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Highlights from the presentations

The event was officially opened by MEP Hilde Vautmans (Renew Europe). She is also a member of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development in the European Parliament and president of the MEPs for Wildlife Group and attaches great importance to biodiversity.

During her opening speech, she highlighted the fact that the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 is an ambitious agreement to try to stop biodiversity loss in Europe by protecting and restoring nature. Vautmans: *"The Strategy also enables change through new forms of decision-making. That is what the so-called 'biodiversity governance' framework is about. This new form of governance will be crucial if we want to achieve our ambitious objectives". She emphasized that "Interreg Europe realizes the importance of working together and sharing ideas, and has therefore put strong local cooperation, coordination and knowledge sharing between the various stakeholders at the core of their projects. That is why this project and organisation is so important. By supporting regional and local governments across Europe and facilitating stakeholder cooperation, BioGov is contributing to a more coherent biodiversity policy." She elaborated on an example from Belgium, highlighting how "BioGov contributed to this project by setting up a process to reconcile the differences in laws and policies between the different regions in Belgium. This piloting case is inspiring and worth looking into. First of all, it is encouraging that local farmers were involved in policymaking. Secondly, the bottom-up approach can easily be taken over to similar projects that aim to improve regional biodiversity across Europe. The input of the bottom-up project has led to the realization of a tailor-made instrument for the refunding of works by farmers and landowners that improve the biodiversity in the region." (...) "This way of working can help us in Europe to fight together against the loss of biodiversity and is the way we should do it in the future. By bringing together the different stakeholders to share their opinions, they can*

harmonize their objectives and try to build consensus. This can give the stakeholders a feeling of ownership, which could enhance the effectiveness of a certain policy because they are more motivated to contribute to a solution. It is clear that with its Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the EU has the powers and ambition to take the lead in this fight and to influence the rest of the world. But we cannot do this without the cooperation from local stakeholders, such as farmers. We need to give them a voice and let them participate in the process. This is the only way to motivate everyone to fight this battle together and to find suitable solutions adapted to the needs in the region. And that's exactly what this project stands for."

Hilde Vautmans, MEP Renew Europe, Opening Speech High level policy event BioGov, 17 November 2022.

Main outcomes Policy Event

We heard many interesting speakers today, showing us the relevance not only of the topic we are addressing, but that the way we went about it is something worth doing.

Nicolas Singer from Interreg Europe shared that Interreg projects are crucial for mobilising actions and funds at regional and local level.

From Lead Partner (**Wim Hiemstra**) and DG Regio (**Nathalie Verschelde**) presentations, we learned how coordinated efforts between different policy areas can and should mobilise different funding and we should look at funding sources in a way that they can complement each other, and not as siloes.

But in BioGov, the partnership has learned and argues that we can go further; we need cooperation at the local level, this way we can build alliances needed to implement EU strategies, from Biodiversity to New Forestry strategy, at the local and regional level.

We need additional institutional and human resources that enable stakeholders to improve their knowledge and skills in participatory processes. We need policy organisations to invest in facilitators of such participatory processes. Also for the future of Natura 2000 sites, this approach can be used for determining clear site specific conservation objectives to be just and inclusive, and to ensure wide knowledge base deriving from different stakeholders.

As PP3 indicated (**Razvan Popa** Fundatia ADEPT Romania), we need to empower people on the ground (from farmers to forest owners) with information and knowledge, especially when we need action from them to protect biodiversity, for example in Result based payments schemes.

Last but not least, the word **trust** was heard several times today. If we can build trust among stakeholders (not only for implementation of new strategies but also monitoring for example already set up measures), then we can move ahead and, as said right at the beginning of our event by our key note speaker: "we can help our stakeholders become part of the solution".

This is a short conclusion of the work BioGov partners did and discussions today, but we are not stopping here, our project opened new questions and common ground where we can

still learn from each other. We will be applying a new project, addressing among other topics connectivity, green infrastructure and landscape approach. We will bring this wide range of knowledge and experience from BioGov into this new proposal, from biodiversity to participatory approach.

Tjasa Baloh, PP6 reporting final conclusions on 17 November 2021, BioGov policy event, Brussels.