

# Time to **bee** coherent for a buzzing future



**EU Pollinator Week 2023 28-30 November**

**#EUPollinators**

## **EU Pollinator Week - Highlights of Day 2 29 Nov 2023**

**For more information, access to the recordings and the slides, please visit  
[www.eupollinatorweek.com](http://www.eupollinatorweek.com)**

(Recordings and slides will be available a few days after the event)

The second day of the EU Pollinator Week saw in-depth discussions about technical, scientific and political matters surrounding pollinator health and beekeeping.

The day kicked off with an update on the revised EU Pollinators Initiative. The Initiative was first adopted in 2018, underwent a revision process in 2021, and a new version was adopted in 2023. The latest version integrates feedback from European institutions as well as the European Court of Auditors and the Committee of the Regions. The Initiative is a landmark in pollinator protection and is expected to be voted on this very day (Nov 29) by the European Parliament.

DG ENVI introduced the audience to the main features of the revised initiative, also stating that it comes partly as a response to the citizens' claims for bee-friendly environments. In particular, it responds to the citizen claims in the European Citizens' Initiative 'Save Bees and Farmers', which collected over a million signatures.

The Pollinator Initiative seeks to improve knowledge with comprehensive monitoring schemes to monitor population trends, with expected support from a future Nature Restoration Law, should the Parliament adopt the bill. Monitoring will also involve regular

updates of the existing Red List Assessment, identifying and assessing threat levels of individual species.

The Initiative also aims to tackle the causes of pollinator decline, including measures that target agriculture and pesticide use. It seeks to establish conservation plans through programmes such as Life and Buzz Lines and provide guidance for urban areas and greening plans. At the same time, it includes a strong communication and engagement plan, focusing on youth and business.

DG AGRI also presented some of its new measures to support pollinator-friendly farming. The proposal includes mobilising resources in the new Common Agricultural Policy, benefiting from a framework they deem more ambitious than the previous one. They also insisted on the importance of area-based interventions beneficial for pollinators, including support for organic farming, maintenance and development of landscape features, and reducing pesticide use and risk. Supporting that reduction is sought by compensating farmers for a sustainability transition, the application of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), precision targeting, and supporting agroforestry and agroecology. Finally, DG AGRI expects to develop a new farmland pollinator indicator in response to the new Nature Restoration Law (NRL) framework if adopted.

Regarding the protection of pollinators from pesticides, DG SANTE presented important measures to ensure that Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is appropriately implemented and that harmonised risk indicators are achieved. On the controversial matter of emergency authorisations of banned pesticides, it has been emphasised that a recent court judgement on the matter (C-162/21) is legally binding. As the judgement establishes, human and animal health should be prioritised over increased plant production, thus further restricting the cases of emergency authorisations. To respond to these developments, the Commission has mandated the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to develop specific protocols to assess the justifications for member states requesting emergency authorisations. The protocols are (likely) expected to be delivered this year.

Furthermore, the risk assessment of pesticides has also been at the centre of attention. The 2013 EFSA Bee Guidance Document, mandated to be reviewed in 2019 and adopted in May 2023, is now awaiting endorsement by the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (PAFF Committee). But, before the approval, the European Commission must conduct an analysis and revision process for necessary updates in implementing regulations (546/2011 regarding uniform principles for evaluation and authorisation of PPPs and 283 & 284/2013 setting out data requirements for PPPs). It is expected that implementing regulations will soon be updated and the relevant measures of the guidance document adopted.

The European Food Safety Authority and the European Chemicals Agency had the opportunity to provide detailed information on the development process and status of their guidance documents. EFSA highlighted the road to establishing Specific Protection Goals, which is the maximum tolerable impact in risk assessment. As it stands, there is a limit of no more than 10% of colony strength loss allowed for honeybees. However, such specific protection goal is not extended to other species because of insufficient data.

Besides the agencies' work on risk assessment, today was also filled with a wide range of presentations on pollinator-related research and initiatives from various projects. Research and monitoring projects like SPRING, Safeguard, and the initiatives by the Spanish CREA

are filling significant gaps in both monitoring initiatives and testing research. Other projects, like B-THENET, create new opportunities for improving and sharing best beekeeping practices.

Significant highlights from these presentations include the confirmation of pollinator population decline across Europe. For example, the Spring project found that there has been a 30% decrease in butterflies in the last 30 years. Additionally, the CREAM has demonstrated the importance of measuring the cocktail effects of both fungicides and pesticides, along with other stressors such as those produced by climate change. The Safeguard project has also emphasised climate change's impacts on pollinator populations, particularly in the lowlands of the Iberian peninsula. Pollinator populations decline in these areas, and some move to higher altitudes in response to rising temperatures and environmental degradation.

The B-THENET project also introduced various key points. Besides its training and information-sharing work, the project identified and stimulated discussions on the challenges that European beekeepers face. One of those challenges is the lack of accessibility to veterinary medicinal products, particularly for treating varroa, one of the most common parasites affecting honeybees in Europe.

The second day of the EU Pollinator Week was also the right occasion to reflect on and celebrate the role of young citizens in the future of pollinators. The European Commission and the Joint Research Centre (JRC) showcased their initiatives for youth involvement in the Pollinators Initiative. With a budget of 4.5 million euros, the Commission is developing the Youth for Pollinators pilot project at the request of the European Parliament. It is a significant step for youth involvement in policy-making and decision-making processes. The project also supports other activities of young people, including research and land management activities, and other initiatives such as campaigns and citizen initiatives aiming to reduce pesticide use. The project also seeks to introduce training and education programmes into the school curricula to stimulate the early engagement of pupils.

The youth also proves to be actively involved in the protection of pollinators. Initiatives such as Pollinators Ambassadors and the Global Young Biodiversity Network demonstrate that young citizens are not only asking to be heard. They are working to raise awareness of the importance of pollinators and to create solutions based on an entrepreneurial spirit. They seek social innovations and develop practical tools to change our social mindset through storytelling, symbolic actions and policy recommendations.

Young beekeepers have also expressed today the many challenges they face. As most European beekeepers insist, their livelihoods are in peril. Deteriorating environmental and market conditions are producing detrimental effects for beekeepers. Honey fraud and adulteration are significant issues for the future of beekeeping. However, the risk is not only the loss of beekeeping. Many crops depend on the pollination provided by honeybees, so the future of food production also depends on the sustainability of beekeeping as an economic activity. Hence, young beekeepers claim they need support to keep the beekeeping profession alive.

The final session shed some light on the problems that climate change poses for pollinators. Speakers explained that climate change should be thought of in terms of rising temperatures and the increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme climate events. Droughts, floods, heatwaves and other extreme events create conditions that significantly affect pollinator

populations. It has also been explained that plants and pollinators have some capacity for adaptation and movement in response to climate change. Nevertheless, they cannot respond to the quickly changing climate, much less to extreme events. We cannot expect nature to become resilient to climate change, considering that the temperature shift it produces is 30 times faster than, for example, the changing temperatures 30 thousand years ago.

Furthermore, climate change also has disastrous effects on beekeeping practices. For example, honeys have reduced quality and sometimes have humidity problems. There is an increase in honey production costs and more significant colony losses. Beekeepers are then calling for a radical agricultural policy reform that ensures an extensive agroecological approach across Europe. Policy measures should also include ambitious ecological schemes targeting pollinators, supporting and stimulating farmers to apply pollinator-friendly farming practices.

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#### **EU Pollinator Week Day 2 programme (Nov 29, 2023):**

##### **Policy Conference (Hybrid): "Revised EU Pollinators Initiative"**

Location: Meeting Room A, Copa-cogeca, Rue de Trèves, 61, Brussels

Moderator: MEP Hannes Heide

Speakers:

- Hans Stielstra - DG ENVI, European Commission
- Karin Nienstedt - DG SANTE, European Commission
- Gaëlle Marion - DG AGRI, European Commission
- Exchanges with:
- Mihaela Vacarasu - European Court of Auditors
- Marta Mansanet Canovas - Committee of the Regions
- Stoyan TCHOUKANOV - European Economic and Social Committee

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##### **Scientific Conf. (Online): Advancing Knowledge and Environmental Risk Assessment for Bees and Other Insect Pollinators**

Moderator: Noa Simón Delso, Scientific Director, BeeLife

Speakers:

- Safeguarding European wild pollinators: Trends, impacts and conservation - Ignasi Bartomeus, EBD-CSIC, Spain
- News from the SPRING project - David Roy, UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, UK
- B-THENET project to support the beekeeping sector - Giovanni Formato, IZSLT, Italy
- Combined effects of pesticides and other stressors on solitary bees - Jordi Bosch, CREA, Spain
- Update on the EFSA activities on risk assessment of pesticides on insect pollinators - Csaba Szentes, EFSA, EU

- Update on the ECHA guidance for the risk assessment of bees and other arthropod pollinators - Jaana Laitinen, ECHA, EU
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### Citizens Conference (Online): "Young Generations with Pollinators"

Moderator: Noelia Vallejo, Head of Area for Conservation Strategies and Plans, Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge (Spain)

Speakers:

- European Parliament's Pilot Project on engagement for pollinators - Mateusz Tokarski and Vujadin Kovacevic, European Commission
  - Young generations engaged with pollinators - Nadine Schuller, Pollinator Ambassadors, Austria
  - Young generations for biodiversity - Nynke Blömer, Global Young Biodiversity Network
  - Young beekeepers, is there a future? - Kestutis Garalevicius, Lithuania
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### B-THENET Workshop: Availability of Veterinary Medicinal Products for use in beekeeping in the EU

Location: Meeting Room A, Copa-Cogeca, Rue de Trèves 61, Brussels

Moderator: Noa Simon Delso, Scientific Director and Chair of the International B-THENET Center for other stakeholders (BeeLife)

Speakers:

- Relevant outputs of the B-THENET international event on Veterinary Medicinal Products for Honey Bees held in 2023 - Giovanni Formato, IZSLT
  - Regulatory tools in the VMP Regulation - Alfonso Las Heras, European Commission DG SANTE
  - Use of Veterinary Medicinal Products in EU: feedback from FVE - Despoina Iatridou, FVE
  - Comparison among POM and non-POM on trade in EU for varroosis control - Andrea Gyorffy, IZSLT
  - Accessibility of VMP to beekeepers: the case of France - Jean-Marie Hédon, FNOSAD, France
- Round table: How to guarantee beekeepers' access to the varroa treatments everywhere in the EU: experiences and proposals
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### Climate Change and Pollinators (Online)

Moderator: Matt Shardlow, Chief Executive, BugLife

Speakers:

- Impact of climate on the Greek beekeeping and rural areas - Alexandros Papachristoforou, University of Thessaly, Greece
- Impact of climate change on plant phenology - Emmanuelle Porcher, Natural science museum Paris, France
- Impact of climate change on wild pollinators - Guillaume Ghisbain, UMONS, Belgium
- Impact of climate change on bees and honey production - Anna Ganapini, CONAPI-BeeLife, Italy