

The cost of inaction with respect to biodiversity loss. A perspective from the view of government policy-making

Dr J. VAN GOETHEM

Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, Brussels, Belgium

*Eproc High level Session, 14 April 2005
OECD Headquarters, Paris*

Biodiversity loss

- Biodiversity is hard to quantify
- Belgium's country study
 - How much? 36,300 \Rightarrow 55,000 species?
 - Quality? Well-known taxa = only 4% of species
 - Yet: used to establish conservation measures
 - Loss? > 50% of species threatened
- Good response to study by policy-makers



Need for comprehensive information on status and trends

Policy action

- Biodiversity loss translated into policy \Rightarrow '2010 target'
- Halt (significantly reduce) the (current rate of) loss
- Policy action at Belgian level
 - '2010 target' in policy plans, reporting and awareness campaigns
 - Other, numerous policy commitments



Policy exists, main drivers are European or international

Policy evaluation

- Little quantitative information on policy evaluation
- A few small-scale studies (forests, estuaries, marine)
 - Economical value, costs-benefits
- Existing information yet to be collected and analysed
- Some projects
 - Eradication of alien species (e.g. muskrat, black cherry)
 - Restoration of fragile biotopes (e.g. chalk grasslands)
 - Depollution (e.g. Tricolor in 2004)



Assessment of costs of policy inaction not yet available, but biodiversity is still decreasing

Perspectives

- Why policy inaction?
 - Lack of knowledge on biodiversity loss
 - Disagreements over what to do
 - Fear of going too far against economical interests
 - Long time-scale of measures against biodiversity loss
 - Numbers on cost of inaction extremely useful
 - Much work ahead on valuation of biodiversity
 - Need to convince non-specialist audience
- ➡ OECD work on valuation / policy inaction must continue