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From: General Secretariat of the Council

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To: Delegations

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Subject: European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 15/2020 entitled "Protection of wild pollinators in the EU: Commission initiatives have not borne fruit"
- Council conclusions

Delegations will find in the [Annex](#) the Council conclusions on the abovementioned subject, as approved by the Council at its 3782nd meeting held on 17 December 2020.

**European Court of Auditors' Special Report 15/2020 entitled "Protection of wild pollinators
in the EU: Commission initiatives have not borne fruit"**

- Council conclusions -

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING

- The Council conclusions on improving the examination of special reports drawn up by the Court of Auditors in the context of the discharge procedure ¹;
 - The measures already taken by the European Commission for the conservation of pollinators, in particular the EU Pollinators initiative ², which sets strategic objectives and a set of actions to address the decline of pollinators in the EU;
 - The Council conclusions on the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 ³ and on the Farm to Fork Strategy ⁴; HIGHLIGHTING the importance of these strategies for the protection of pollinators:
1. WELCOMES the Special Report No 15/2020 from the European Court of Auditors ('Court') entitled "Protection of wild pollinators in the EU: Commission initiatives have not borne fruit"; and AGREES with its conclusions on the need to strengthen the framework and policies for the conservation of pollinators in the EU;

¹ 7515/00 + COR 1.

² 9744/18 - COM(2018) 395.

³ 12210/20.

⁴ 12099/20.

2. EMPHASISES the vital role of pollinators for healthy ecosystems and food security and the necessity to reverse their decline; ACKNOWLEDGES, also against the background of increasing public concern regarding the decline of wild pollinators, the Court's finding that efforts are urgently necessary to revert the observed trends by addressing their main drivers, as identified by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in its Assessment Report on Pollinators, Pollination and Food Production (IPBES Report on Pollinators);
3. HIGHLIGHTS that strong collaboration and an adequate use of resources will be necessary to ensure coherence between the various policy measures and instruments which have influence on the protection of wild pollinators, such as the EU Green Deal with its EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and the Farm to Fork Strategy, the pesticides legislation and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP);
4. SUPPORTS the Court's proposal to use targeted funding instruments such as LIFE for the protection of wild pollinators and for improving their habitats both within and outside Natura 2000 areas; and REAFFIRMS that understanding and measuring biodiversity, tackling biodiversity loss, maintaining ecosystems in good condition and restoring ecosystems will require significant public and private investment at national and European level;

Assess the need for specific measures for wild pollinators

5. WELCOMES the Court's recommendation to assess the need for additional actions to address drivers of pollinator decline not considered in the current EU Pollinators initiative; in this respect WELCOMES the Commission's intention to undertake a review of the EU Pollinators initiative by the end of 2020 and, on that basis, consider follow-up actions on pollinators in 2021;

6. ACKNOWLEDGES the need for an EU-wide governance and monitoring framework, to effectively monitor and assess the status and trends of pollinators, the impact of the main drivers responsible for the decline in pollinators and of relevant EU policies, as well as the impact of conservation and restoration actions foreseen in the Habitats Directive on pollinator species; in this respect CALLS ON the Commission to establish such a framework, in cooperation with Member States, as soon as possible and define detailed objectives and indicators regarding the key commitment ‘The decline in pollinators is reversed’ from the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030;
7. UNDERLINES the importance of addressing knowledge gaps through enhanced research, including EU-level research, on the current state of pollinators and their habitats as well as on the drivers of their decline, with the aim to help develop effective measures to address them; NOTES in this regard the IPBES Report on Pollinators; HIGHLIGHTS the need to update the European Red list in respect of threatened EU pollinator species;

Better integrate actions to protect wild pollinators in EU policy instruments addressing biodiversity conservation and agriculture

8. AGREES with the Court's recommendation that the actions to protect wild pollinators should be better integrated into the strategic planning tools for the management of Natura 2000 sites; ENCOURAGES Member States to include measures targeting pollinators and their habitats in their multi-annual prioritised action frameworks (PAFs); NOTES that the assessment of these measures should take into account biological and geographical characteristics of each site, as well as other objectives for the conservation of species and habitats; further ENCOURAGES Member States to include measures on pollinators in their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans;

9. WELCOMES the Commission's intention to take the results of the review of the EU Pollinators initiative into account in the implementation of the post-2020 CAP;
10. NOTES that the post-2020 CAP proposals foresee the relevant interventions through conditionality, eco-schemes and agro-environmental climate measures, which are expected to have a positive effect on wild pollinators; and CALLS ON the Member States and Commission to ensure the integration of the measures which have a positive effect on pollinators in the Strategic Plans of the CAP;

Improve the protection of wild pollinators in the pesticides risk assessment process

11. AGREES with the Court in that better protection of wild pollinators in the pesticides risk assessment process and during the use phase of pesticides is required; WELCOMES the Commission's intention to develop better harmonised risk indicators more clearly reflecting the risks and impact of use of plant protection products for human and animal health and the environment;
12. SUPPORTS the Court's recommendation to elaborate a working plan for the development of scientifically-based test methods and specific protection goals for wild pollinators; CALLS ON Member States to further support the development of test methods for pesticides focusing on wild pollinators, including developments at international level (e.g. OECD, FAO); RECOGNISES that the current methods are mainly focused on managed honeybees and bumblebees; and EMPHASIZES that wild bee species and other pollinators should be better considered in this respect;

13. CALLS UPON the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the Commission to address specific protection goals for wild bees in the ongoing review of the Bee Guidance Document and for other pollinators in the project to develop a methodology for setting specific protection goals for the environmental risk assessment of pesticides; and CALLS ON the Commission and Member States to complement the protection goals for wild pollinators in the uniform principles for evaluation and authorisation of plant protection products and to integrate protection goals for wild pollinators in the evaluation process of biocides; in this respect, AGREES with the Court's recommendation that EFSA should revise the 2013 guidance document on the risk assessment of plant protection products for bees ⁵; EMPHASISES that the ongoing revision of the 2013 guidance document should maintain a high level of protection for managed and wild bees;
14. SHARES the Court's view that emergency authorisations shall always be adequately justified in order to reflect the need for the individual authorisations and should include specific information on activities conducted to find alternative solutions;
15. CALLS ON the Member States and Commission to further support a higher uptake of Integrated Pest Management, prioritising non-chemical pest control methods and techniques over pesticide use, with priority given to low-risk pesticides with a lesser impact on wild pollinators; HIGHLIGHTS that support for research is also necessary in this respect; and POINTS OUT that the availability of such solutions is important for European farmers and their appropriate use should be encouraged for the benefit of both agriculture and the environment.

⁵ https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/3295?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss.