

**Speaking points for intervention by the European Commission Representation
at the 3rd Conference of Eastern and Central European Botanic Gardens**

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- The Directorate-General for the Environment of the European Commission regrets not being able to send a representative to this conference but wishes to greet the participants and to share some thoughts with them.
- The EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 aims at halting the loss of biodiversity by 2020. It reflects the commitments taken by the EU in 2010 within the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
- Article 9 of the CBD specifies measures for the establishment and maintenance of facilities for ex-situ conservation of components of biological diversity. This article also points out the role such collections can play in the recovery and rehabilitation of threatened species and for their reintroduction into their natural habitats under appropriate conditions. Action A1.3.3 of the EU Biodiversity Strategy is the EU implementation of this article. It says: "Identify and fill critical gaps in EU ex-situ (zoo, botanic gardens, etc.) conservation programmes for wild species, in line with best practice, with appropriate cofinancing from European Commission and Member States". This action is very relevant for the botanic gardens that you represent at this conference.
- In the course of the implementation of the Habitats Directive in the Member States, which is one of the key targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy, a number of projects with the support of the EU LIFE financial instruments carried out plant species reintroductions to their natural habitats with the cooperation of botanic gardens. In 2011 a publication summarized some of these projects, among which there were some successful projects on plant conservation carried out in Hungary, the host of this conference. (Pro Domo: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/publications/lifepublications/lifefocus/documents/reintroduction.pdf>).
- Botanic gardens also play an important role in educating the public about plant conservation. There are many good examples of such activities.
- Also in the framework of the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the EU has adopted Regulation 1143/2014 on invasive alien species.

- Invasive alien species are one of the major threats to biodiversity. They cost the European economy at least 12 billion euro per year.
- The core of the Regulation is a list of invasive alien species of Union concern. There are currently 49 species on the list, among which 23 plants, mostly ornamental plants.
- Examples of terrestrial ornamental plants of Union concern are Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), American skunk cabbage (*Lysichiton americanus*) and Crimson fountaingrass (*Pennisetum setaceus*).
- Examples of aquatic ornamental plants of Union concern are water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*), Fanwort (*Cabomba caroliniana*) and Water Primrose (*Ludwigia grandiflora*).
- Following the listing of species as invasive alien species of Union concern, restrictions to selling, cultivating, reproducing and releasing the species apply. Member States have the duty to rapidly eradicate newly establishing populations, and to manage widely spread species.
- Botanical gardens have a crucial role to play in educating the public on invasive alien species, the threats they pose and the actions to be taken, with special emphasis on invasive alien species of Union concern.
- The Commission is keen to cooperate with the botanical gardens, in order to address the problem of invasive alien species, and to stop the loss of biodiversity by 2020.
- We wish you a successful conference and we also look forward to seeing the outcomes of your discussions.