

**Report Pledge networking event  
on Butterflies and EU Biodiversity  
Strategy 2030 targets**



**Butterfly**  
**CONSERVATION EUROPE**

# Butterfly Conservation Europe Report Pledge networking event on Butterflies and EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 targets Online, 29 and 30 March 2022



## Butterfly Conservation Europe (BCE) May 2022

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## Production

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May 2022

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## Introduction

Over 100 participants joined the event on Pledges and Butterflies was organised by Butterfly Conservation Europe (BCE) and DG-Environment with support from the Natura2000 Networking events consortium led by Wageningen University. Representatives from 26 Member States, butterfly experts from across the EU, Butterfly Conservation Europe and DG-Environment met online on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of March 2022 to explore the opportunities to include actions for butterflies in MS's Pledges to implement EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 targets.

### Context

This event was organised within the frame of the EU Natura 2000 Biogeographical process and was focussed on improving the conservation and restoration of butterflies and their habitats to assist Member States in achieving the targets in the EUBDS 2030, including reversing the decline in wild pollinators and supporting the recovery of Habitats Directive and Red listed butterflies and moths.

Key aims were to enhance contacts, share knowledge and expertise and make sure it was available to help MSs with developing Pledges to meet the Protected Areas and Species improvement targets.

- legal protection of at least 30% of EU land and sea area, of which one third at least (10% of EU land and sea area) should become strictly protected;
- non-deterioration in the trends of protected species and habitats and reaching (at least) a positive trend for 30% of all species and habitats that are currently not in favourable or secure status.

#### *The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030*

- Strategy adopted by the European Commission on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2020  
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1590574123338&uri=CELEX:52020DC0380>
- Overall goal: **to put biodiversity on the path to recovery** by 2030, by protecting and restoring nature and ecosystems in the EU
- **Headline targets:**
  1. Establish a larger coherent EU-wide network of protected areas
  2. Develop a EU Nature Restoration Plan
- the Strategy was **endorsed by Member States** through Council Conclusions in October 2020, and by the **European Parliament** in an own-initiative report adopted in June 2021



*Slide from presentation of Frank Vassen- DG-ENV*

### Networking Event

Dr. Sam Ellis Chair of BCE welcome delegates and Prof. Dr. Josef Settele UFZ chaired the Plenary session. In the Plenary session the following presentations were given:

- [The Pledge process](#) – Frank Vassen, DG-Env
- [Status and trends for butterflies and their habitats and MS's Conservation Status Improvement targets and Pledges](#) – Sue Collins, BCE
- [Protected Areas targets](#) – Simona Bonelli, BCE and Turin University
- [Improving management for butterflies](#) – Sam Ellis, BCE
- [Monitoring for butterflies and their habitats](#) – Chris van Swaay, BCE
- [Developing and implementing National and Regional Species Action Plans for butterflies in France](#) - Xavier Houard - OPIE & Camille Gazay - MNHN

All the presentations can be found [on the BCE website](#) and the recorded plenary session at [this link](#). The plenary was followed by 3 break-out groups which brought together MS's representatives and butterfly experts from countries facing similar challenges, to discuss opportunities for the pledges. Butterfly experts and MSs plan to follow up the event with further bilateral and cross border exchanges as the pledge process develops.

Check the [detailed Agenda](#) for more information of the event structure.

## Main conclusions and recommendations

### 1. Butterflies are a good candidate for inclusion in Members State Pledges for Conservation Status Improvements and halting deterioration

Members States (MSs) noted that:

- Most EU Habitats Directive listed butterflies and their habitats are in unfavourable conservation status and often declining, as the [Art. 17 Reports](#) on butterflies clearly show and are good candidates for the MSs species improvement Pledges.
- Ecological knowledge, advice and monitoring is available to help MSs design and implement measures to halt deterioration of these listed species; to support their restoration; and to demonstrate improvements. The [French National Action Plan for butterfly recovery](#) was a valuable example of species recovery plans.
- “Butterflies are an “umbrella” species; therefore, Pledges supporting butterfly recovery will bring other benefits, including helping reverse declines in other pollinators”.



Fig 1. Mentimeter survey done during the Plenary session regarding prioritization for Pledges. Answers from 62 participants.

### 2. Sources of support for implementation of Pledges are available

Participants noted that there are several initiatives, including Butterfly Species Action Plans, LIFE Nature, LIFE SNAPS, EU INTERREG and other projects which demonstrate how improvements can be made for butterflies and could be used to support implementation of Pledges. BCE's Report on [Do's and Don'ts for butterflies of Habitats Directive of the European Union](#) provides advice on specific measures that are likely to be effective.

### 3. Management Measures need to be included in Species Improvement Pledges

In all MSs, reducing the pressures from agricultural intensification is vitally needed. Member States Pledges to take the following actions would support the recovery of Habitat Directive and Red List butterflies and their habitats:

- prevent ploughing or fertilisation of semi natural grasslands;
- avoid pesticides;
- maintain herb rich edges of crop fields and woodland with butterfly larval food plants and nectar sources across the farmed landscape;
- include funding and support for such measures in CAP Strategic Plans is essential. In Central and Eastern areas of the EU, prevent abandonment of semi-natural grasslands, through Pledges to support the maintenance of sustainable grazing and mowing regimes;





- 1.3 improve management of water levels, rewet humid meadow habitats, reduce peat extraction, support the inclusion of open areas, rides and biodiverse edges in woodland management and closer to nature forestry.



*Fig 3. Mentimeter survey done during the Plenary session regarding priority focus of the Protected Areas. Answers from 62 participants.*

## *2. Include measures in Pledges to reduce pressures on PAs through:*

- 2.1 horizontal measures to reduce nitrogen emissions and eutrophication (especially in the Atlantic Biogeographic region);
- 2.2 adding buffer areas to PAs.

## *3. Enhance connectivity between PAs and across the landscape through stepping stones and corridors, supporting dispersal and recolonisation of butterfly species.*

## *4. Increase the size of existing PAs and add new ones, especially for Red Listed butterflies.*

- 4.1 New PAs are needed for Red Listed butterflies
- 4.2 In MSs where PA coverage is well below the 30% target, adding PAs for butterflies and other pollinators would be a priority.

## **Next Steps**

- Further bilateral and cross border discussions to be organised between MSs designing Pledges involving butterfly experts and BCE to inform more detailed consideration of possible Pledges.
- Explore the scope for LIFE+, INTERREG and other projects to support implementation of Pledges for butterflies and their habitats.
- Mobilise funding to implement Pledges through CAP Strategic Plans and other EU and national funds.
- Improve ecological knowledge and availability of Farm Advisory Services should be included in Pledges.
- Raise the profile of butterflies, wild pollinators and their habitats to enhance support for positive action and contribute to transformative change and achieving EU BDS 2030 targets.
- MSs to consider supporting additional butterfly monitoring efforts to inform evaluation and adaptation actions.



## Summary of key conclusions from Breakout Groups

**Group A:** Czech Republic, Finland, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Sweden. *MSs with intermediate levels of species richness, often with lower pressures from intensification and more from land abandonment.*

- Funds: challenge lies in **mobilising EU and national funds** effectively (MFF to commit 7.5% of the EU Budget annually), including through CAP Strategic Plans. The scope for LIFE project funding associated with specific Pledges could be an important catalyst.
- There was acceptance that relevant data and information exist to help target, design Pledges and measures and monitor outcomes. The need to **mobilise financial and human resources** as well as filling knowledge gaps was highlighted.
- **Better management** of existing Protected Areas should have a high priority to help improve HD species trends.
- **Good practical measures to improve habitat for butterfly populations** are needed, including grazing or mowing; sustaining sufficient water levels; creating open areas and flower rich rides and edges in forests.
- **Action is required at scale** to improve the conservation status of HD Butterflies and their habitats which could have wider benefits. This opportunity to share experiences between butterfly experts and MS officials was appreciated by MSs and experts.

**Group B:** Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Spain, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia. *MSs hosting butterfly hotspots, often with knowledge gaps on species distribution and ecological requirements.*

- All agreed that **better management of existing Protected Areas was a vital measure** to include in Pledges. In many cases Management Plans for Natura 2000 sites exist on paper only while implementation, applying expert knowledge is urgently needed.
- Criteria to select species were recommended for the Species Improvement Pledge to focus on HD butterfly species, with **Red Listed species included**, connecting species protection with threatened habitat protection, especially semi-natural grasslands. France's National and Regional Action Plans for butterfly species recovery were welcomed and showed that **strict protection works**.
- Initiatives for **sharing more knowledge and effective practices across borders** would be a good opportunity to help develop effective Pledges and develop support schemes to improve species status.
- Butterflies and the habitats they depend on suffer from both **abandonment and intensification pressures**. Measures to address and reduce these pressures are urgently needed and at scale. Creating opportunities for interaction between policy makers and actors in both Environmental and Agriculture Authorities is needed, at both MSs and EU level.
- **Reducing pressures from pesticides** is important for butterflies and other pollinators, for example in Italian rice fields. CAP Strategic Plans have been drafted by MSs and are open for revision before finalisation and **links across to the Species Improvement targets** could usefully be made.
- Effective measures against grassland abandonment: small land parcels and **traditional mowing or grazing**. There are opportunities to upscale these and payment levels need to be high enough to encourage farmers uptake of such voluntary schemes.



- **Improving ecological knowledge and availability of Farm Advisory Services** should be included in Pledges. Support for developing a Community of Practice around effective management for butterflies and other pollinators and their habitats could enhance the spread of effective management practices.
- **LIFE Preparatory Action Grants, Interreg Project Grants and Horizon projects** all offer opportunities to help e.g., to improve and share knowledge, map important areas and demonstrate results.
- **Monitoring of butterfly** and pollinator abundance and diversity was agreed to be essential both to design and **evaluate targets and measures**. MSs' support for BMS coordinators and management of data is a good opportunity to improve effectiveness.

**Group C: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands and France.**

*MSs with fewer species and better levels of knowledge on species distribution and ecological requirements, and often with high pressures from land use intensification.*

- Habitats and species in this region are affected by **highly intensive land use** with external pressures on the biodiversity conservation in both Protected Areas and the wider countryside. Actions to reduce adverse impacts are needed.
- Including actions to **reduce nitrogen emissions** as a horizontal measure in Status improvement Pledges would be valuable and help to recreate the conditions for grassland recovery over the decade.
- Measures to **sustain species on wet meadows** by managing water levels and controlling drainage are also needed. **Strict Protection for Peatland** would support butterflies and climate objectives.
- More practical information on **how to manage grazing** effectively and in a targeted way e.g., covering timing, duration, intensity in relation to different soil types, would be welcome in Ireland and elsewhere.
- **PA Management Plans exist mostly “on paper”**. The priority is to implement them with funded measures. In Germany and elsewhere it was noted that there is a need to connect management planning needed for butterflies with CAP Strategic Plans, funding and measures.
- **More action is needed to sustain and restore rarer butterflies**, including those listed in the Habitats Directive.
- In Western Europe much less high-quality habitat remains than in the rest of the EU. **Low Protected Area coverage**, so Pledges for action to contribute more to the EU PA target will be needed, especially the 10% Strictly Protected Areas target.
- **More publicity** around the state of butterflies and their habitats was identified as an opportunity: monitoring by citizens, promoting garden butterfly surveys, public engagement days and “No mow May” publicity campaign (Flanders).



## Resources and References

- EU Workshop website: [Workshop on butterflies and EU Biodiversity Strategy targets \(europa.eu\)](#)
- [Briefing Note](#): Pledge networking event on EUBDS 2030 target and Butterflies
- Butterfly Conservation Europe website: [De Vlinderstichting | Butterfly Conservation Europe](#)
- EU guidance and formats for MSs Pledges: [note on species improvement target](#), [format for species Pledges](#), [PA target guidance](#), [format for PA target](#)
- [Article 17 Reports at EU and MS levels](#)
- BCE [Do's and Don'ts for butterflies of Habitats Directive of the European Union](#)
- [European Red List of Butterflies 2010](#)
- [Mediterranean Red List of Butterflies](#) <https://doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.CH.2016.MRA.6.en>
- Integrating Red Lists for prioritising conservation for European Butterflies <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10841-019-00127-z>
- BC Landscape Scale approaches Report <https://butterfly-conservation.org/our-work/conservation-projects/landscape-scale-conservation-for-butterflies-and-moths-report>
- French National and Regional Action Plans for 38 butterflies 2020 - 2028 <https://papillons.pnaopie.fr/le-plan-national/>
- [Butterfly Indicators 1990-2018-Technical Report](#)
- [eBMS \(European Butterfly Monitoring Scheme\)](#) - citizen science butterfly monitoring
- EU ABLE Project Reports [www.butterfly-monitoring.net/ABLE](http://www.butterfly-monitoring.net/ABLE)
- EU SPRING Project [www.spring-pollination.eu](http://www.spring-pollination.eu)
- [EU PoMS report](#)
- EU Pollinators Initiative [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/pollinators/index\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/pollinators/index_en.htm)

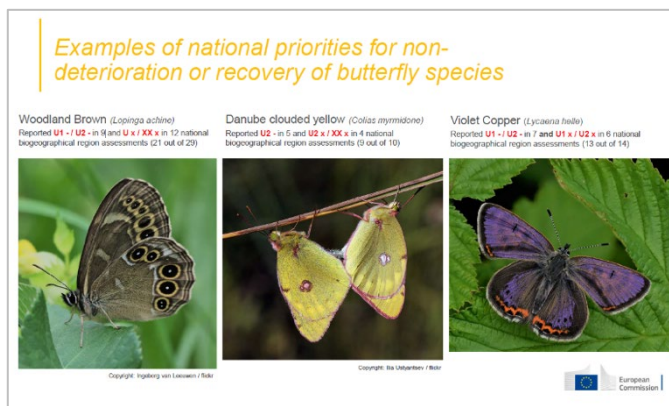
## Annex I. Additional Information

### Conservation Status improvement target

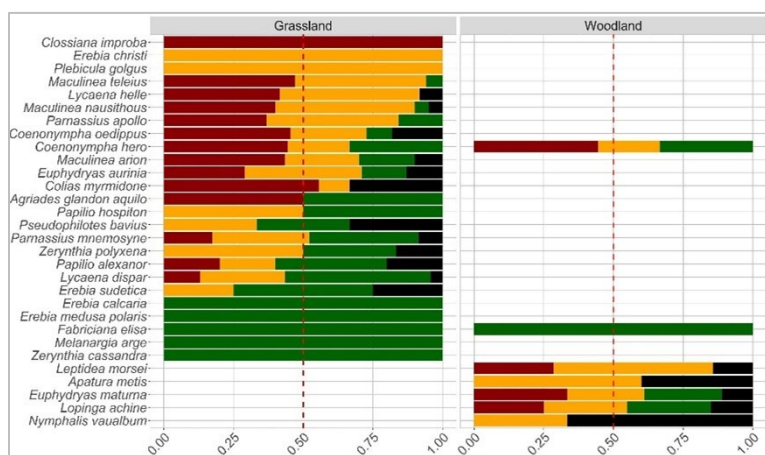
Action to ensure **non-deterioration of all Habitats Directive listed species** is required at the level of each Member State, plus specific measures to **support recovery of 30%** of Article 17 Species and Habitat Reports

Participants recognised that butterflies are a charismatic species, and are an indicator of the health of the environments and focusing of them in Pledges would have an umbrella effect, benefiting other pollinators characteristic of open habitats.

Most listed butterflies and their habitats of European importance are in an unfavourable conservation status, many with a declining trend ([Article 17 report](#)).



Slide from presentation of Frank Vassen- DG-ENV



Conservation Status of Habitat Directive butterflies (Art. 17)

Many other butterflies are Red Listed and vulnerable to extinction and the EU Grassland Butterfly Indicator shows declines in widespread species as well. Participants noted that inclusion in Pledges of action to improve status and trends of butterflies and their habitats could be an important contribution by MSs to meeting the ambitions of the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030. Priorities for actions in MSs were discussed and can be firmed up as Pledges develop.

### Protected Area Target and improving management and monitoring

Member States are invited to Pledge their contribution to **ensuring well managed Protected Areas across 30%** of the EU area by 2030. One third of PAs need to be **strictly protected**. All must be appropriately **managed** to support the species and habitats for which they are designated and outcomes need to be **monitored**.

Participants discussed the criteria for identifying action to achieve the Protected Area targets. These include the designation of new PAs (including for Red Listed species), addition of buffer zones and improving connectivity across the network. Participants identified improving the management of the existing PA as a high priority action to improve outcomes for butterflies and their habitats. Setting conservation objectives for butterfly conservation in PA management plans and investing in measures to implement them will be highly beneficial and could be a priority for Pledges. Criteria for selection of actions in different MSs were discussed and can be developed in further dialogues about Pledges.

**Rare and localized species: protecting all the populations!**

The case: *Phengaris teleius*  
Specialist butterfly Habitat 6410

IUCN category	
European (2010): <b>Vulnerable</b>	Italy (2015): <b>Vulnerable</b>
HD Annex II, IV	

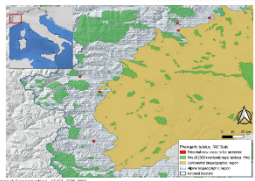
4<sup>th</sup> DH Italian Report (2019)

Alps	Cont.	Med.
U2	U2	I

Approach: Establishing new protected areas and enlarge borders of the existing ones. High resolution distribution data.

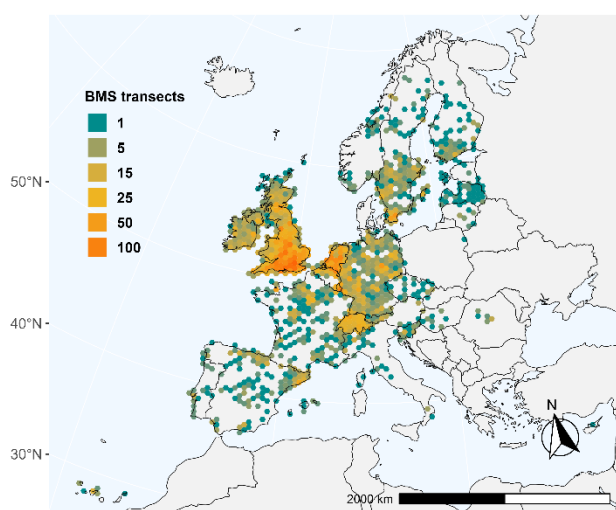
*P. teleius* show a very large proportion of occurrence points outside PAs. In this context, the new areas to be protected proposed in the maps are little enlargements of existing PAs and the designation of new PAs.

To identify we could considering 1 Km-buffer as reference area allows for a precautionary approach around precise occurrence data.



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Slide from presentation of Simona Bonelli



Butterfly monitoring transects up to 2020 (eBMS)

There is a lot of monitoring data available in many MSs about butterfly distribution and abundance. Participants noted that there are also data gaps that need to be filled and monitoring coverage and frequency needs to be increased to track trends and improve the quality of Art. 17 reporting. Expanding the monitoring of butterfly abundance and diversity, including through supporting eBMS coordinators in MSs will add important evidence here, including successes in reversing declines and supporting adaptive management.

## How to achieve results?

Participants discussed a variety of priorities and solutions across MSs. The Plenary and the Breakout Groups discussions enabled sharing knowledge, exchange of experience and help to strengthen dialogue between MS officials and butterfly experts. This will assist with the design of measures to implement Pledges. Participants noted the important of mobilisation of resources to scaling up action. DG-ENV reminded participants that the EU was committed to spending 7.5% of the EU budget (MFF) on biodiversity each year up to 2026 and 10% thereafter. Both EU funds and national resources were important. Participants noted the importance of making links between actions to implement Pledges and CAP Strategic Plans and other EU funding sources.

Management and monitoring, as well as protection from damaging activities are key to butterfly recovery. The French National Action Plan for butterfly recovery and the implementation plans at regional level are an inspiring example of a strategic approach to planning and implementation, accompany by monitoring and outcomes.

The deployment of various EU and national sources to support the implementation of evidence-based recovery measures will result in improvements in the conservation status of butterflies and their habitats and many other species, including wild pollinators. Supporting monitoring - both citizen

science eBMS and rollout of EUPoMs schemes - will make a difference and help MSs fulfil their obligations and aspirations and demonstrate results.

Citizen science [Butterfly Monitoring Schemes are available in most MSs](#).

Support from more MSs for coordination and data management would offer very good value for money and help extend the number of transects and underpin trend analysis.



*Slide from presentation of Xavier Houard and Camille Gazay*

### Some Practical Steps to improve management

There are some **good examples of effective measures** in MSs - applying similar approaches in more areas is key.

- Avoid further abandonment of semi natural grassland and reverse recent encroachment of scrub on semi natural grassland through funded restoration programmes
- Support extensive grazing (and grazing enterprises, working with local communities) or sustainable mowing of existing semi-natural grassland areas
- Avoid intensification (e.g., ploughing, fertilising and pesticide use) or overgrazing by sheep or cattle in places important for butterflies
- Manage existing PAs better, including through setting conservation objectives and funding measures (see BCE [Do's and Don'ts for butterflies of Habitats Directive of the European Union](#) for tailored land management advice). This is a priority action that will benefit butterflies, their habitats and the recovery and diversity of other wild insect pollinators, including bumble bees, solitary bees and hoverflies
- In places important for butterflies avoid intensification (e.g., ploughing, fertilising and pesticide use); overgrazing by sheep or cattle; and afforestation
- Identify and map some semi-natural grasslands, inside and beyond existing Protected Areas, where butterflies would benefit from Strict Protection and combine that with appropriate management measures
- Sustaining water levels in wet meadows, through reducing abstraction or reversing drainage, will be crucial to the recovery of some species.
- Creating and sustaining open areas and flowery rides and edges in forest and woodland habitats will support recovery of several threatened woodland butterflies, moths and other pollinators
- Incorporating butterfly recovery targets in spatial planning in MSs can help recovery of butterflies and moths in rural and urban areas (e.g., supports mosaics of habitats and flowery road verges) through managing threats and supporting conservation and connectivity
- Ensuring CAP Strategic Plans include Agri Environment and Eco Schemes that take account of Article 17 data and include measures that support conservation of butterflies, other pollinators and their habitats will mobilise resources and help meet targets
- Developing LIFE projects can help to fill gaps in knowledge and demonstrate practical results



*Slide from presentation of Sam Ellis (chair BCE)*



## Annex II. Participant List

First name	Last name	Organisation	Country
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