



PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency

# Nature Outlook: Report on the First Dialogue, 2 and 3 December 2014



## 1 Introduction

A dialogue on the future of nature in Europe took place in the Museum of Natural Sciences in Brussels on 2 and 3 December 2014. The dialogue was organised by PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency and European Centre for Nature Conservation (ECNC). More than 30 representatives of European organisations involved in nature conservation, forestry, agriculture, hunting, health care and research, participated (see list of participants).

PBL and ECNC appreciate the number of high quality ideas generated during the dialogue. This report presents the results of the dialogue, which will be used as valuable input to the Nature Outlook. This study is being conducted by PBL to provide input to discussion on the future of nature policies during the Dutch presidency of the Council of the EU in the first half of 2016.



The dialogue was the first of three dialogues and focused on generating perspectives for the Nature Outlook. The second dialogue will take place on 12 and 13 March 2015 to expand the perspectives and the third on 17 and 18 June 2015 to derive the key messages of these perspectives. Each dialogue is followed by online consultation to give more stakeholders the opportunity to contribute to the perspectives. The perspectives will also be discussed with DG Environment and other DGs operating in related policy domains. The perspectives will be integrated with the results of a literature review, design activities and model calculations.

## 2 Nature Outlook

The Nature Outlook project leader, Henk van Zeijts presented the study set-up and answered various questions. In 2012, PBL published the Dutch Nature Outlook, based on the perspectives generated by stakeholder involvement and other techniques. This approach gave deeper understanding of different viewpoints on nature and broadened the political debate. As a result, the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs has requested PBL to publish a European Nature Outlook.

This Nature Outlook will complement the midterm review of the biodiversity strategy of the European Commission and the fitness check on the Birds and Habitats Directive. The study will not question the goals of the biodiversity strategy, but instead provide new insights for additional options for achieving the biodiversity targets.

PBL intends to provide inspiration for the political and societal debate on the future nature policy in Europe. The European Commission agenda focuses on growth and employment jobs. The Nature Outlook may contribute to getting nature back on the political agenda and to the heart of society. The perspectives to be presented in the Nature Outlook may be broader than those dominating the current political debate. While providing valuable insights for policy visions and plans, the perspectives themselves should not be considered to be visions or plans.

The dialogues and online consultations provide input to the Nature Outlook. Other sources include literature review of discourses, design activities, an international survey and model calculations.

### **3 Challenges to Nature in Europe**

The Nature Outlook deputy project, Anne Gerdien Prins presented societal and physical trends with a high impact on nature, such as urbanisation, agriculture intensification, changes in water quality, and climate change. Following her presentation, various issues were discussed.

The Nature Outlook uses a broad definition of nature in an attempt to cover the wide range of views on nature. However, a more concise definition of nature needs to be adopted.

The trends presented in the dialogue tended to be biased to north-west Europe. More attention could be given to trends in east and south Europe.

Trends with a high impact on marine nature are not taken into consideration because this is beyond the scope of study in terms of time and capacity constraints.

Participants responded to Anne Gerdien's request for challenges for nature included:

1. Giving more attention to the intrinsic value of nature
2. Increasing awareness that the environment is the basis of society
3. Establishing closer links between nature conservationists and other people
4. Establishing closer links between people and the environment
5. Establishing closer links between nature and culture
6. Achieving more multi-functional land use
7. Mobilising more political will for nature conservation and overcoming short-term visions
8. Implementing effective mechanisms for nature conservation
9. Improving implementation of environmental policy
10. Reinforcing the capacity to deliver, taking into account electoral impacts, dealing with business, and social deprivation
11. Overcoming sectorial viewpoints

12. Becoming more demand driven; presenting solutions rather than problems
13. Finding a new approaches to spatial planning; green urbanisation
14. Focusing more on managed landscapes
15. Taking more account of the impacts of urbanisation and infrastructure development on nature
16. Stepping out of the growth paradigm
17. Achieving sustainable food production in Europe
18. Dealing with increasing inequality and increased poverty

The perspectives on Nature Outlook should address the most important of these challenges. PBL will link the challenges identified in the dialogue and the perspectives for discussion in the second dialogue.

## 4 Guiding ideas

The first draft of the perspectives for Nature in 2050 was constructed in four steps: (1) generating a large number of guiding ideas for the perspectives; (2) clustering the guiding ideas into coherent and contrasting combinations; (3) working out the combinations into images of nature in 2050; and (4) developing pathways (coalitions, measures, and other actions) to achieve each image.



To generate a large number of guiding ideas for the perspectives, the participants were divided into small groups of two or three. Each group elaborated one of the ideas generated in words and in images. This exercise resulted in the following 12 guiding ideas<sup>1</sup>:

- Ideal nature: the basic idea is diversity and multifunctionality of land use and biological diversity
- Nature and agriculture: agriculture supports itself and nurtures nature
- Nature and cultural history: cultural landscapes containing special nature are protected for the future
- Sustainable use for recreation: high quality agriculture and landscapes

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<sup>1</sup> The guiding ideas are extensively described and visualised in a background document.

- Sustainable use of nature as conservation: sustainable use serves as a central conservation concept
- Nature and consumption: a paradigm shift towards less and different consumption
- Nature, business and innovation: growth is inclusive, natural, human and financial capital are in all three
- Nature and health: green and sustainable health systems; medical professionals value the importance of nature in physical and mental health
- Water vital for life: working with nature, allowing natural processes to function (resilience)
- Wilderness at the heart of society: biodiversity but also socio-economically driven, benefits agenda
- Connectivity between all citizens and nature: nature as a gradient from inner city to wilderness
- Boxed nature: people become more disconnected and secluded from nature (considered a nightmare)

## 5 Perspectives

The guiding ideas were clustered into four coherent and contrasting combinations. The participants worked out the clusters of ideas into the first version of each perspective, which included ideas for an image of nature in 2050 and a potential pathway to achieve that image. Both parts were presented in words and images on posters

### 5.1 Nature as a foundation of society

*We are nature*

*Building a working alliance*

*Image of nature in 2050*

In 2050, nature is the foundation of society and is strongly multifunctional and multisectorial. Natural capital is protected. Optimum (fullest, balanced) connectivity has been achieved between nature and other sectors of society. There is continuity between the various functions provided by nature, regardless of landscape type. There is continuity from inner-urban areas through cultural and agricultural landscapes and forests to the wilderness. Nature is respected by people and companies. They understand nature fundamentally, and also in terms of what it can deliver to other sectors of society. By 2050, wealth is defined in terms of *Gross Natural Product* instead of *Gross Domestic Product*. Because of this, society benefits fully from nature in terms of ecosystem services.

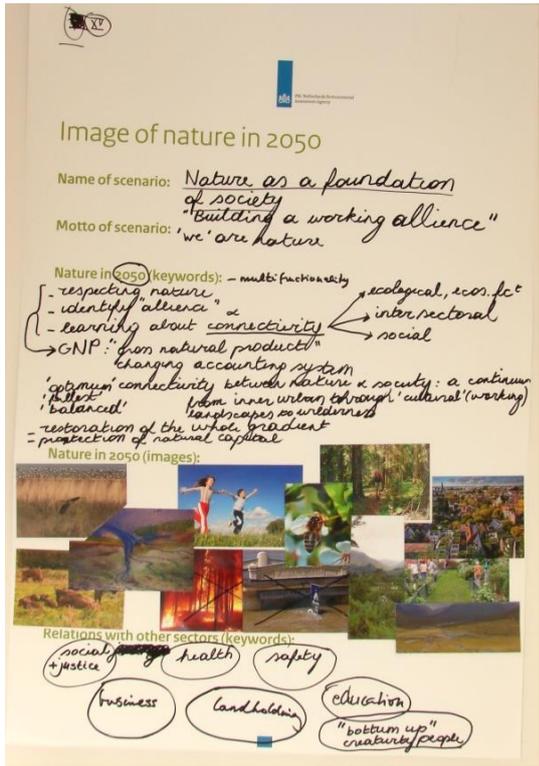
*Pathway to 2050*

Key actors who could accomplish this image of nature are companies, landholders (farmers, forest owners, and landowners), the urban-social sector, and the lobby sector. Other key actors are Heads of State, Environment Ministers in the EU Member States, and social movements across Europe, such as a revived Countdown 2010 (which did much networking). Furthermore, organisations, such as World Trade Organisation and European Commission, play relevant roles.

In this perspective, the actors build many alliances and by doing so, become key driving forces. The working alliances are based on shared values, and people referred to as “catalysers” play a leading role. They identify interrelated and overlapping values, create relationships, build agendas and motivate and coordinate grassroots movements. European institutions facilitate alliance building and expand the current economic-based agenda to a broad societal agenda.

A multifunctional and multisectorial approach underpins nature restoration and protection required to achieve and maintain the image. The actors listed above start by implementing environmental legislation and actions already agreed upon. This is achieved by building on capacities in the nature conservation, business, urban-social and lobbying sectors, particularly capacities to relate to different sectors, to identify common ground, and to develop common policies and projects.

To achieve this, the actors learn about all aspects of connectivity, understand ecological connectivity and also inter-sectorial and social connectivity. Moreover, natural values are embedded in the accounting systems that economists can and must use in development planning. Furthermore, nature conservation organisations take on broader objectives and build alliances with other sectors developing and implementing multifunctional and multisectorial policies and projects.



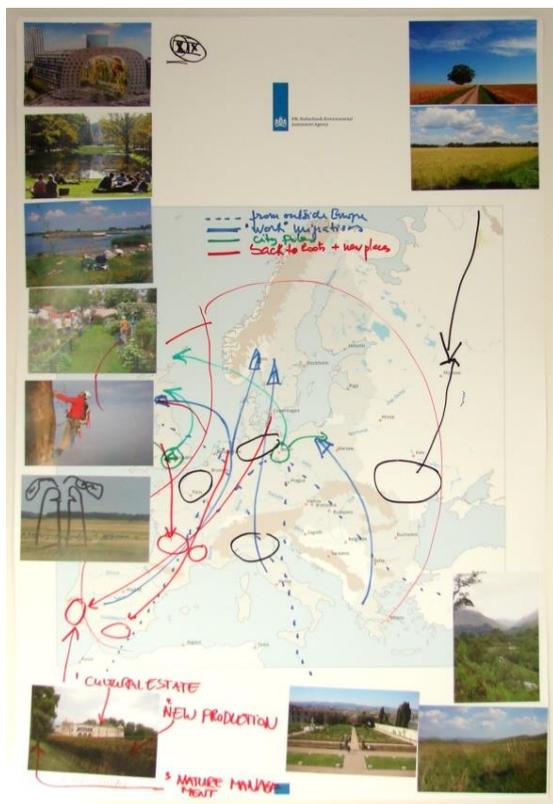
In this perspective, actors focus on finding inter-sectorial common ground and on identifying common interests for specific actions. They no longer define the relationships between nature and other sectors in terms of nature versus development but as nature for development. Nature is considered to be a stepping stone in climbing out of the recession.

## 5.2 From the past to the future

### *Identity through sense of place*

#### *Image of nature in 2050*

In 2050, nature is an essential component of the local identity of rural and urban communities. Local communities identify with nature and have a strong feeling of belonging to it. People appreciate living and working with nature and feel responsible for its conservation and development. Nature is very accessible to people, creating many opportunities for everyday nature experience. This identity is expressed by revitalising well preserved cultural landscapes and re-naturing degraded landscapes. The characteristic high diversity of nature and landscapes in Europe is a unique selling point in international tourism and in encouraging new business to locate to these areas. People also travel long distances to visit nature areas in their region, their country and throughout Europe. Nature hotspots attract visitors in the same way as cultural sites, such as cathedrals and other monumental buildings.



In this perspective, nature is considered to be dynamic, because landscapes are continually changing. Many landscapes that have lost their identity (degraded sites) become attractive in 2050 because they have been re-colonised and re-natured. For instance, former industrial sites are converted to attractive green places with monumental industrial buildings by local gardening initiatives and start-ups in urban agriculture. The demographic, economic and ecological decline of remote rural areas has slowed down as a result of the return of people searching for their roots and reconnecting with nature. These local communities are revitalised, for example, by new inhabitants and start-ups in local agriculture production and tourism. Former large-scale agricultural areas are enriched by large-scale landscape elements. People, who originate from outside

Europe (e.g., from Turkey and Morocco), also create nature and places, according to their own identities. In urban areas, different groups of people relate to different spots.

#### *Pathway to 2050*

Key actors who could accomplish this image of nature are part of civil society, such as various newly developed groups of citizens and farmers. The media and the arts sector could facilitate these groups by expressing identity and by giving strong images of what nature can be and how people can relate to it. The business and health sectors can play significant roles in increasing the effect economically. Regional and local authorities could regulate and facilitate achievement of the image, for instance, when tensions arise between sectors.

There is much social innovation in this perspective, particularly innovations involving new public-private partnerships. Moreover, people work together in various collectives in which they share resources. Social media play a key role in communication within collectives and with society.

Programmes for rural and urban renewal could also play a key role in achieving the image. In this perspective, much effort goes into the branding of European nature. Financial resources are generated by selling nature areas as products, and also by crowd sourcing and micro-financing. Thus, small amounts of public funds are sufficient to reinforce nature conservation and development. All nature areas that are publicly co-financed are accessible to the public. Regional awareness is also raised through specific education programmes.

Synergies between nature and other sectors of society could be achieved through public participation and by social ownership. However, there could be tensions in competition for land in urban areas and also in other areas. Land accessibility could be an issue. Furthermore, nature areas could be disturbed by intensive recreational use.

### **5.3 Nightmare for nature and people (boxed nature)**

#### *Nature is taken for granted*

##### *Image of nature in 2050*

In 2050, land use is mono-functional, dominated by agriculture, urbanisation, and infrastructure. Most nature areas in the EU are small green boxes, conserved for recreation by wealthy people, and with restricted access for most people. Large nature areas are only found outside the EU, for example, in Russia. In most regions in the EU, there is considerable pressure on nature, resulting mainly from large-scale biomass production for energy generation and the chemical industry. Cities have few green areas and city parks are mainly man-made artificial. Large areas in southern Europe have become desert.

In this perspective, people have gained material wealth – although unequally distributed – but the quality of the living environment has declined. Many people suffer from “nature deficit disorder”, and especially children, spend little time outdoors, leading to behavioural problems. The focus on short-term economic gains leads to a loss in regulating capacities of ecosystems with high risks of floods, droughts, shortage of clean



sectors. Many regulations and subsidies for nature conservation are considered to hamper economic growth and therefore are phased-out.

Nature is segregated from other sectors and there are many tensions between sectors, particularly between “profit” and “planet”.

## 5.4 Paradigm shift

*Nature is not a luxury. It is a fundamental essence for life.*

### *Image of nature in 2050*

In 2050, a paradigm shift has been achieved towards greening the society. People understand the value of nature and why they need it. They are connected with nature and have plenty of opportunities to feel and experience nature. Nature-based solutions play a key role in the economy. Production is dominated by the principle “working together with nature”. Business models are changed to ethical thinking and creating sustainable solutions. Transparency and traceability play key roles in the production of goods and services. Agriculture is multifunctional (food and nature) and soil is managed sustainably. Production and consumption of goods and services have changed significantly. Companies make limited use of resources and produce little waste. In their daily lives, people contribute to nature rather than having a negative impact on nature. Regional and local consumption have become routine, as has waste recycling.

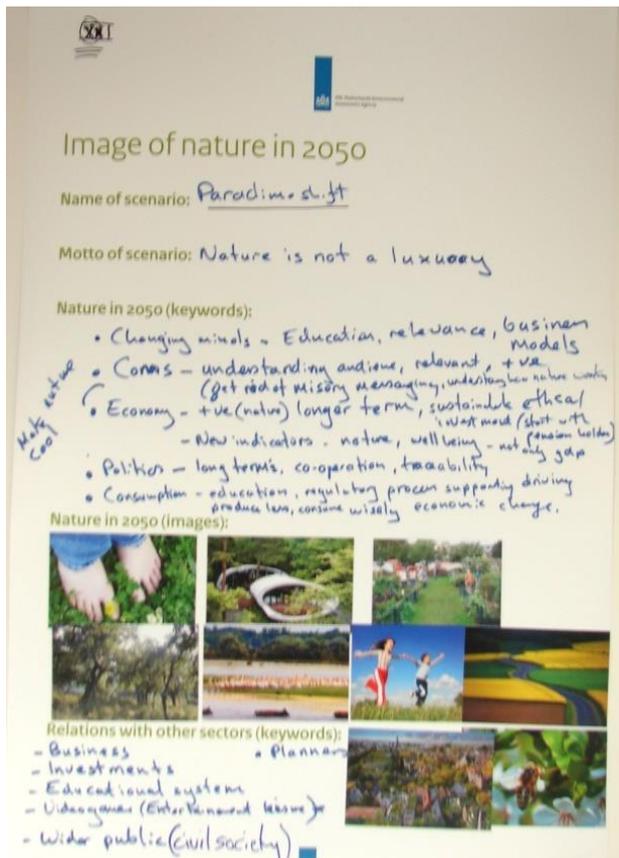
In Paradigm shift, nature is closely integrated with society, particularly with agriculture, infrastructure, housing, leisure, health, the economy, planning, and education. The wider public (civil society) is also well aware of the value of nature and the service it provides.

### *Pathway to 2050*

Key actors who could achieve the paradigm shift are businesses, the financial sector, policy makers, educators and NGOs. Achieving this image needs companies to change their production processes. Politicians, consumers and children are not key actors but key audiences.

This perspective involves cooperation by innovators, trendsetters and the media to get the messages across. Good examples from local community actions are widely discussed. Politics is dominated by cross-party agreements, which are essential in the regulatory process. This is requested by civil society.

The paradigm shift is primarily achieved by education, especially for children. Schools integrate nature in their curriculum, and NGOs foster education in various ways. Television programmes and games educate in informally. Education and understanding shape and change people’s mind-sets, and in turn, contributes to close cooperation by politics and companies. Companies and people obtain the right information to limit their use of resources and waste production. New indicators for welfare are applied in relation to *Gross Natural Product* as well as the *Gross Domestic Product*.



This perspective contains many synergies between nature and other sectors of society, and which are actively created by the many actors involved. Tensions may arise when short-term requirements prevail over long-term requirements

## 6 Evaluation

The dialogue concluded with a brief evaluation. The participants indicated which aspects of the dialogue worked well and which aspects could be improved. PBL and ECNC will use these suggestions in organising the next two dialogues.

Aspects of the dialogue that worked well were:

- Good mix of people
- Stimulating group discussions
- High but deep reflection
- Efficient time distribution
- Fantastic dinner
- Great team

Aspects of the dialogue that could be improved were:

- More clarity about objectives
- More diversity of participants including people from urban networks
- Facilitating group communication, when necessary
- More understanding of how outcomes will be used

## List of participants

Ms Agnes Zolyomi , European Habitats Forum  
Ms Amanda Gregory, Joint Nature Conservation Committee  
Mr Andreas Baumueller, Worldwide Fund for Nature - European Policy Office  
Ms Anik Schneiders, Research Institute for Nature and Forest  
Ms Anita Prosser, EUROPARC Atlantic Isles  
Ms Anne Gerdien Prins, PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency  
Ms Aysegul Cil, European Centre for Nature Conservation  
Ms Caroline Costongs, Euro Health Net  
Ms Chantal van Ham, IUCN European Policy Office  
Ms Christina Fatourou, European Centre for Nature Conservation  
Mr Claus Mayr, NABU, BirdLife partner in Germany  
Mr Clive Needle, Euro Health Net  
Mr Cy Griffin, European Federation of Associations for Hunting & Conservation  
Dr Ed Dammers, PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency  
Mr Guy Duke, EU Business & Biodiversity Platform  
Mr Hans Farjon, PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency  
Mr Henk van Zeijts, PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency  
Ms Inge Gotzmann, Network of NGOs for the European Landscape Convention  
Ms Irene Bouwma, Alterra Wageningen UR  
Ms Ivone Pereira-Martins, European Environment Agency  
Mr Jaap Wiertz, PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency  
Ms Janneke Vader, LEI Wageningen UR  
Mr Jean-Michel Scheuren, Biomimicry europa  
Dr Juan Urbano López de Meneses, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment  
Mr Kristijan Civic, European Centre for Nature Conservation  
Dr Laure Ledoux, European Commission, DG Environment (observer)  
Dr Lawrence Jones- Walters, Alterra Wageningen UR  
Mr Luc Bas, IUCN European Union Representative Office  
Ms Marieke van Zalk, Worldwide Fund for Nature - European Policy Office  
Ms Marijke Vonk, PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency  
Mr Mark Snethlage, European Centre for Nature Conservation  
Mr Matthias Jurek, UNEP Vienna - Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention  
Mr Michael O'Brian, European Commission, DG Environment (observer)  
Dr Miklós Kertész, Centre for Ecological Research, Hungarian Academy of Sciences  
Mr Neil McIntosh, European Centre for Nature Conservation  
Mr Pierre Crahay, European Landowners Organisation  
Mr Pieter de Pous, European Environmental Bureau  
Mr Tamas Marghescu, International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation  
Mr Toby Aykroyd, Wild Europe  
Ms Valerie Carter, European Council for Village and Small Town  
Mr Wouter Langhout, Birdlife Europe