Mapping Europe’s ecosystems key to ensuring their future health and resilience

PDF

News Published 27 Feb 2019 Last modified 19 Jun 2019 1 min read

Image copyright: Davide Marchi, NATURE@work /EEA

Biodiversity — Ecosystems Policy instruments Sustainability transitions

Mapping Europe’s vast land and marine ecosystems is crucial to assessing the health of the continent’s biodiversity and ensuring its future survival. That is why the European Environment Agency (EEA) is currently working on enhancing the data and knowledge of Europe’s ecosystems which will support the European Union’s work on the final evaluation of the EU biodiversity strategy in 2020.

The EEA briefing ‘Mapping Europe’s ecosystems’ explains recent progress made in mapping ecosystem types and their associated habitats, including the use of the EU’s Copernicus satellite system.

The collection and assessment of new data are being used to significantly upgrade the existing Europe-wide ecosystem map which covers all 39 EEA member countries and cooperating countries. The map comprises 47 land, freshwater and marine habitats and five seabed types in an area of about 12 million kilometres square of land and sea. The upgrade makes full use of the improved Copernicus land monitoring service, EUSeaMap, EUNIS and other recent data.

The EEA map serves as an important tool for environment experts and policymakers who need to assess the health of Europe’s ecosystems. Assessing the state of Europe’s biodiversity requires mapping the ecology of habitats to describe the interaction between species and their environment more accurately. This involves bringing together information about the distribution, size and environmental conditions like climate, topography and soil characteristics of these habitats. It is also useful in assessing the challenges and pressure they face like habitat changes, land use intensity and change, pollution, climate change and invasive species.