environment agencies to develop suitable forms of capacity building approaches and produce appropriate guidance materials. In Ireland the Irish Government's Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in cooperation with the Heritage Council give guidance for the development of local biodiversity action plans⁶. In some MS civil society organisations play a role here, as e.g. in France where the International Union of the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) supports the development of regional biodiversity action plans by tailor made guidance

⁴ See case study in part A.

⁵ <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/domenech-green-infrastructure-in-the-region-of-valencia.pdf>

Muñoz-Criado, A. and Domenech, V. (2014) Green Infrastructure Planning at Multiple Levels of Scale: Experiences from the Autonomous Region of Valencia, Spain, in Scale-sensitive Governance of the Environment (eds F. Padt, P. Opdam, N. Polman and C. Termeer), John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, Oxford, UK. doi: 10.1002/9781118567135.ch17.

⁶ See case study in part A.

material⁷, or the guide “planning for a healthy environment – good practice guidance for green infrastructure and biodiversity” published by Town & Country Planning Association and the Wildlife Trusts in the UK⁸.

*7. MS and regions should establish, enhance and maintain **national/regional recognition mechanisms to reward LRA efforts to sustainably manage biodiversity**. They are encouraged to note the EU- wide project Capitals for Biodiversity and demand development of a harmonised EU-wide recognition scheme, either as part of or alongside the EU Green Capital Award.*

Rewarding and labelling are well established mechanisms to create multiple added benefits, including increased public awareness about the topic, improved cooperation between different governmental levels (supported through the application process as communication mechanism), motivation for active LRA and exhibiting role model characteristics and good practices for others, etc.

Reflecting on the findings, different forms of recognition, awarding or labelling are in place in several European Member States, like e.g. Belgium, France, Ireland and Spain. However, there are some MS that do not have a national rewards scheme in place that is predominantly dedicated to biodiversity.

The EU could trigger interest in MS to introduce rewarding mechanisms by providing an EU-award mechanism. The LIFE+ funded “Capitals of Biodiversity”⁹ initiative is an example of an award which has been simultaneously implemented in five Member States, recognising local authorities’ biodiversity efforts.

*8. MS and regions shall **launch portals for online and up-to-date biodiversity information** to serve as a key reference point for LRA and the interested public, with regular review and maintenance.*

The internet is a main source of information for all target audiences; therefore, it is strongly advised to create appealing, targeted and localised information that is compiled in one national information point. In the revision process of the national information available online, the use of social media should also be reflected upon.

The principle idea of a biodiversity clearing house mechanism remains valid, but the desk research has revealed that numerous websites which are still available

⁷ uicn.fr/IMG/pdf/UICN-Plaquette_SRB-EN-bd.pdf

⁸ http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/TCPA_TWT_GI-Biodiversity-Guide.pdf

⁹ See case study in part A.

online are out-of-date and not in line with current biodiversity-related developments. For the creation of national topic centres, existing information and sources need to be taken into account. It is not necessary to begin a new process, but rather to complement current information and websites and consolidate all relevant and available sources of information.

A positive example is the Austrian website *vielfalt.at* that combines all of the national sources of information, incorporates different topic related and functions as an information channel for the national biodiversity awareness raising campaign.

*9. MS and regions shall offer **tailor-made training and capacity development opportunities**. For LRA, MS should support **peer-to-peer learning and peer-to-peer reviewing** as proven and cost-effective means of peer-driven quality management.*

In the survey as well as the desk research, little evidence has been found on ongoing capacity building in the sense of fostering education and training for LRA, but there are several involvement mechanisms and exchange forums in place. One interesting example is the German Dialog Forums¹⁰ that are open for all stakeholders, governmental and non-governmental from all levels. These forums are dedicated to one specific topic at the time, designated to learn and exchange ideas and concepts.

Nevertheless, the study points out lacks in capacity building as an important barrier for LRAs in advancing on biodiversity protection. Amongst LRA, the peer-to-peer approach - the learning from each other concept - could be an interesting option to be supported by MS and national LRA associations. By fostering a peer-to-peer learning experience, new knowledge for a certain challenged areas will be created and synergies might occur amongst the peers as well.

3.3 Funding and financing

For establishing and maintaining effective and efficient management structures within multilevel governance frameworks as well as to effectively implement biodiversity strategies and action plans, LRA need substantial financial support; this support should come in the form of investments from an array of sources. The following recommendations should foster this.

¹⁰ www.biologischevielfalt.de/dialogforen.html

10. MS and regions are recommended to establish, advance and maintain financial support programmes and incentives for LRA to sustain and enhance their biodiversity action. This includes the provision of co-funding schemes for LRA to match EU grants.

As the topic of biodiversity still needs to be further addressed, and as EU funding shows some limitations, MS will have to renew and increase the proportion of their national budget for actions on biodiversity. Given the importance of the regional level as an intermediate actor in multilevel governance processes and coordinator of biodiversity action, MS should therefore consider providing and/or increasing financial support to the regional level in particular.

Some Member States and regions already have own national/regional funding schemes in place, for example for pilot actions in landscape stewardship on a regional/local level. Examples are the German funding programme "Biological Diversity"¹¹ or the LONA funding instrument provided by the Swedish Environmental Protection agency. For the implementation of LONA, the funding is handed over to the county administrative boards, where local projects, initiatives can apply for obtaining financial support to take local biodiversity actions¹². In Estonia the Ministry of Finance established the so called Environmental investments Center that channels different investments from the exploitation of the environment into environmental projects, and thereby also re-allocates funds to LRA activities.

Taking account of the analysis results, it seems that MS with a strong regional level, such as Spain or Germany, predominantly have regionalised own funding schemes dedicated to biodiversity in place. In general MS and regions can play an important role in the support to local authorities in providing guidance in the application process for European funding.

11. MS and regions are requested to support LRA in identifying, piloting and applying innovative financing schemes, including e.g. partnerships with businesses, funding from private associations, tax incentives, crowd-funding schemes and further innovative approaches.

The study revealed that the main type of financing for biodiversity actions at the LRA level is in the form of public funding. Nevertheless, respondents were also

¹¹ www.bundesprogramm.biologischevielfalt.de/

¹² See case study in part A.

aware of the need to apply other financial instruments that are made available to or by LRA to support their biodiversity conservation efforts, such as public-private-partnerships (PPPs), which can include sponsorships, joint ventures and projects, or corporate volunteering.

The research has produced only limited examples of LRA using such ‘alternative’ funding opportunities. However, there is information available that LRA and other levels may take into account, including initiatives like e.g. ‘Biodiversity in Good Company’¹³ or campaigns like ‘Business and Biodiversity’¹⁴ that contribute to understanding of the links between business activities and biodiversity at the national, European and international levels.

To guarantee the quality of the water a Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES)¹⁵ mechanisms has been established by the mineral water company Vittel in France to support framers in water-quality preservation efforts and actions. Alternative funding opportunities can also arise from establishing cross-sectorial perspectives on biodiversity. The MoorFutures¹⁶ initiative of two northern Regions in Germany offers an example of a publicly organised investment product (peat lands) that uses finances from companies wishing to voluntarily offset their carbon.

12. LRA are encouraged to use existing and creatively seek new funding in related policy areas, such as environment, agriculture, regional and urban development, energy, resource efficiency and similar fields. LRA should continue developing proposals for innovative biodiversity actions and set up and maintain appropriate programme management procedures to qualify for existing EU and national funding programmes.

Cross-sectorial funding opportunities in the agricultural sector or in urban and rural development programmes can offer additional opportunities for LRA to financially support biodiversity protection. A systematic screening of these cross-sectorial funding opportunities will support the development of a more integrated perspective on biodiversity, including aspects of local and regional economic and social development.

Several examples for such funding opportunities can be found within the national/regional operational programmes under the European Structural and

¹³ www.business-and-biodiversity.de/en

¹⁴ www.business-biodiversity.eu

¹⁵ pubs.iied.org/pdfs/G00388.pdf

¹⁶ See case study in part A.

Investment Funds 2014-2020, in particular the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EARDF), but also e.g. under the investment priority 6 of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF).

LRA need to set up and maintain appropriate management procedures that enable them to successfully apply in particular for EU funding streams like LIFE, INTERREG, but also the research-oriented HORIZON 2020 to support LRA biodiversity action.

3.4 Local and regional authorities cooperation

The theme of biodiversity in its nature asks for cooperation. Chapter 3.1 and 3.2 have in their recommendations already given suggestions mostly to cooperation between different political levels, especially taking the cooperation with the national level into account. In this chapter the recommendations focus on the cooperation between LRA in networks and platforms, cross-border cooperation and decentralised development cooperation.

*13. MS need to acknowledge the role of LRA collaboration for joint learning and biodiversity action by **organising or supporting networks and platforms and facilitating LRA exchange** at the national, supra-national (European) and global levels.*

In a cooperation or network arrangement, LRA have the opportunity to learn from each other and to overcome specific local/regional challenges by gaining new ideas from other regions. An exchange between similar entities can foster their individual development and, in turn, support the development of novel, more effective solutions. In the survey respondents were to a lesser extent aware of such activities between different regional authorities (44%) and different local authorities (38%).

In this context, an interesting example is the German Alliance of Communities for Biological Diversity (*Bündnis Kommunen für Biologische Vielfalt*). An association of 94 communities from the local level across Germany (including counties) supports their members in their biodiversity work and, specifically, supports communities in the development of their strategies. It offers capacity and training possibilities to their members and displays information on the topic, mainly on their website, for the interested public.

At European level, a special focus on regional exchange has been established. It is the European Learning Network for Regions and Biodiversity¹⁷ which aims to support exchange of experience and foster cooperation, especially on the regional level.

Cooperative approaches might also offer more effective ways to apply for adequate funding. There are already EU funding streams that support these cooperation efforts across Europe, mainly through the INTERREG programme. Two interesting examples from this programme are the PERIURBAN project¹⁸, an interregional exchange project on the management of natural suburban areas coordinated by the Regional governments of Tuscany and the SURF project¹⁹ a partnership of 14 authorities and public bodies working together to optimise regional policies and practices of nature and biodiversity conservation in the Alps. Also the LIFE funding programme is relevant, as it is not only supporting environmental related efforts but also network building and communication between different entities. In the T.E.N project²⁰ for example, the management of NATURA 2000 in the Pan Alpine Ecological Network is supported. Another example is the LandLife project²¹ where the value of land stewardship as a tool for biodiversity conservation is discussed with partners from France, Italy and Spain.

An example of an existing platform to internationally showcase LRA biodiversity action, to exchange experiences and to support LRA-positioning towards the UN CBD is the ‘Cities for Biodiversity Summit’²², organised regularly by ICLEI back-to-back with the CBD COP.

14.MS and LRA should especially take care to establish cooperation schemes for LRA for cross-border cooperation at the macro-regional scales, and for decentralised development cooperation to strengthen and capitalise on joint and integrated biodiversity protection and management efforts.

As biodiversity is inherently not tied to any scale or boundaries, cooperation between LRA across national borders is important. Accordingly, cooperation between the relevant policy planning and management efforts should be aligned to create a common understanding to achieve biodiversity objectives and successfully

¹⁷ www.regionsandbiodiversity.eu

¹⁸ www.periurbanparks.eu

¹⁹ www.surf-nature.eu

²⁰ www.lifeten.tn.it

²¹ www.landstewardship.eu

²² cbc.iclei.org

carry out related actions. This concerns in particular cross-border protected areas and Natura 2000 sites.

The analysis has shown only little evidence for cooperation taking place between local authorities on a macro-regional level. However, a European cooperation mechanism that supports this cooperation and helps to overcome possible obstacles hindering cross-border cooperation are the European groupings of territorial cooperation (EGTCs). ZASNET is one well established example for this kind of cooperation and supports the collaboration between communities in the Portuguese Region Zamora-Salamanca and the Spanish Region Douro Superior.²³

A network dedicated to a specific macro-region is the MediverCities network. It is a network of Mediterranean local authorities, their associations and partners (national and sub national governments, academia and scientific institutions, international organizations) that aims to improve the protection and management of biological resources and ecosystem services in the Mediterranean basin. At the moment, a steering committee has been constituted and the city of Montpellier - in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity - is running a secretariat.²⁴

Other biodiversity macro-regions in Europe have cooperation or common funding mechanisms in place, mainly in relation to already existing regional cooperation programmes most prominently the INTERREG programme in different European macro-regions such as the North or the Baltic Sea or the Alps.

Nevertheless, biodiversity protection still needs to be more strongly considered and intentionally embraced as a cross-sectorial and cross-regional issue, that within the EU but also beyond. Taking especially the implementation of CBD decision 22/X into account decentralised cooperation between European LRA and those of developing and EU neighbour countries is important.

²³ See case study in part A.

²⁴ See case study in part A.

3.5 Local and regional authorities key actions

There are LRA key actions that complement the already given recommendations. They compile suggestions on local and regional biodiversity strategies and action plans (RBSAPs, LBSAPs), but also refer to related issues such as communication, awareness raising and capacity building.

3.5.1 Regional and local biodiversity strategies and planning

*15. LRA are strongly advised to establish or further **develop their local and regional biodiversity strategies and action plans (RBSAPs, LBSAPs)**. They are encouraged to build upon already existing processes and activities, helping the strategies to be aligned with national, European and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets; regional rather than local-scale approaches should be targeted.*

Both local and regional authorities are important key actors to combat the loss of biodiversity. The local level is the level of implementation on the ground, where actions can be conducted together with citizens. It is the level closest to people's everyday life, where actions and changes are most likely to be realised. This implementation is dependent upon a solid planning having taken place beforehand.

The wider perspective of LRA and their responsibility for a specific area is of specific interest for the strategic planning and management of biodiversity. Regional authorities are advised to formulate framing conditions that enhance effective work on a local level. The survey as well as the desk research has highlighted good examples of RBSAPs and LBASPs. There are LBASPs in place in several capital and bigger cities such as Paris, Berlin, or Vienna. There are interesting examples for local action plans from smaller communities in the UK, Ireland and Germany. In addition, there are also good examples from regional developments reported by Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands.

In fact, these two levels cannot be developed or understood separately. A lot of activities are even taking place in-between them. For example, Natura 2000 areas often cross municipal borders and therefore require inter-municipal cooperation as well as a strong link to the regional level. A majority of the respondents (63%) acknowledged that exchanges, cooperation and partnerships on biodiversity issues have been organised between regions and their local authorities.

A good example of a local-regional cooperation is the city and the province (Deputacio) of Barcelona, where biodiversity and related concepts such as green infrastructure are considered as opportunities for sustainable urban-rural development.²⁵ There is a close cooperation between these levels and planning is conducted in a coordinated way. Another interesting process has taken place in the Brussels-Capital Region. Here, the draft biodiversity plan was developed in a participatory process involving representatives of regional and local authorities.

*16. LRA are called on to **advance their biodiversity conservation efforts by piloting and integrating innovative approaches and concepts such as green infrastructure, evaluation of ecosystem services and no-net loss of biodiversity into their policy-making, territorial and spatial planning and development programmes, as well as land-use regulation and building codes.***

Given the potential benefits to biodiversity, humans and ecosystems which can be achieved by incorporating biodiversity into general spatial planning procedures²⁶, instruments as green infrastructure, the evaluation of ecosystem services, and no-net loss of ecosystems and their services, merit additional recognition and resource investment by LRA.

Green Infrastructure is intensively discussed across Europe, not only on the EU level but also in many examples of implementation on regional and local level. For instance, in the federal state of Bavaria, the network Bavarian Nature²⁷ that has a long tradition in supporting nature protection processes is currently using the concept of green infrastructure to expand their green and blues corridors. The UK offers a wide range of local examples where GI is integrated in biodiversity planning (or the other way around) on local level. A very prominent local example is the green infrastructure Plan of the city of Barcelona²⁸.

In the discussion on green infrastructure the added value of this approach for futures planning processes is central. Therefore a lot of research is on the way; for examples in West Flanders (Belgium) an economic valuation model to assess the multifunctional values for green infrastructure investments to improve the environmental conditions has been developed.

²⁵ See case study in part A.

²⁶ www.ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/info/pubs/docs/greeninfrastructure.pdf
www.ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/ecosystems/index_en.htm

²⁷ www.stmuv.bayern.de/umwelt/naturschutz/baynetznatur

²⁸ See case study in part A.

3.5.2 Awareness raising and communication

*17. LRA need to sustain and further increase their efforts to **raise awareness amongst all stakeholders** and the public on biodiversity objectives and - to do so - implement or advance targeted awareness-raising programmes.*

The study has highlighted interesting examples of awareness raising campaigns of LRA sometimes but not necessarily supported by the MS.

On local level BioFrankfurt²⁹ is such an example. It is a network of over 30 partners that brings together governmental and non-governmental stakeholders from research, conservation and politics to promote biodiversity activities in the city region of Frankfurt, Germany. This network combines different awareness raising mechanisms and offers, apart from capacity building and information events, a website with a lot of information and a Facebook account dedicated to the activation of stakeholders. On a regional level, the ‘Action for Biodiversity’³⁰ project is remarkable. It is an INTERREG project to foster cross-border capacity building and awareness raising efforts between Ireland and North-Ireland. A similar example is the so called “People with Nature” project, a cross-border cooperation between Latvia, Estonia and Russia³¹. It aims to promote nature education as a mean of awareness-raising. All these examples show that awareness raising and communication do fulfil multiple purposes and support additional benefits such as cooperation or benchmarking mechanisms.

The global challenges of biodiversity loss and its consequences still seem to be somewhat unclear and unknown. Both the desk research as well as the questionnaire has only given a few indications on innovative approaches taken by LRA to tackling this issue, such as using different social media formats like videos or blogs and highlighting ongoing activities. Until 2010, a high degree of awareness-raising took place surrounding the Countdown 2010³² and the established Clearing House Mechanism. The challenge for good communication is to sustain the momentum, keep the communication current and interesting and to further inform and report to the interested public.

²⁹ www.biofrankfurt.de

³⁰ See case study in part A.

³¹ See case study in part A.

³² www.countdown2010.net

3.5.3 Involvement

18.LRA shall establish, coordinate and maintain effective and appropriate multi-stakeholder partnerships and stakeholder involvement processes for creating shared ownership and responsibility in developing and implementing their biodiversity strategy/plan and related actions.

This recommendation underlines the importance of stakeholder involvement to achieve broadly supported and robust objectives, strategies and action plans that can be endorsed at all governance levels. To guarantee these important inputs and to sustain the momentum of engagement, it is important to use effective and comprehensive mechanisms for the involvement. Otherwise, the risk arises that stakeholders might lose interest and will no longer invest in this kind of processes.

The local level is of specific interest for social engagement and participation. It is the closest to the everyday lives of society, the level to raise their awareness and interest in participation. If and how people will be actively involved in biodiversity-related issues needs to be planned carefully, and an effective communication and public relation strategy needs to be incorporated in this planning.

The Local Nature Partnerships in the UK consists of a broad range different local stakeholders NGOs, business, and individuals that jointly aim at preserving biodiversity in their region or local community. An initiative that focuses on businesses as partners to be involved is the Business-Biodiversity Partnerships in Belgium. They use contracting to bring the private sector into biodiversity protection efforts. The GIFT-T! Project, an INTERREG IVB project based in the Netherlands, also brings together public and private partners.³³ Another example is the project of the Province of Limburg (Belgium) “Municipalities adopt Limburg species”, where municipalities are invited to adopt a plant or animal typical for their area. Based on this act a development plan for each municipality, including concrete actions has been developed³⁴. Another example for the cooperation and co-decision making between the local and the regional level is the currently developed Nationalpark Hunsrück-Hochwald³⁵ in Rhineland Palatinate, Germany. Since the beginning different stakeholders groups (governmental and non-governmental) were taken into account in the development of this protected area.

³³ See all case studies in part A.

³⁴ www.provinciaalnatuurcentrum.be/gals

³⁵ See case study in part A.

In general, it can be advised that communication, awareness raising and engagement initiatives are better aligned on all governance levels to have a stronger outreach effect and impact.

19. LRA should participate in research initiatives to identify and fill knowledge gaps with regard to biodiversity/ecosystem services valuation and management, and related concepts such as nature based solutions and green infrastructure, greening regional and local economies, and enhancing communities' quality of life.

One of the biggest transdisciplinary global research initiatives undertaken on biodiversity is TEEB³⁶ (The Economic of Ecosystems and Biodiversity), focusing on the valuation of ecosystem services. Currently, there are further TEEB studies which are being conducted by some Member States at a national level, with Germany and Poland also focusing on cities. These efforts are ongoing and LRA are encouraged to participate in further national/regional TEEB studies.

At a European level, there are several biodiversity related research projects³⁷ being implemented which bring together the most important European scientific centres related to biodiversity. The new research programme Horizon 2020 will also offer several opportunities that should be used by scientists and representatives of LRA, as the participation of LRA will support the applicability of the scientific findings and will make the scientific work more present in the planning process of LRA.

To foster this cooperation between science and practitioners, IPBES, the 'Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services' needs to be taken into account. It has been established in April 2012, as an independent intergovernmental body open to all member countries of the United Nations.

³⁶ www.teebweb.org

³⁷ For example: urbesproject.org, <http://greensurge.eu/>, www.phenotype.eu.