

Press release



Unique tool predicts effects of policy decisions on Europe's biodiversity

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Nine European institutions, under the lead of ECNC, have developed a new tool for assessing biodiversity impacts of changing environmental conditions in Europe. This so-called BioScore tool has now been released on the Internet.

"Every citizen and decision maker can now download the tool from the web and find out the possible effects of selected decisions on Europe's rich biological diversity," said Ben Delbaere, project leader at ECNC. "It allows policymakers to make alternative options that reduce potential negative effects or that may even improve the state of biodiversity."

Co-funded by the European Commission Research Framework Programme, the BioScore tool brings together data on Europe's species that help quantify the possible effects that policy measures may have on Europe's species composition. The user of the tool can simulate combinations of changes in the environment and immediately see what the effects of these changes may be for a given country, region or the whole of Europe.

Effects of biofuels

The international team has tested the tool on specific policy cases, such as the biodiversity impacts of improved air quality in the Netherlands, improved water quality in Norway, or afforestation in Italy. It also looked at the potential impact of increased or decreased production of biofuels in Europe. The latter case demonstrates that, if biofuels are produced on a large scale in Europe, the overall effect on biodiversity is rather negative. Biofuels produced from woody crops (such as willow or poplar) seem to have fewer detrimental effects than those produced from annual crops (such as rapeseed or maize) and locally may even turn out to have positive effects when applied in a sustainable way.

The European Commission provided nearly one million Euros for the project team to build this tool over the past three years. The Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency modelled much of the database, which holds a unique collection of data on over 1,000 species of Europe's mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles, freshwater fish, butterflies, dragonflies, vascular plants and aquatic macroinvertebrates.

Note for the editor:

1. The BioScore tool can be downloaded from www.bioscore.eu
2. Contact details: Ben Delbaere, Head of Programme Development, ECNC, PO Box 90154, 5000 LG Tilburg, the Netherlands, delbaere@ecnc.org, mobile 0031-6-43286175
3. BioScore was co-funded by the EC 6th Framework Programme for Research and Development, contract no. 022661, and developed for the European Commission's Directorate-General Environment
4. Copies of the final report of the project are available on ECNC's website: www.ecnc.org