

**Welcome Speech on the occasion of giving the EuroNatur Award 2021 to Dr. Eszter Kelemen (Hungary), Dr. Yunne-Jai Shin (France) and Prof. Dr. Josef Settele (Germany) on behalf of all the researchers working for the IPBES on 14 October 2021 on the island of Mainau**

***Dr. Anna Katharina Wöbse, Vice president***

Dear Count Björn,

dear members of the board and of the advisory board of EuroNatur,

dear former EuroNatur Award Winners Gudrun Steinacker, Ulf Müller-Helmbrecht, Ernst Paul Dörfler and dear representatives of Mals,

dear Mrs. Riewenherm, President of the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation,

dear donors and

friends of the EuroNatur foundation,

dear ladies and gentlemen,

usually our President, Prof. Dr. Thomas Potthast, would welcome you. However, as he is going to give the laudation, I have the great pleasure, privilege and honour of welcoming you here myself. First of all, we would like to thank all of you who have made this real-life-meeting happen:

So many thanks go to our host, Count Björn Bernadotte, the Mainau team of Sabine Neufang, the technical team that is broadcasting the event and the staff of EuroNatur.

Having said all this, we would also like to welcome you: the delegation representing all the IPBES researchers, to whom we will be awarding the EuroNatur Award today: Dr. Esther Kelemen, Dr. Yunne-Jai Shin and Prof. Dr. Josef Settele.

You, the scientists, are the heart and soul of IPBES. You have to take a breath before reading what this abbreviation means: they are the scientists of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. The IPBES was established in 2012 and it is affiliated to the UN system. Within the UN family you are a relatively young member, but in a way, we have all been eagerly awaiting your initiative because it was and still is so badly needed. The scientists of IPBES work at the interface between science and politics. They collect and provide the numbers, the knowledge and the expertise needed to make sustainable Earth policy. Thomas Potthast will explain in a moment how you do this, what impact it has, and which dimensions it reaches.

At first glance, you, the researchers, seem to fall outside the scope of our usual honorees. The last three honorees, for example, were people and groups who have fought in a very concrete way, physically and on the ground, against the destruction of nature and the environment. The activist Roberto Epple, who fights to liberate rivers, for instance, or the brave women of Kruščica, who prevented the construction of a dam with solidarity and strength, or the people of Mals, who are resisting the pressure of the chemical and agricultural lobbies and fight for ending the use of pesticides in their community – and beyond. (By the way, let me briefly recommend a TV documentary. You can find it in the mediathek of ZDF. The film project "Gegen Gift" actually started at last year's award ceremony, when Volker Andres met the Mals people here on the Mainau Island).

This time, our prize goes to the scientists who compile data worldwide, who correlate it, who put it into a global context and above all, make it available to all of us. Not only are you, the scientists, enabling policymakers to get the reliable data they need for negotiating the future, but you are also explaining to us exactly what the biodiversity crisis we are facing is about, what it means for the global community and ultimately for each of us personally. You are opening our eyes to life's big picture, and also to the microscopically small, to the commons of the living. With your inclusive, transparent, and understandable communication of science, you are also countering rampant scientific skepticism and political shortsightedness. It is not easy these days to be a scientist, especially a public scientist. It takes courage. This alliance of scientists has taken on a huge task and for this you have our utmost respect.