EVIDENCE

Priority actions for European conservation biology: A workshop summary

András Báldi 🔘

Lendület Ecosystem Services Research Group, MTA Center for Ecological Research, Vácrátót, Hungary

The Intergovernmental Science-policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) is dedicated to providing policymakers with scientific assessments about the state of knowledge on biodiversity, ecosystems, and the benefits they provide to people (https://www.ipbes.net/). The IPBES Europe and Central Asia (ECA) assessment was completed between 2015 and 2018, and was adopted by the IPBES Plenary meeting in Medellin, Colombia (17–24 March, 2018).

The ECA assessment, co-chaired by Mark Rounsevell and Markus Fischer, was prepared by ca. 120 experts. In addition, 7,700 stakeholder comments on the drafts from stakeholders were considered. The ECA assessment is a complex and comprehensive assessment of the status and trends of biodiversity in ECA, including all of Russia and Turkey (IPBES 2018). The assessment chapters overview the status and trends, drivers, possible futures and governance options in over 1,000 pages. It also provides a summary for policy makers (SPM), a short and easy to understand supplement aimed at a general audience.

This comprehensive document gives a solid basis for actions in the ECA region. The 5th European Congress on Conservation Biology (ECCB) 12–June 15, 2018, Jyväskylä, Finland (https://conbio.org/mini-sites/eccb2018), hosted a related key note speech, a symposium and a workshop on IPBES, amongst other offerings. The symposium guided the audience through the IPBES and ECA chapters, mostly led by authors of the assessment. A workshop following the symposium was aimed to discuss current conditions and the potential consequences of official adoption of the ECA assessment. Three invited comments were presented at this workshop. Anikó Kovács-Hostyánszki, coordinating lead author of the IPBES pollination assessment, presented on the initiatives that emerged following the adoption of the pollination assessment. Eleanor Sterling presented on the potential for stakeholder involvement in ECA initiatives. Finally, Teuta Skorin presented on the potential role for the Society for Conservation Biology in the IPBES process. After discussion, participants were asked to identify the priority actions having the ECA assessment in hand. These ideas were collected on sticky notes and grouped according to topic. Below we report on the results of this workshop exercise.

The following priority areas were identified (in no particular order):

- Communication:
  - Spread the results of the ECA assessment to the public and those groups who work on the conservation of biological diversity.
  - The communication of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) may provide an example for effective public relations for ECA results.
  - Next steps:
    - Breakdown the results to digestible pieces.
    - Provide positive, not just "bad news," examples.
    - Expand communication tools, including video and art.
- Policy actions:
  - Create country level policy and governance recommendations.
  - Address sector specific policies with 3–5 key messages for immediate actions.
  - Work to mainstream IPBES recommendations into country-level policies.

- Work to reach policy-makers at a variety of levels from local to international with the main report findings.
- Education:
  - Work to integrate the ECA assessment results in national-level teaching at primary, secondary, and tertiary education levels.
- Science:
  - Mainstream the IPBES results in the regional science agenda.
  - Work to fill identified knowledge gaps, including geographical gaps in knowledge.
  - Identify measures to address drivers of change in biodiversity decline.
  - Foster multidisciplinarity, including better integration of the social sciences.
  - Promote IPBES at research institutions.
  - Use current momentum to provide a financial basis for IPBES-related activities.
  - Link ECA assessment results to evidence-based conservation and to national initiatives.
  - Use the ECA results to build collaboration between researchers and policy-makers.
- Make the "SPM" type of documents a common part of the conservation literature.

This collection of ideas is, of course far from complete. However, the report provides insights into the knowledge, opinions, and preferences of the region's community of conservation biologists.

ORCID

András Báldi https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6063-3721

REFERENCE

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