Review of the existing quantitative national targets in National Biodiversity Strategy and Actions Plans of European countries:
contributions to a post-2020 EU biodiversity strategy

McKenna Davis & Sophie Condé

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Review of the existing quantitative national targets in EU NBSAPs of European countries

Authors’ affiliation:
McKenna Davis, Ecologic Institute (DE)
Sophie Condé, Muséum national d’Histoire naturelle (FR)

EEA project manager:
Carlos Romao, European Environment Agency (DK)

ETC/BD production support:
Muriel Vincent, Muséum national d’Histoire naturelle (FR)

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1 Introduction

In support of the development of the EU’s post-2020 biodiversity strategy, this brief note analyses quantifiable national biodiversity commitments across the EU Member States\(^1\) in their NBSAPs submitted to the CBD. The aim is to answer the following questions:

- Which topics are prioritized across countries, based on the existence of quantified targets?
- Which of the existing targets could be integrated into a post-2020 EU biodiversity strategy?

The analysis is based on a composite list of national commitments, stemming from an initial review of the NBSAPs by UNEP-WCMC (2019). In order to allow for a systematic and efficient analysis of this information, a spreadsheet (xls-file) was created with information on each NBSAP’s quantifiable commitments, including: verbatim text of the commitment, the theme to which it applies, relevant secondary themes and the page on which it appears in the respective document. A pragmatic approach was applied to filter and count the commitments per theme in order to gain an overview of which are most frequently included. The aim is to be able to use this evidence to inform priority-setting for future targets and actions post-2020.

2 Priority topics across NBSAPs

A total of 403 quantifiable commitments were identified across 23 themes\(^2\) in the MS NBSAPs (see table 2.1). While the majority of countries (18) included less than 6 quantifiable commitments, some countries provided a significant number (e.g. Latvia - 87 commitments; Luxembourg – 48; Lithuania – 46; Denmark – 43; Hungary – 35). Two methods have been applied to establish which topics have been prioritized most highly across MS. The first approach tallies the total number of quantified targets in NBSAPs per topic area; the second looks at the number of countries which have set at least one quantified commitment per topic. Each is described below, as well as the shared outcomes.

Utilising the first approach, the most frequently referenced topics were knowledge, the science base and technologies (59 commitments), protected areas (53), habitats (42), and threatened species (37) (see Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable. Table 2.1). These were followed by: mobilisation of financial resources (29), pollution (26), awareness (23), and forestry (22). However, the high number of commitments made by a single country to a specific topic area need to be taken into account when conducting this exercise. Latvia alone accounts for 43 of the 59 commitments relating to knowledge, science base and technologies and 20 of the 26 commitments under pollution, thereby misrepresenting their level of importance as a whole. Similarly, almost half of the habitats and restoration commitments came from Luxembourg and 17 of 29 of the mobilisation of financial resources came from Denmark. Adjusting to take account of these weightings, the priority topics across MS using this approach would be protected areas, threatened species, restoration, and habitats.

\(^1\) Including four separate national reports for the United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales)

\(^2\) i.e. Agriculture, Aquaculture, Awareness, Biodiversity planning, Ecosystem resilience, Ecosystem Services, Energy and mining, Forestry, Genetic diversity, Habitats, Incentives, Infrastructure, Invasive alien species, Knowledge, the science base and technologies, Mainstreaming, Marine living resources, Mobilisation of financial resources, Other area-based conservation measures, Pollution, Protected areas, Restoration, Sustainable consumption and production, Threatened species

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The least number of quantifiable commitments were made in relation to *energy and mining* and *aquaculture* (with 1 commitment each) as well as *other area-based conservation measures, incentives, biodiversity planning, and ecosystem resilience* (with 2 commitments each). Applying the second approach and looking at the number of countries which have set at least one quantified commitment per topic highlights the importance of *protected areas* (18 of 31 countries), *restoration* (14), *threatened species* (14), *habitats* (12), *awareness* (10), and *forestry* (9) (see Table 2.1).

### Table 2.1 Prioritisation of topics across Member States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Total commitments across MS</th>
<th>Number of MS with ≥ 1 commitment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge, science base and technologies</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protected areas</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>Habitats</td>
<td>42</td>
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<td>Restoration</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Threatened species</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobilisation of financial resources</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollution</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mainstreaming</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable consumption and production</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Genetic diversity</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ecosystem Services</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marine living resources</td>
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<td>Ecosystem resilience</td>
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<td>Incentives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other area-based conservation measures</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Energy and mining</td>
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Comparing the results of the two approaches indicates clear overlap and a prioritization across MS of: *protected areas, threatened species, restoration, and habitats*. Other important shared topics are *awareness* and *forestry*.

### 3 Potential metrics to measure priority topics

This chapter revisits the quantified commitments from the MS in more depth, focusing on which types of metrics have been applied in each of the four priority areas. Examples are provided which have been taken directly from respective NBSAPs, and presented according to their relevance in the following categories: management actions, achieving impact, monitoring, other.

#### 3.1 Protected areas

A total of 53 quantified commitments regarding protected areas were found in the NBSAPs across 18 MS, focusing largely on management actions and achieving impact.
3.1.1 Management actions

Commitments relating to management actions focus on designating and establishing protected areas, applying specific management measures, acquiring more state land, and developing nature protection plans and management concepts.

Designating and establishing protected areas for specific types of habitats includes the establishment of protected areas for terrestrial and inland waters, coastal and marine areas, representative forests, and wetlands as well as the designation of new protected areas or sites, and the extension of Natura 2000. Commitments are expressed either in percentages, hectares, or number of sites, e.g.:

- At least 17% of terrestrial and inland water areas... are conserved through the development of ... protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (Belgium);
- 10% of strictly protected typologically representative forests in total forest land (Estonia);
- Special Areas of Conservation Natura 2000 Earth network. 100% designated. (Spain);
- The formal protection of lakes and watercourses has increased by at least 12 000 hectares (Sweden);
- Approx. 600 ha of new nature areas through new EU LIFE projects ... (Denmark);
- Establish state-owned protected areas, covering approx. 700,000 ha, related to the implementation of national conservation programmes and other areas reserved for protection and the Natura 2000 network of protected areas (Finland);
- Adjust the Natura 2000 boundaries to include approx. 31,000 ha of new areas ... (Denmark);
- ... declare at least 40 sites by the end of 2021 at a rate of 8 sites per year (Luxembourg);
- Establish 3 new facilities/ protected areas in order to achieve ecological representative character of national parks (Poland).

Denmark, Lithuania and Hungary set quantitative commitments to implement specific management measures on protected areas or within Natura 2000 sites. These were expressed as hectares, number of areas, and percentage of Natura 2000 sites, i.e.:

- Implement management of an expected 90,000 hectares of open habitats with mowing and grazing, primarily within Natura 2000 sites (Denmark);
- 400 landscape complexes, natural and cultural values and Natura 2000 areas maintained... (Lithuania);
- Natura 2000 impact estimations have been performed for 80% of Natura 2000 sites (Hungary).

The acquisition of state land for protection is also strived for through quantified targets in Finland, Luxembourg and Romania and is expressed in hectare and percentage targets, i.e.:

- Establish state-owned protected areas, covering approx. 700,000 ha... (Finland);
- This measure aims to acquire 50% of the land contained in the protected areas, respectively 100% of the land in their core areas (Luxembourg);
- Establishing the legal procedures and the state purchasing of private lands included in the category of natural protected areas (approximately 50.000 hectares) (Romania).
Several countries outline commitments to **develop, approve, or implement nature protection plans or management concepts**. This can be expressed as a **percentage** of the total specially protected nature territories (SPNTs), a **number of documents prepared, a number of sites, or a percentage of instruments** that are approved. Examples include:

- Development and implementation of nature protection plans for protected areas, proportion of SPNTs (% of total) for which nature protection plans have been developed and their implementation started. In 2013, this figure is 30%. It is desirable to reach 40% in 2016 and 55% in 2020 (Latvia);
- 540 documents prepared and conservation management actions, methodologies, information dissemination and training projects implemented ... (Lithuania);
- Prepare and implement management projects for 8 parks of state importance by 2023 (Lithuania)
- 987 Natura 2000 sites having planned documents to improve the nature protection system. The number of developed plans for area-related nature protection forms should be doubled as compared to the condition for 2015 (Poland);
- Instruments of management of Natura 2000 sites. 100% approved (Spain).

### 3.1.2 Achieving impact

Six countries establish commitments regarding the **implementation of projects to impact specific aspects** of protected areas, including e.g. aesthetic quality of landscape, biodiversity protection, specific species, anti-logging, etc. These are expressed as a **number of projects, percent of land area, designated reserves, number of areas, or number of hectares**, e.g.:

- 18 prepared and implemented projects designed for the management of parks of state importance and the enhancement of the aesthetic quality of landscape by 2023 (Lithuania);
- 15 projects on the enhancement of the structure of the nature frame and the management of areas implemented by 2023 (Lithuania);
- A reserve for marine mammals and sharks will be established ... (Netherlands);
- Developing implementation programs Special Planning Programs of the Territory of 25 areas protected areas by 2020 (Portugal);
- Protection, enhancement and management of 4,400 hectares of designated land for biodiversity benefit by 2020 (Norther Ireland);
- Malta’s 13% land area covered by terrestrial Natura 2000 sites is maintained (Malta);
- 10,000 ha of mire communities with a restored natural water regime in protected areas (Estonia);
- Taking the measures necessary for the protection of at least 5 habitats of each stringently protected species... (Hungary).

Hungary, Lithuania and Malta have all set commitments to **improve the (conservation) status of Natura 2000 sites**. These are expressed as improving over a **number of hectares or a percentage of habitats**:

- ...the status of natural values of at least 95,000 hectares of Natura 2000 sites (including overlapping areas in other protection categories) is improving (Hungary);
- 48% of habitats of Community importance with a favourable conservation status found in Lithuania by 2020 (Lithuania);
• Vulnerable ecosystems that provide essential services are safeguarded, with at least 15% of degraded ecosystems restored, while 20% of the habitats of European Community Importance in the Maltese territory have a favourable or improved conservation status (Malta).

### 3.2 Threatened species

A total of 37 quantified commitments regarding threatened species were found in the NBSAPs across 14 MS, focusing largely on management actions, achieving impact, and monitoring.

#### 3.2.1 Management actions

Commitments relating to management actions focus on defining target species, developing legal instruments and guidelines, and applying specific conservation or management measures.

Latvia strives to **define target species**, expressing this as a *percentage*: “In 2013, no target species (0%) have been defined for any species or habitat of EU importance. It is desirable to develop them at 100% by 2020, including 30% of the total in 2016.”

Lithuania, Spain and Estonia outline the commitment to **develop legal instruments and guidelines to ensure effective conservation**, expressed as a *number* of instruments, permits, strategies or species for which these will be developed.

- 40 legal instruments that ensure the conservation of protected species prepared by 2020; 50 permits granted for the use of protected species a year (Lithuania);
- 10 approved strategies for the Conservation and Restoration of Habitats in Danger of Disappearance or that Host Endangered Species (Spain);
- Have 155 species with appropriate conservation guidelines (Estonia).

The **application of specific conservation or management measures** is outlined by Lithuania, Portugal and Romania in terms of the *number* of water bodies or species for which measures were applied, or the *percentage of implemented measures*:

- 800 water bodies subject to fish stocking with 3.5 mln stocked fish; 37 protected flora and fauna species where measures were applied for the conservation of their habitats by 2020 (Lithuania);
- Start implementation of 50% of the measures to adapt to changes climate change, giving priority to species and habitats and coastal by 2025 (Portugal);
- Implement PNACs for a number of 15 priority species (Romania).

#### 3.2.2 Achieving impact

Several types of commitments referred to achieving positive impact towards the conservation of protected and threatened species. Examples are listed below, highlighting the trend to either focus on halting decline, reaching a certain population size, or increasing the percentage of species in a certain conservation status.

Hungary and Germany commit to **halting the decline in species and degradation of habitats** or **maintaining the current status**, expressed as an overarching goal to be achieved to 100%:

- By 2010, the decline in species and the degradation of habitats (of the coastlines and oceans) will have been halted (Germany);
- The index showing the change in the number of specimens of bird species characteristic of the agricultural habitats stays constant (100) (Hungary).
Several MS also outline commitments to **reach a certain population size of select species**, e.g.:
- Size of game populations at 200 (Wolf) and 700 (Lynx) (Estonia);
- The number of bustards in Hungary reaches 1,700 (Hungary);
- The number of bee colonies has increased to 400,000 (2020) (Austria).

**Improving the conservation status of protected species or habitats** or **reaching a certain status** is a key commitment type under the threatened species category. These are listed as **percentages of species** in a certain status, **changes in percentage** of species in a given status, **number of species**, or **area of watercourse** in a certain condition. Many of these commitments are in line with or seem to be inspired by the EU’s aim to “halt the deterioration in the status of all species and habitats covered by EU nature legislation and achieve a significant and measurable improvement in their status so that, by 2020, compared to current assessments: (i) 100% more habitat assessments and 50% more species assessments under the Habitats Directive show an improved conservation status; and (ii) 50% more species assessments under the Birds Directive show a secure or improved status”.

- 78% of the species listed in the Birds Directive have acquired the status “secure” or have improved in 2020 (Austria);
- 80% of species in a good conservation status among the species of the Birds Directive (Estonia);
- The number of species favourable or improving environmental situation increased by 50% in the Pannonian region (Hungary);
- 68 % of species of Community importance with a favourable conservation status found in Lithuania by 2020 (Lithuania);
- The risk of local extirpation of known threatened species has been reduced, with 30% of the species of European Community Importance in the Maltese territory having a favourable or improved conservation status (Malta);
- The conservation status of at least 64 bird species must be improved (Slovakia);
- Good conditions in 1,600 – 2,200 km of watercourses in order to improve the living conditions for wild animal and plant species in lakes, watercourses and coastal areas (Denmark).

### 3.2.3 Monitoring

Three countries set quantified commitments regarding the **monitoring of threatened species**. These all aimed to reach a certain amount of habitats or species that will be monitored, classified either by **number, percentage or level**, such as:

- 96 monitored species of the Habitats Directive; 221 monitored species of the Birds Directive; 60 monitored habitat species (Estonia);
- The environmental situation of 100% of the species of community significance and the habitat types characteristic of the Pannonian region is checked via active monitoring programs (Hungary);
- Maintain value of aggregated index of the number of common forest birds (Forest Bird Index FBI at the existing level of at least 1.2) (Poland).

### 3.2.4 Other

Estonia and Spain set additional commitments to **improve the knowledge** of a **percentage** of species and habitats’ status, namely:

- …the status of all species is known (Estonia);
Knowledge of the state of conservation of species and habitats of the Habitats Directive. Known for 70% of the habitats and for 100% of the species (Spain).

3.3 Restoration

A total of 41 quantified commitments regarding restoration were found in the NBSAPs across 14 MS, focusing largely on management actions and achieving impact.

3.3.1 Management actions

Restoration management actions pertain to defining degraded ecosystems and functions to target for restoration, implementing legal instruments, and implementing projects for restoration.

In line with the EU’s 15% restoration target, several Member States commit to targeting degraded ecosystems and functions for restoration, expressed as a percentage or number of projects:

- Degraded ecosystems of ecological functions as well as existing and potential green infrastructure elements are defined by 2020, at least 15% of them are restored, and the necessary policies and regulations are drafted and put in place (Hungary);
- Two model projects examining the potential of restoration of degraded areas with the private sector will be set in motion by 2015 (Netherlands).

The Czech Republic, Estonia and Denmark also commit to developing and implementing legal instruments for restoration, expressed as a percentage of area covered by these instruments, specific number of actions, or hectares of area:

- (Sub)legal regulation provided for 20% of the area for spontaneous succession plans in addition to reclamation of land temporarily removed from the ALR by 2025 to increase the share of reclamation after mining by spontaneous succession (Czech Republic);
- 4 ecoducts and 20 small game tunnels (Estonia);
- 45,000 ha of restored and maintained semi-natural communities (alvars, floodplains, dry and fresh meadows, peat) (Estonia);
- 4 ecoducts and 20 small game tunnels (Estonia);
- Approx. 4,500 ha of carbon rich lowlying farmland will be redesigned as nature areas (Denmark).

Finally, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Scotland commit to implementing projects for restoration, both in terms of the number of projects and number of hectares to be affected:

- Prepare and implement at least 30 projects on the improvement of the formation and ecological status of landscape ... and increase of landscape and biological diversity by 2023 (Lithuania);
- Pilot project will start in 2015 to restore the shellfish beds in one of the North Sea’s protected areas (Netherlands);
- …demonstration project will [restore] 2,000 hectares of peatland ... over 2.5 years (UK – Scotland).

3.3.2 Achieving impact

In line with the EU’s commitment to maintain and enhance ecosystems and their services by 2020 “by establishing green infrastructure and restoring at least 15% of degraded ecosystems,” several countries adopted the 15% aim (i.e. Austria, Belgium, Hungary, Luxembourg, Slovakia and England). Additional commitments went into more detail about restoring specific numbers of hectares of a given ecosystem type, such as:

- 45,000 ha of restored and maintained semi-natural communities (alvars, floodplains, dry and fresh meadows, peat) (Estonia);
• Improve 200 ha of Oak forests of Stellario-Carpinetum by 2021 and 3,900 ha in the long term (Luxembourg);
• Restore 240 hectares of ancient woodland by 2018 (Northern Ireland);
• Natural assets of approx. 7,000 hectares of Danish forest will be increased ... (Denmark).

Restoration commitments also focused on reclaiming or restoring watercourses, expressed in kilometres or hectares, such as:

• Reclamation of a minimum of 300 km of watercourses by 2025 (Czech Republic);
• Approx. 1,000 ha of new nature areas and a better aquatic environment as a result of watercourse restoration projects (Denmark);
• Improve river sources... by 300 N by 2021 and 600 N in the longer term (Luxembourg).

3.4 Habitats

A total of 42 quantified commitments regarding habitats were found in the NBSAPs across 12 MS, focusing largely on management actions, achieving impact and monitoring.

3.4.1 Management actions

Various aspects of habitat management are outlined in the form of quantified commitments across MS, ranging from the establishment or management of certain habitats to the development of protection strategies/plans/guidelines or the implementation of specific management measures over a given area.

All countries committing to the establishment or management of habitats expressed these in terms of area (metres or hectares), including:

• Approx. 8,000 ha of wetlands will be established (Denmark);
• 50-80 metres width of the Baltic Sea coast beach (Lithuania);
• Management of the remaining 5,900 hectares of non-designated land to maintain and enhance priority habitats and species by 2020 (Northern Ireland);
• Positive management of 700 hectares of land for biodiversity benefit by 2020 (UK – Northern Ireland).

The number of strategies, plans or guidelines to be developed for species and habitat protection were also outlined by Latvia and Spain:

• Management guidelines for all habitats by 2020, species protection plans for 7 endangered species. It is advisable to accomplish this task by 2020, with a total of 13 habitat protection and 7 endangered species protection plans (Latvia);
• 5 ... strategies and plans for marine habitats in danger of disappearing (Spain).

3.4.2 Achieving impact

Quantified commitments to improving or maintaining the conservation status of given habitats or ecological quality of waterbodies were made by 7 Member States (i.e. Austria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Slovakia, and England), expressed as percentage increase, number of areas, or number of species/habitats.
• Number of habitat types of favourable or improving environmental condition is doubled (increased by 100%) (Hungary);
• Conservation status of 14 habitat types endangered at the European level (inc. their ecological coherence) has improved (Estonia);
• 43 landscape areas whose state has improved by 2023 (Lithuania);
• By 2020, compared to current assessments: i) 100% of additional habitat assessments and 50% of assessments additional species under the Habitats Directive or a plan national action plan, indicate a favourable or improved state of conservation (Luxembourg);
• The conservation status of 30 habitats and 49 species must be improved, while at the same time at least maintaining (i.e. showing no decline) the conservation status of 30 habitats and 52 species (Slovakia);
• Better wildlife habitats with 90% of priority habitats in favourable or recovering condition and at least 50% of SSSIs in favourable condition, while maintaining at least 95% in favourable or recovering condition (UK – England);
• Increased share of surface water bodies with good and high ecological quality. From 51% in 2013 (according to RBMP) to more than 70% in 2020 (Latvia);
• Increase the proportion of water bodies in Good Ecological Status from 26% now to 32% by 2015, working through 11 river basin management plans (UK- England).
Finally, commitments to increase habitat area were made by Germany, Luxembourg, England and Poland in the form of percentage of coverage, hectares, or percentage increases in total share:
• By 2020, at least 2% extensive wilderness in Germany... (Germany);
• Create +25 ha of Dry heaths with calluna by 2021 and +165 ha in the long term (Luxembourg);
• ... increase in the overall extent of priority habitats by at least 200,000 ha (UK – England);
• 10% increase of habitats and species proving proper condition of protection (Poland).

3.4.3 Other

Lithuania has made an additional commitment to achieve a given ratio of natural and semi-natural areas to urbanised areas, i.e.: 60:40 ratio of natural and semi-natural areas (forests, other green areas, wetland, water bodies, natural grassland and pastures, unused land) to urbanised areas (built-up areas, roads), gardens, arable land and damaged areas by 2020.

Estonia was the only Member State to commit to improving the knowledge of habitat assessment status: “the status assessment of all habitat types is known”.

4 Concluding comments

The review process revealed shared commonalities across Member States regarding the prioritised topic areas, as indicated by the number of quantified commitments made. In exploring these fields (protected areas, threatened species, restoration, and habitats) in more depth, commitments predominantly relate to management actions, achieving impact, or monitoring. While some categories shared the metrics by which they were measured, others included diverse approaches.

Management actions frequently included commitments relating to designating and establishing (protected) areas or habitats, applying specific management measures or restorative projects,
acquiring state land, implementing legal instruments, and developing nature protection plans, management concepts or guidelines. Metrics included a set number of hectares to be impacted, or a number of plans or guidelines to be drafted for a certain number of species or habitats. Commitments dedicated to achieving impact focused on improving or maintaining the conservation status of given habitats or ecological quality of waterbodies, increasing habitat area, halting decline, reaching a certain population size, or increasing the percentage of species in a certain conservation status. These were most frequently expressed as a percentage increase, specific number or size (hectare) of areas, number of species/habitats, or km of watercourses which were to be affected. The percentage increases often related to the EU 15% restoration target expressed in its current Biodiversity Strategy. Finally, monitoring commitments only appeared in relation to monitoring threatened species. These aimed to reach a certain amount of habitats or species that will be monitored, classified either by number, percentage or level.

Additional commitments referred to improving the knowledge of habitat or species status (e.g. ‘knowing the status assessment for all habitat types’ or ‘conservation status known for 70% of the habitats and for 100% of the species’) or achieving a given ratio of (semi)natural areas to urbanised areas. The later commitment, proposed by Lithuania, could be inspiring should an urban-focused target be introduced to the post-2020 Biodiversity Strategy.
References

UNEP-WCMC, 2019, ‘Reversing negative biodiversity trends through action: What is needed to bend the curve?’, Draft information document prepared for the regional consultation on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework for the Western European and Others Group and other members of the European Union, 19-21 March, Bonn.
Annex 1  Quantifiable targets per MS per theme
### Review of the existing quantitative national targets in EU NBSAPs of European countries

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<th>Agriculture</th>
<th>Aquaculture</th>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Biodiversity planning</th>
<th>Ecosystem resilience</th>
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Review of the existing quantitative national targets in EU NBSAPs of European countries

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