



# ACTIVITY REPORT 2019

# BEELIFE EUROPEAN BEEKEEPING COORDINATION



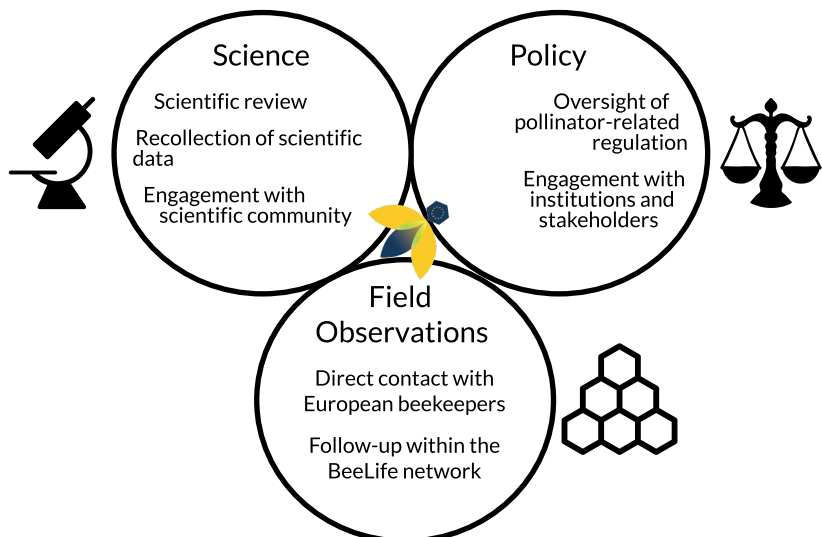
BeeLife strongly bases its actions in principles of constructive collaboration. BeeLife works together with European beekeepers, beekeeping associations, other NGOs, policymakers and other European institutional agents to improve environmental conditions for pollinators, biodiversity and ourselves.

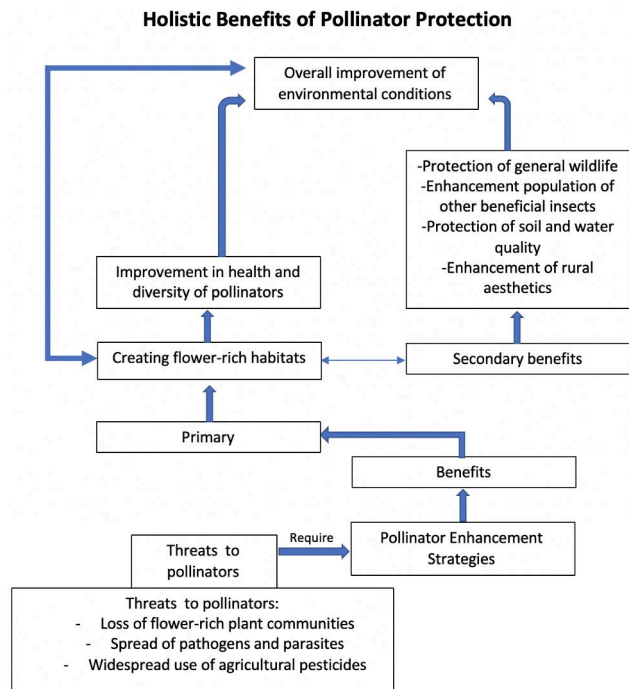
BeeLife European Beekeeping Coordination is an association formed by beekeepers and farmers from different countries of the European Union. It works for the protection of bees, pollinators and biodiversity, based on the principle that 'bees serve as the canary in the gold mine, sounding the alarm that something is wrong in the environment'. BeeLife is currently a member of the Save the Bees Coalition, a registered stakeholder in the EU Bee Partnership, and a partner in the European-funded project, the Internet of Bees.

Bees and other pollinating insects are at the centre of BeeLife's work. They are not only ideal indicators of environmental health, but they are also necessary for our food safety. Their decline puts in peril the way we produce and consume food in Europe, particularly considering crops that depend on insect pollination. Besides, understanding the strong bond that has existed between humans and bees for thousands of years, we insist on the cultural value that bees and beekeeping has.

Understanding and protecting the health of bees leads us to ensure better conditions on the environment that not only improve for these insects that we highly value. Protecting bees and pollinators also means protecting biodiversity. Due to their role in ecosystems through the pollination services they provide, they are vital to guarantee necessary resources from wild flora, on which wildlife depends. Bees and pollinators in general, have a strong link with the general well-being of wildlife and biodiversity, which we value and defend.

Places with intensified agricultural practices have seen a steady decline in pollinators and wildlife in general, but new opportunities to counter such conditions continue to rise. From the application of new techniques to dismissing unnecessary and high-risk practices, for example, those that involve prophylactic use of plant protection





Wratten, S. D., Gillespie, M., Decourtye, A., Mader, E., & Desneux, N. (2012). Pollinator habitat enhancement: benefits to other ecosystem services. *Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment*, 159, 112-122.

products, also called pesticides, professional farming practices are opening up to new methods that diminish negative impacts on the environment. BeeLife is continuously working so that unsustainable practices are changed, and we can achieve a new agricultural model that sets bees, pollinators in general and life at the core of its objectives.

BeeLife's vision of a safer environment for pollinators takes into account the practical steps to achieve it. More sustainable and innovative agricultural practices, as well as improving collaborations between farmers and beekeepers, are part of BeeLife's vision for the future. Achieving our core objective of protecting bees and pollinators rely on cooperation, working together with institutional agents, researchers and stakeholders. BeeLife works to maintain a link with representatives of European institutions such as the European Food Safety Authority, DG Agriculture or DG Environment of the European Commission, as well as with elected representatives of the European Parliament. The goal is to achieve a multiparty collaboration between beekeepers, researchers, farmers, environmentalists and European institutions, ultimately so that different actors understand their role in pollinator protection and fostering.

BeeLife continues to follow up on European regulation and legislation, particularly those that concern pesticide use and landscape impact. After the ban of three neonicotinoid insecticides in 2018 (active substances clothianidin, imidacloprid and thiamethoxam), we remain vigilant on pesticide use. Notably, new products that aim at replacing the banned substances, as well as continuous emergency authorisations that continue allowing the use of prohibited products in the field, as is the case of Romania. BeeLife is also focusing its work on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). A new post-2020 CAP is still under negotiation within European institutions, and a final text is expected to be voted by the European Parliament on the first semester of 2020. Achieving a bee-friendly CAP is a priority for BeeLife so that bees and other pollinators can thrive and ensure healthy food production and a biodiverse environment.

## PROTECTING POLLINATORS

Bees teach us to think in large scale and long-term, particularly when we need to take into account that:

- Reports show a high decrease in biodiversity worldwide, particularly in contexts with intensified agriculture;
- Butterflies and wild bees populations are decreasing over time;
- Beekeepers have struggled to maintain their populations of honey bees over the last thirty years;
- Main problems observed in agricultural areas, where a confluence of stressing factors for bee health coexist, such as lack of nutritional sources, pesticide exposure, or loss of habitat.

## Other Activities

Other activities for the Common Agricultural Policy in the first semester of 2019 included the publishing and dissemination of voting recommendations for MEPs, constant monitoring of developments, and follow-up and a bee-friendly MEPs campaign before European elections in May. This campaign included direct contact with MEPs, as well as the production and dissemination of video interviews with representatives.



Members of BeeLife as of December, 2019

## ACTIONS

### THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY (CAP) POST-2020

In 2019, BeeLife intensified its efforts to achieve a more bee-friendly Common Agricultural Policy. During the negotiations of the text among different parties in the European Parliament, BeeLife met and advised Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from several parties across the ideological spectrum. The message we provided was clear: Europe needs a CAP that helps bees and other pollinators thrive. To achieve this, we presented essential comments on the draft text, and we insisted on the importance of including a Pollinator Index in the CAP reform text proposal by the European Parliament. The Pollinator Index is a measurement tool based on pollinator diversity and density that can help provide further insight into the impact of policies that impact the environment and landscape.

We brought this message directly to MEPs in a collective effort along with other Non-Government Organisations, such as PAN Europe and Arche Noah. Thanks to such collaboration and other parallel efforts of several organisations, the latest draft of the CAP has included such a Pollinator Index. During this effort, we published our short document *Why We Need Bees as Indicators in the Next CAP*<sup>1</sup>, where we presented our arguments to include a Pollinator Index in the text. In the document, we offer the initial arguments for legislators to add and vote in favour of a Pollinator Index in the future CAP.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bee-life.eu/post/2019/03/12/why-we-need-bees-as-indicators-in-the-next-cap>




**WHY WE NEED BEES AS INDICATORS IN THE NEXT CAP**

We are aiming towards a more sustainable Common Agricultural Policy in the EU and bees can be one of our greatest allies for this purpose. The value of bees as indicators of the quality of the environment is not easily overstated. By including a Pollinator Index based on bees, we can better measure the impact of policies within the frame of the new CAP

**A CAP FOR POLLINATORS**

HOW THE NEW CAP MAY SUPPORT POLLINATORS AND POLLINATORS BENEFIT THE NEW CAP





November 2019

In the second semester, we reached two milestones in our work on the CAP. First, we published the document *Pollinators as Indicators in Policy Affecting the Landscape and Environment*<sup>2</sup>. This document is the more detailed explanation of the arguments in favour of including the Pollinator Index in the CAP, and it explores its possible shaping. This document is the result of a continuous work, concluded after the presentation of the Pollinator Index in the Apimondia International Apicultural Congress in Montreal<sup>3</sup>.

The second milestone was the publishing of BeeLife's position on the future CAP: *A CAP for Pollinators - how the new CAP may support pollinators and pollinators benefit the new CAP*<sup>4</sup>. This document expands on the underlying logic that the future CAP will require to ensure safer conditions for bees and other pollinators effectively. It also provides a more detailed analysis of the tools in pillars I and II of the CAP that can be advanced to improve bee protection. These, however, require special attention, considering that they must be carefully designed to, first, avoid undesired effects and, second, be as effective as possible. This document is the response by BeeLife on how to allow pollinator populations to develop themselves by creating favourable conditions that support habitats and the multiplication of nutritional sources.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bee-life.eu/post/pollinators-as-indicators-in-policy-affecting-the-landscape-and-environment>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.apimondia2019.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/API\\_abstractbook.pdf](https://www.apimondia2019.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/API_abstractbook.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bee-life.eu/post/a-cap-for-pollinators-beelife-s-proposals-for-the-future-of-agriculture-and-pollinators-in-europe>



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BeeLife's activities also included a campaign on European elections. As part of this campaign, we conducted interviews and had several meetings with Members of the European Parliament.

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Besides strengthening relations with political representatives in EU institutions, BeeLife also worked to provide the general audience with direct information on the functioning and possibilities of pollinator protection in Europe.

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## **ADOPTION OF THE EFSA BEE GUIDANCE DOCUMENT**

BeeLife has been denouncing in the last six years, the failure of Member States to adopt the "Bee Guidance Document"<sup>5</sup>. It is a missed opportunity to improve risk assessment for pesticides that may harm bees and other pollinators. Considering the engagement by the European Commission through projects such as the EU Pollinators Initiative, the adoption of this important document could be a breakthrough in improving bee protection. Even though the responsible committee of EU Member States, the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals Food and Feed (SCOPAFF), had several opportunities along the year to adopt EFSA's guidance document, another year has gone by without a decision.

To advance arguments in favour of its adoption, and to reveal the troubling state of the political indecision, BeeLife published its document: *When Science and Biodiversity Meet Economic Interests*<sup>6</sup>. The document portrays the history and current situation regarding EFSA's Bee Guidance and the opportunities that arise from its

adoption. It also gives an overview of the mechanisms in place that continuously trump the chance for an improved risk assessment.

BeeLife also followed the political process and meetings surrounding the discussion on EFSA's document.

**"Not adopting the Bee Guidance Document is a missed opportunity to improve risk assessment for pesticides that may harm bees and other pollinators."**

In collaboration with the Save the Bees Coalition, BeeLife supported the drafting and circulation of letters addressing responsible ministers in the Member States. BeeLife coordinated their distribution among its members. Although the Bee guidance document is still not adopted, the pressure is mounting. BeeLife will continue to do so until the most up-to-date scientific standards are included in the risk assessment process for pesticides that may affect bees. For this purpose, a BeeLife expert is currently

contributing to the review that the EFSA is doing of its Guidance document, which should be concluded in 2020.

BeeLife experts follow up the evolution on the methodologies for risk assessment of pesticides on bees, by participating in relevant symposia as those organised by the COLOSS Task Force Apitox and that organized by the ICPPR.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsa-journal/pub/3295>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.bee-life.eu/post/publication-when-science-and-biodiversity-meet-economic-interests>



## **REGULAR MEETINGS**

BeeLife is a registered stakeholder and takes active participation in the Civil Dialogue Groups (CDGs) organised by DG AGRI in the European Commission.

CDGs include representatives of different productive sectors as well as other stakeholders such as environmental protection organisations, traders, farmers, industry or consumer organisations.

In direct discussion with representatives from farmers organisations, BeeLife attempts at dynamising the forum towards more bee-friendly practices. With this interdisciplinary approach, we took part in the Policy Labs organised by IUCN and the European Commission around the subject of the shaping of the Green Architecture of the future CAP.

BeeLife also participates in DG SANTE Advisory Committees on Animal Health, Plant Health and Consumer Safety, which also bring together stakeholders around sanitary topics. Finally, BeeLife assists DG ENVI workshops, such as the one on conservation measures that benefit pollinators applied under the Nature Directives in Natura 2000 sites.





## THE INTERNET OF BEES (IOBEE)

# IoBee

BeeLife is a partner on the Internet of Bees (IoBee) project<sup>7</sup>. Since 2017, the project has been developing, and in 2019 it reached two new significant stages which are led by BeeLife. Monitoring systems and their interface are being put to the test in real-life conditions. The project is working to reach a more precise measure of several parameters, focusing on optoelectronic count of entering and exiting traffic on the hives. Additionally, it is also focusing on the improvement of data visualisation, striving to have one of the most user-friendly interfaces in the market. Thanks to the feedback of beekeepers, the aim is to achieve a user-friendly and robust tool.

BeeLife is the coordinator of field tests and is conducting them throughout its network of beekeeping associations. In collaboration with FAB-BBF, FFAP, UNAAPI, Romapis and COAG, field tests are progressively taking place in various countries of the European Union, including Belgium, France, Italy, Romania and Spain. We aim at including other countries like Sweden and Slovakia in the next year.

As part of the communications and dissemination strategy of IoBee, BeeLife has also coordinated for the participation of the project in several stages around Europe to reach a wider audience and gain direct feedback. With its involvement in events ranging from Beecome (Romania), Apimell (Italy), and other apicultural events throughout Europe, BeeLife has expanded the IoBee network throughout Europe.

<sup>7</sup> <http://io-bee.eu/>







## **EU BEE PARTNERSHIP**

In a continuous attempt to improve the situation of pollinators in Europe, BeeLife has invested efforts in actively contributing to the EU Bee Partnership, which is a discussion group focusing on the challenges that bees face in Europe. Dynamised by EFSA, it works with several stakeholders, including BeeLife, to ensure that bees in the EU can thrive and prosper. The Terms of Reference for the partnership were published in 2018, and have been guiding the joint work to “improve data collection, management, sharing and communications to achieve a holistic approach to the assessment of bee health in Europe and beyond”<sup>8</sup>.

The EFSA was awarded in 2019 by the EU Ombudsman for moderating the EU Bee Partnership<sup>9</sup>. Within this Partnership, we are developing two initiatives aiming to achieve a standardisation and centralisation of bee related data, BeeXML, with

active engagement by the Apimondia Working Group on Bee Data, and the Bee Hub,

### **BeeLife is closely following and working in the forefront of political and technical developments for the protection of pollinators**

respectively. The Bee Hub is a platform for bee-related data integration, processing and communication that could be developed thanks to the EU project loBee. BeeLife is engaged in this work convinced that an open data approach will also help bringing clarity and transparency on the problematic observed by pollinators in Europe and beyond.

With these initiatives we hope to find new forms of cooperation for the sake of bees, pollinators and us

all. BeeLife largely depends on the collaboration of other stakeholders and its own members to achieve its objectives. This report serves as a short recollection of achievements in 2019, and as an invitation to further collaborate in 2020 for the protection of pollinators, their value for the environment and thus achieving a more sustainable and bee-friendly future.

January, 2020.

<sup>8</sup> <https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/sp.efsa.2018.EN-1423>

<sup>9</sup> <https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/sp.efsa.2018.EN-1423>



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