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*Dear colleague,*

*With this first issue of our Newsletter, we would like to keep you informed about the BESAFE project.*

*Best wishes,*

*The BESAFE team, wishing you all a very good 2013!*





# The BESAFE project

The BESAFE (Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services: Arguments for our Future Environment) project aims to improve our understanding of the alternative ways in which concepts for the 'value of biodiversity' can be used to improve biodiversity policy making and governance at local, national and European to global scales. The project is investigating and analysing the use and effectiveness of various types of arguments for biodiversity protection under varying circumstances.

BESAFE's goal is to improve environmental policy decisions and governance through two main channels. First, we will provide policy makers with better insight into why people think biodiversity deserves protection, and second, we will inform them of the most effective arguments for their specific situation. To accomplish this, the results of our studies will be analysed for general trends which will be published in scientific and policy papers. Results will also be incorporated in a web-based toolkit and database, which will be structured according to the identified trends and include specific case study situations and arguments as examples. This database and toolkit will be developed in close cooperation with stakeholders to ensure we create a user-friendly product.

The main purpose of both the web tool and database will be to convincingly demonstrate the value of biodiversity to policy makers and provide them with guidance on the use and effectiveness of the various arguments in a range of situations. The tool will also demonstrate how the effectiveness of different argument types can vary between governance levels. A better understanding and awareness of these aspects may prove influential in conservation policy.

[Learn more about [BESAFE](#)]

## Changes over time in the argumentation used in biodiversity policy documents

An improved understanding of the use and effectiveness of argumentation in biodiversity policy is needed in order to formulate and implement more effective biodiversity policies. To gain a better understanding of how biodiversity conservation policy is created and implemented, it is important to know how argumentation is formulated at different jurisdictional and governance levels and how this argumentation is subject to change over time.

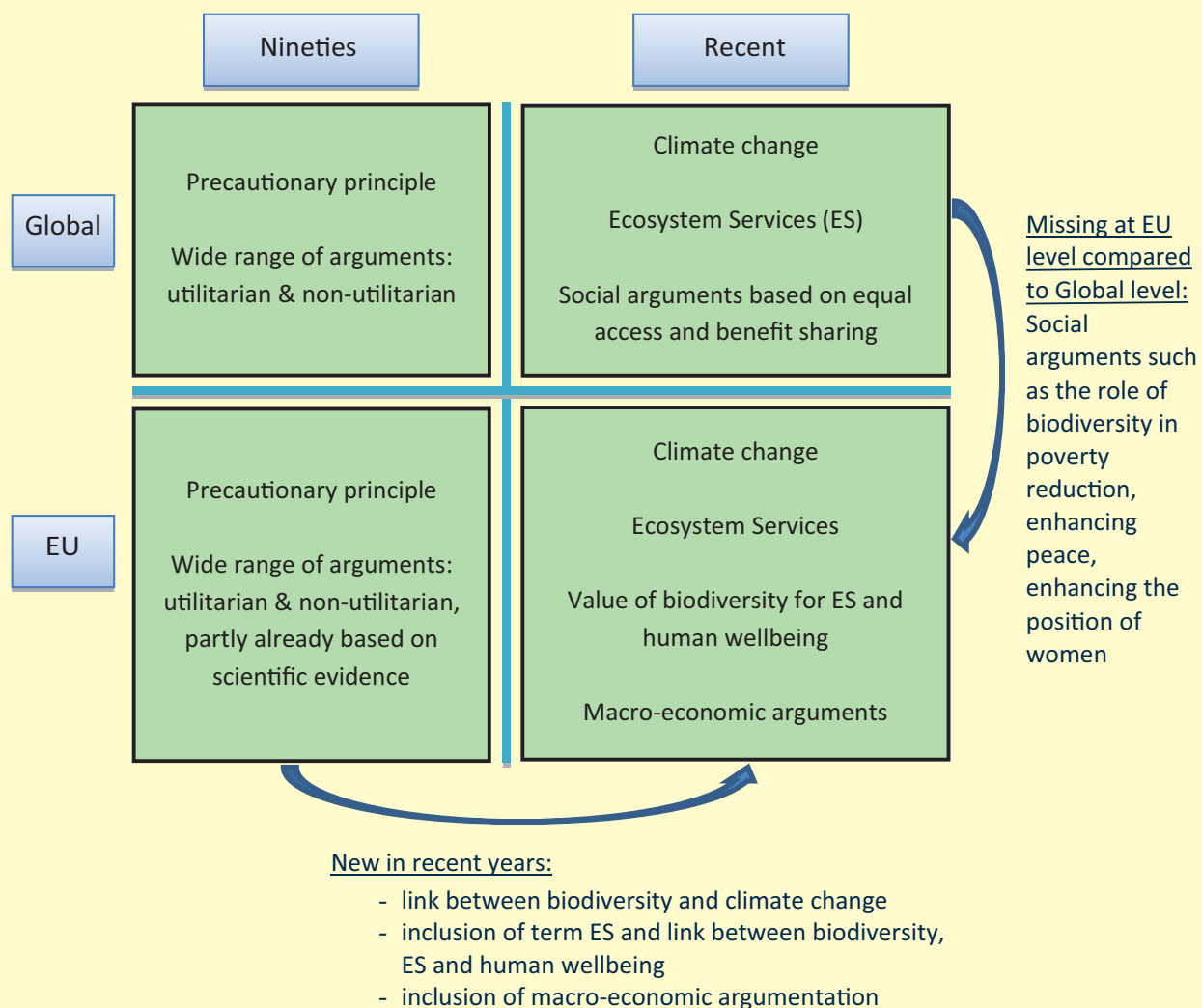
During the first stage of the BESAFE project we therefore mapped and compared the main argumentation patterns used at the EU and global level by conducting a comparative study of written policy documents. To capture changes over time, we compared the argumentation used during the nineties (1992, 1998) with the argumentation used in recent years (2010, 2011).

Consequently, two global level and two EU level policy documents were analysed:

1. The Convention on Biological Diversity (Global; 1992),
2. The New Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 of the CBD (Global; 2010),
3. The EC Biodiversity Strategy (EU; 1998)
4. The EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 (EU; 2011).

### Changes over time

During the nineties, the precautionary principle (e.g. "where there is a threat of a significant reduction or loss of biological diversity,.....") was widely accepted as a general environmental policy principle both at the global and the EU level (see also Figure 1). The 1998 EU Strategy was prepared a few years later than the CBD and some scientific data had been gathered within this intervening period to show the loss in biological diversity and draw attention to the urgent need for actions. Hence, argumentation at the EU level in the nineties was based on scientific evidence as well as the precautionary principle. Also a wide range of values of biodiversity was used as justification for biodiversity protection. Non-utilitarian values (e.g. species have a value of their own, species have a value independent of their direct use, biodiversity is important for sustaining life), social values (e.g. indigenous people need biodiversity for their subsistence) and utilitarian (economic) values all played important roles.



**Figure 1: Comparison of arguments at different governance levels and timescales**

The mixture of arguments used currently is, however, very different. In recent argumentation the influence of the CBD's three Global Biodiversity Outlooks, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) and The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) is clearly visible. The concept of Ecosystem Services (ES) has become the central element of the argumentation, emphasising the benefits of ecosystems to people and the contribution of ES to human wellbeing. The relationship between biodiversity, ES and human wellbeing begins to play a strong role, particularly in the new EU biodiversity strategy document, where biodiversity is mentioned as a natural capital, delivering ES, and being elements of an economic stock-flow model.

In present-day argumentation, the roles of the precautionary principle and non-utilitarian values have become smaller. They still appear in the argumentation, but with the introduction of the concept of ES there is a clear shift towards the (mostly utilitarian) values for society. Considerable attention is paid to the importance of including the economic value of biodiversity and ES in national accounting and reporting systems, as prerequisites for effective biodiversity conservation. Both the cost-effectiveness of biodiversity conservation (e.g. resource efficiency) and the investment opportunities provided by conservation measures are highlighted.

Climate change issues have become an important part of the argumentation at the global as well as the EU level recently (see also Figure 1.). This concerns the inter-linkage of biodiversity loss and climate change, as well as the benefits of biodiversity conservation for climate change mitigation. The concept and practice of ecosystem-based climate change adaptation is promoted, underlining that biodiversity conservation can contribute to both climate change mitigation and adaptation in a cost-effective way. The general argument is that higher levels of biodiversity strengthen the adaptive capacity of ecosystems. This gives them a greater potential to resist and recover more easily from, for instance, extreme weather events and avoids unintended negative consequences on ES.



## Differences between the global and EU level

At the global level, unequal access to, or dependency on, biodiversity resources of different social groups is a clear issue, while at the European level this problem is not highlighted. 'Social' arguments for biodiversity protection therefore play a much more important role at the global governance level. At that level, biodiversity and ecosystem services are considered an important element for human livelihoods as they support basic needs, especially for indigenous people. Moreover, it is highlighted that many aspects of biodiversity decline have a disproportionate impact on poor communities and therefore biodiversity conservation is strongly interrelated with poverty reduction.

In indigenous communities, women play a leading role in managing biodiversity resources. On the one hand they are disadvantaged through biodiversity loss, while on the other hand they play an important role in the conservation of the resource. Enhancing the position of women is therefore an argument, as well as a means for, biodiversity protection and is as such used at the global level.

The increased importance of economic arguments is especially notable at the EU level, where macro-economic arguments, such as the contribution of biodiversity conservation to green economy and sustainable growth, clearly link biodiversity protection with the new economic policy of the EU. Cooperation with the private sector is envisaged to achieve these goals. At the EU level, social arguments are therefore especially used in relation to sectoral policies with regard to the livelihood of communities (e.g. the livelihoods of fishermen and fishing communities as well as rural communities dealing with forestry as stated in the EU Biodiversity Strategy 1998) and the employment opportunities related to biodiversity conservation.

This study, in which we highlight differences over time and between global and EU level policy, clearly shows that the use of argumentation is not fixed and is not a constant used by everybody everywhere. Argumentation for biodiversity protection is subjective to geographic area and to the time we live in.

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In our next newsletter we will describe the different arguments found in both official policy documents as well as in the so called 'grey' literature across different parts of Europe in more detail. The mapping exercise of all arguments that have been, and are currently, used will serve as the basis for analysing the effectiveness of the different arguments.

## First BESAFE Stakeholder consultation workshop - spring 2013

The identified spectrum of arguments used in the development of policy to protect biodiversity (work in progress under BESAFE's first work package) will be used to build a provisional framework to classify the reviewed arguments. This framework will be tested and revised through [stakeholder consultation](#). BESAFE is therefore planning its first stakeholder consultation workshop in spring 2013 and is currently setting up the framework for this consultation workshop. Invitations with a preliminary programme will be sent out in January/February 2013. If you are interested in participating, [please let us know](#) and you will receive our invitation and additional information as soon as possible.

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