

Most Europeans See Biodiversity Loss as Serious Problem

Majority make some effort to preserve biodiversity

by Anna Manchin

BRUSSELS -- As millions worldwide celebrate World Environment Day on Saturday and reflect on how they can conserve the diversity of life on Earth, a Flash Eurobarometer survey finds more than 9 in 10 adults in the European Union agree that biodiversity loss is a very or fairly serious problem globally.

Seriousness of Biodiversity Loss

Asked in all EU member states

	% Very serious problem	% A fairly serious problem	% Not a serious problem/Not a problem at all
In your country	37	47	14
In Europe	42	43	9
Globally	63	30	4

"How serious is the decline and possible extinction of animal species, flora and fauna, natural habitats and ecosystems in your [COUNTRY]? And how serious is the problem in Europe? Finally, how serious is the problem globally?"

February 2010 Eurobarometer survey

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World Environment Day this year focuses on biodiversity as part of the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity, which the United Nations declared to draw attention to the rapid decline in species, ecosystems, and genetic heritage. Most experts agree that human activities such as expanding agriculture, infrastructure, and urbanization, pollution, and tourism contribute to the loss of the variety of species around the world.

While EU citizens are largely in agreement that biodiversity loss is a global problem, they are less likely to see it as a "very serious" problem for Europe or their own country. Opinions, however, vary greatly across the union: While a large majority in Portugal (72%) consider biodiversity loss a "very serious" problem for their country, a small minority in Finland (9%) share this view.

The European Union made a political commitment to stop biodiversity loss within the union by 2010, but the success of EU policies will likely depend on the willingness of individuals to act. A majority of EU citizens (70%) say they personally make an effort to protect biodiversity, and roughly half of these respondents say they would like to do more. Most of those who say they do not personally make efforts to protect biodiversity say it is because they do not know what to do.

Would you say that you personally make an effort to protect biodiversity?

Asked in all EU member states

	% Yes, I do	% Yes, but I would like to do more	% No, because I do not know what to do	% No, for other reasons
European Union Overall	37	33	20	8
Belgium	58	29	10	3
Netherlands	50	19	17	13
Austria	50	19	19	10
Germany	48	15	25	11
France	47	32	15	5
Malta	47	37	10	3
Slovenia	45	42	9	3
Portugal	43	45	7	3
Finland	43	30	15	10
Slovakia	42	26	26	3
Luxembourg	40	37	18	4
United Kingdom	37	40	16	7
Denmark	36	28	20	15
Spain	34	49	11	6
Ireland	33	43	18	5
Hungary	33	38	22	6
Sweden	32	33	23	11
Latvia	29	23	29	15
Poland	27	30	26	12
Estonia	26	31	30	9
Greece	23	47	20	8
Italy	23	45	26	4
Cyprus	23	49	19	9
Romania	23	39	26	9
Bulgaria	22	30	29	15
Lithuania	20	31	33	9
Czech Republic	17	29	37	14

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Despite Europeans' generally high level of concern about biodiversity loss, they are far from unanimous in their knowledge of it. In most European countries, a majority have heard of the

term "biodiversity," but only in Germany and Austria do a majority also know what the term means. Overall, 5% of Europeans say they feel "very well informed" about biodiversity and an additional 32% say they feel "well informed." With the exception of those surveyed in Germany, in all EU countries a majority say they feel "not well informed" or "not informed at all" about biodiversity.

How informed do you feel about the loss of biodiversity?

Asked in all EU member states

	% Very well informed	% Well informed	% Not well informed/Not informed at all
European Union Overall	5	32	62
Bulgaria	10	33	56
Cyprus	10	30	60
Portugal	10	23	67
Belgium	9	35	51
Germany	8	51	42
Greece	7	27	66
Luxembourg	7	34	59
Austria	6	40	52
Denmark	5	30	64
France	5	40	54
Slovenia	5	32	63
Finland	5	37	56
Sweden	5	30	63
United Kingdom	5	28	66
Ireland	4	23	72
Malta	4	24	70
Netherlands	4	35	60
Slovakia	3	21	75
Czech Republic	3	22	73
Estonia	3	29	65
Spain	3	27	69
Latvia	3	22	74
Hungary	3	39	58
Italy	2	17	81
Lithuania	2	22	74
Poland	2	28	67
Romania	2	22	77

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Having adequate information appears to have a considerable effect on individuals' expressed willingness to act. Those who feel very well informed about biodiversity are much more likely to

say they make an effort to protect it (86%); among those who feel not at all informed about biodiversity, this proportion is 58%.

For complete data sets or custom research from the more than 150 countries Gallup continually surveys, please contact SocialandEconomicAnalysis@gallup.com or call 202.715.3030.

Survey Methods

Results are based on the general population survey "Attitudes of Europeans Toward the Issue of biodiversity" (Flash Eurobarometer No. 290) conducted for the European Commission and the Directorate General Environment, Communication, and Governance Unit by Gallup Hungary. The survey's fieldwork was carried out Feb. 8-12, 2010. More than 27,000 randomly selected citizens, aged 15 years and older, were interviewed in the European Union's 27 member states. Each national sample is representative of the population aged 15 and older. Interviews were predominantly carried out via fixed telephone, approximately 1,000 in each of the member states. Statistical results were weighted to correct for known demographic discrepancies. The overall European statistics were weighted by population of EU member countries. The average margin of error is ± 3.2 percentage points.