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Annex to the

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL, THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

TOWARDS AN EU STRATEGY ON INVASIVE SPECIES

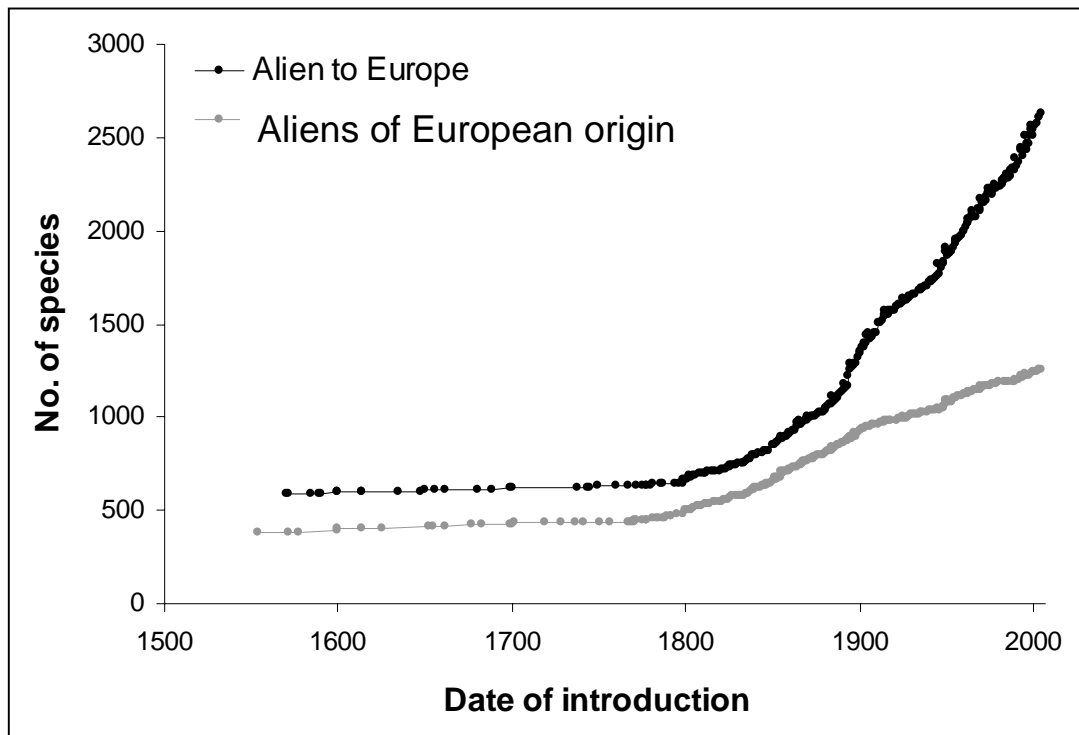
IMPACT ASSESSMENT - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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IMPACT ASSESSMENT - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. The nature of the problem and identification of the objective of the initiative

"Alien species" are species which are introduced outside their natural past or present distribution area and succeed in surviving and subsequently reproducing. "Invasive Alien Species" are alien species whose introduction and/or spread threaten biological diversity¹. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment revealed that IAS impact on all ecosystems². The problem of biological invasions is growing rapidly as a result of increased trade activities. Invasive species (IS)³ negatively affect biodiversity e.g. by competing with other organisms and changing habitat structure, being toxic, being a reservoir for parasites or a vector for pathogens, hybridising with related species or varieties, predated on native organisms, altering the local food web, e.g. invasive plants alter nutrient availability, disrupting pollination services, causing extinction of native species, being an ecosystem engineer by altering energy and nutrient flows, as well as physical factors in habitats and ecosystems. IS can cause congestion in waterways, damage to forestry, crops and buildings and damage in urban areas. The costs of preventing, controlling and/or eradicating IS and the environmental and economic damage are significant. The costs of control, although lower than the costs of continued damage by the invader, are often high. These costs could be avoided or minimised by decisions to prevent and stop introductions at an earlier stage.



SOURCE: DAISIE project (see Annex B)

¹ CBD Guiding Principles (CBD Decision COP VI/23).

² See Annex: Figure 1 - main drivers' impact on biodiversity/ecosystems from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA, 2005).

³ The term 'Invasive Species' used throughout this document encompasses the terms 'Invasive Alien Species' as used by the Convention on Biological Diversity and 'Invasive non-native species'. Invasive Species are broadly defined as species whose introduction and/or spread threaten biological diversity or have other unforeseen consequences.

The increased mobility of Europeans and people and goods in general has many benefits, but it also increases opportunities for intentional introduction of highly invasive species and for unintentional introduction of 'hitchhiker' or contaminant organisms through trade or other pathways. IS do not recognise national boundaries. The impact and related costs of IS will further increase due to the expected exponential increase of IS in the future (see graph above). This is a shared problem of all Member States, Europe and the world. Thus it is critical to address this global threat also at the European level.

Good practice in relation to policies and legislation relating to IS is found in some areas, but it remains scattered. The fragmented measures in place are unlikely to make a substantial contribution to lowering the risks posed by IS to Europe's nature and ecosystems. There are at present no mechanisms to support harmonisation or basic consistency of approaches between neighbouring countries. The multitude of existing EU legislation partly covering different aspects of IS makes coordinated implementation difficult.

The Community has committed itself to substantially reducing the impact of IS on biodiversity. To contribute to this process this impact assessment report aims to outline the policy options and measures for immediate implementation while developing "an EU Strategy on IS". The current policies in place and the legal context are set out in Chapter 1 of the Impact Assessment Report, which also provides a review of the use of consultation and expertise in the preparation of the Communication. Chapter 2 reviews the issue of invasive species in Europe and describes the various pathways of introduction. It gives examples of their environmental and economic impact and an overview of current knowledge about the related costs, and also explains the need for action at EU level. Chapter 3 presents the objectives of an EU Strategy on IS.

II. Exploration of different approaches for achieving the objectives

Chapter 4 presents four policy options identified for addressing the objectives and some horizontal issues that are relevant to all options. These **options are not exclusive and competitive packages**. They are options of increasing intensity and effectiveness. Increased intensity needs increased resources, and therefore depends on the willingness to invest. The measures identified in option B are not stand-alone measures. They should be seen as **cumulative measures**, which are part of the approach seeking to boost current efforts to tackle IS problems and maximise the existing instruments and legislation. **It is feasible to implement certain of these measures immediately**, while other elements would take several years. The suggested measures include actions for the prevention of intentional and unintentional introduction, early warning and information, eradication, containment and control of established IS species. The options identified are:

- Option A, **Business as usual**: continuation with the ongoing implementation of existing instruments.
- Option B, **Maximise use of existing approaches**: best use of existing legislation, development and implementation of voluntary codes of conduct, development of an early warning and information system, maintenance of the European inventory on IS, increasing awareness, exchange of best practice, implementation of eradication and control measures at national level.
- Option B+, **Adapt existing legislation**: this option implies amending existing legislation to widen the scope to formally take IS issues into account.

- Option C, **Comprehensive, dedicated EU legal instrument**: this option includes the basic tools described in option B, but in addition includes the rapid introduction of new legislation, which will make it possible to tackle IS in a comprehensive manner.

A set of horizontal measures that are common and relevant to all options is also under consideration; these include communication, education and awareness-raising, development of the knowledge base and financing.

Chapter 5 summarises the options and provides an overall comparison and evaluation. Chapter 6 provides conclusions, while Chapter 7 identifies aspects of monitoring and indicators that will help in assessing progress towards the preparation of a comprehensive EU Strategy on Invasive Species.