



# HALFWAY THERE?

MID-TERM ASSESSMENT  
OF PROGRESS ON THE EU 2020  
BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY **MAY 2015**





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With special thanks to the MAVA Foundation, RSPB/BirdLife UK, Conservation International and the European Environmental Bureau

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This publication is partly financed by the European Union. Sole responsibility lies with the author and the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **EU Biodiversity Strategy** is a landmark in European conservation, and commits the European Commission, the European Parliament and the EU Member States to taking action on all key drivers of biodiversity loss. At this halfway point between 2010 and 2020 we assess progress of the EU towards the EU Biodiversity strategy to 2020.

**Our conclusion is that we are far from halting biodiversity loss, as many plants and animals are threatened with extinction in the EU.** Where protection through EU nature legislation has been enforced, and targeted conservation taken, biodiversity declines have been turned around, as shown by beavers, cranes, wolves and eagles coming back to many countries in Europe. However the status of more than 20% of the species protected under EU nature legislation and more than 30% of the protected habitats have deteriorated over the last years. The root cause of the decline of biodiversity is clearly the poor implementation of the Birds and Habitats Dir-

ectives, the crucial pieces of EU nature legislation: more financing and better implementation and enforcement are urgently needed. Expanding Green Infrastructure and restoring degraded ecosystems are crucial actions to support the Natura 2000 network but are currently suffering from an apparent lack of political will. No EU Member State had as of 2014 developed a restoration prioritisation framework, even though they committed to do this under the Biodiversity Strategy.

**A major ecological disaster is happening in EU agriculture, with grasslands disappearing at an alarming rate.** It is estimated that more than half of the farmland birds in the EU have been lost since 1980. The 2014 reform of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy has failed nature: the idea of maintaining a minimum of nature on every farm, known as Ecological Focus Areas, was watered down to such an extent during negotiations that it is already clear nothing will happen on most farms.

**Another ecological disaster is happening in the EU's seas and oceans.** The EU's freshly reformed Common Fisheries Policy does, at least, set out a vision to turn the tide, but much will depend on whether the EU puts the implementing legislation in place to make this vision a reality.

**Invasive alien species**, species from elsewhere that have been brought to countries in the EU, are on the rise, threatening native species and causing social and economic damage. Here the EU has put a good tool in place through a new Regulation on Invasive alien species, but now the EU needs to use this tool to stop invasive alien species that damage biodiversity.

**Outside the EU, the loss of biodiversity and damage to the environment is accelerating.** The EU's initiatives to reduce its impacts on biodiversity abroad have not had, thus far, a significant effect. More positively, the EU has improved its financial contribution to global biodiversity action.

**TABLE 1 THE VISION, THE HEADLINE TARGET AND THE SIX SPECIFIC TARGETS OF THE EU BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY TO 2020**

### THE 2050 VISION

By 2050, European Union biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides – its natural capital – are protected, valued and appropriately restored for biodiversity's intrinsic value and for their essential contribution to human wellbeing and economic prosperity, and so that catastrophic changes caused by the loss of biodiversity are avoided.

### THE 2020 HEADLINE TARGET

Halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.

### TARGET 1

#### FULLY IMPLEMENT THE BIRDS AND HABITATS DIRECTIVES

To halt the deterioration in the status of all species and habitats covered by EU nature legislation and achieve a significant and measurable improvement in their status so that, by 2020, compared to current assessments: **(i)** 100% more habitat assessments and 50% more species assessments under the Habitats Directive show an improved conservation status; and **(ii)** 50% more species assessments under the Birds Directive show a secure or improved status.

### TARGET 2

#### MAINTAINING AND ENHANCING ECOSYSTEMS AND THEIR SERVICES

By 2020, ecosystems and their services are maintained and enhanced by establishing green infrastructure and restoring at least 15% of degraded ecosystems.

### TARGET 3

#### INCREASE THE CONTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY TO MAINTAINING AND ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY

**a)** Agriculture: By 2020, maximise areas under agriculture across grasslands, arable land and permanent crops that are covered by biodiversity-related measures under the CAP [...].

**b)** Forests: By 2020, Forest Management Plans or equivalent instruments, in line with Sustainable Forest Management, are in place for all forests that are publicly owned and for forest holdings above a certain size [...].

### TARGET 4

#### ENSURE THE SUSTAINABLE USE OF FISHERIES RESOURCES

Achieve Maximum Sustainable Yield by 2015. Achieve a population age and size distribution indicative of a healthy stock, through fisheries management with no significant adverse impacts on other stocks, species and ecosystems, in support of achieving Good Environmental Status by 2020 [...].

### TARGET 5

#### COMBATING INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES

By 2020, Invasive Alien Species and their pathways are identified and prioritised, priority species are controlled or eradicated, and pathways are managed to prevent the introduction and establishment of new IAS.

### TARGET 6

#### ADDRESSING THE GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY CRISIS

By 2020, the EU has stepped up its contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.

## OUR PROGRESS ASSESSMENT



**Four years have passed** since the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020<sup>1</sup> was adopted by the European Commission (EC), endorsed by the European Parliament (EP)<sup>2</sup> and the EU Member States<sup>3</sup>. The EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 aims to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss. By 2050 biodiversity and ecosystems should be fully protected and restored, according to the vision set out in the Strategy. The EU Biodiversity Strategy is a key contribution of the EU to the globally agreed Strategic Plan 2011-2020 of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity<sup>4</sup>.

**The Strategy introduces** a comprehensive package of measures to achieve this headline target. The six targets of the strategy (see Table 1) each address a different driver of biodiversity loss: lack of implementation of existing legislation, deterioration and loss of ecosystems across the landscape, unsustainable agriculture and forestry, unsustainable fisheries, invasive alien species and the ecological footprint of the EU on the rest of the world. The 20 actions of the Strategy are focussing largely on EU level initiatives, but many are only possible with active Member State buy in.

**At this halfway point** between 2010 and 2020 the time has come for a critical examination of the achievements of the EU Biodiversity Strategy thus far. In this report, we highlight progress or lack thereof under each of the targets and key actions under these targets, updating our previous assessment on the Biodiversity Strategy<sup>5</sup>. Where the implementation of the actions of the Biodiversity Strategy has been insufficient to achieve the targets, we propose key actions the EU should take to achieve the targets by 2020. In Annex I we provide a snapshot progress assessment of all the Biodiversity Strategy's action. The report is based on most recent data on the state of nature<sup>6,7</sup> and the wider environment<sup>8</sup>, as well as on studies and practical experience of BirdLife and other NGOs across all EU Member States.

**We call on decision makers** in the European Commission, the European Parliament and the EU Member States to take this report into account during the upcoming mid-term review of the EU Biodiversity Strategy.

- 1 European Commission (2011) Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. COM/2011/0244.
- 2 European Parliament (2012) European Parliament resolution of 20 April 2012 on our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020. European Parliament Resolution 2011/2307 (INI). Official Journal of the European Union C 258E, 7.9.2013, p. 99–114.
- 3 Council of the EU (2011) EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020: towards implementation - Council conclusions. ST 18862 2011 INIT.
- 4 Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (2010) The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. COP10 DEC X/2.
- 5 BirdLife Europe (2012) On the Road to Recovery? BirdLife assessment of progress on the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy.
- 6 EEA (2015) The State of Nature in the EU.
- 7 BirdLife International (2015). European Red List of Birds.
- 8 EEA (2015). The European Environment – State and Outlook 2015.

MUCH MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE IF WE ARE TO ACHIEVE THE TARGETS OF THE BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY  
THE FOLLOWING SIX ACTIONS SHOULD BE THE PRIORITY FOR THE EU

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INVEST IN NATURE ..... 1

More financial resources are needed to save nature. The EU needs to propose new and effective solutions to address the failed integration approach of EU biodiversity funding.

STOP ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME ..... 2

The EU needs to improve enforcement of its nature laws and environmental laws by improving inspections in EU Member States, through legislation on Environmental Inspections and through deterrent penalties. The destruction of Natura 2000 sites and the illegal killing of wildlife need to stop.

GET SERIOUS ABOUT RESTORATION ..... 3

Limited action has been taken in relation to the EU's commitment to restore a large proportion of degraded ecosystems. We have five years left and need to start with setting priority actions as soon as possible.

ADDRESS THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS  
IN AGRICULTURE ..... 4

The reform of the Common Agricultural Policy has failed on biodiversity and the EU must change its course at the first opportunity.

IMPLEMENT AND ENFORCE  
THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY ..... 5

All quota, technical measures and plans adopted need to follow the ecosystem approach – they need to stop overfishing and tackle bycatch, including the bycatch of seabirds.

ADDRESS RESOURCE  
EFFICIENCY ..... 6

The EU is squandering natural resources from the EU and abroad and needs to adopt ambitious legislation on the circular economy to stop this.



**THE 2020 HEADLINE TARGET**

Halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.

**MAIN MESSAGE**

Halfway through the Strategy period, the EU is far from achieving the 2020 target of halting biodiversity loss and many species remain at risk of extinction in the EU. However, some species have recovered following legal protection and targeted and properly funded conservation action, showing that the target can be met if actively pursued.

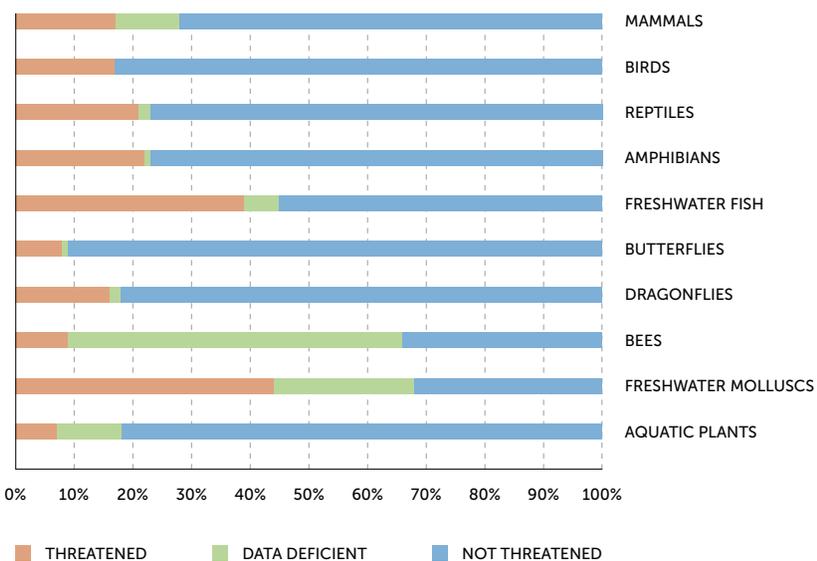
**MANY SPECIES IN EUROPE ARE AT RISK OF EXTINCTION**

In the EU, many species are threatened with extinction. Over the last decade, Red Lists have been compiled for several species groups, which assess extinction risk of species using the IUCN Red List Criteria. For most groups, including birds and mammals, this is the first time that that an assessment has been done at the EU level. While it is not yet possible to assess the effects of the EU Biodiversity Strategy in reducing extinction risk of species in Europe, the Red Lists do provide, for the first time, an overview of the extinction risks of a large part of EU biodiversity.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the results of the IUCN Red List assessments for the ten taxonomic groups which have had a complete assessment at EU level between 2007 and 2015, indicating the percentage of threatened species (Vulnerable, Endangered, Critically endangered). Freshwater molluscs (44%) and freshwater fish (49%) are the groups with the highest proportion of threatened species, followed by amphibians (22%), reptiles (21%) and birds (17%).

The assessments show that no taxonomic group is doing well. The situation is particularly alarming for taxonomic groups in freshwater. If no action is taken, an extinction crisis will follow in freshwater in the EU, with many species of molluscs, fishes and amphibians at risk. The assessments also show that there are still large gaps in knowledge on the extinction risk of mammals, bees, freshwater molluscs and aquatic plants.

FIGURE 1



Extinction risk of different taxonomic groups in the EU. The red part of the bars indicates the proportion of threatened species (species that meet the IUCN Red List criteria for Vulnerable, Endangered or Critically Endangered), the blue indicates the species that are Least Concern or Near Threatened, and the green indicates the Data Deficient species.

A pair of Large Red Damselflies. Europe is home to an astonishing diversity of species, all of which we need to conserve if we are to meet the headline target of the Biodiversity Strategy. Photo © Shay Connolly

## COMMON BIRDS ARE BECOMING LESS COMMON

**Birds are an important part** of European biodiversity. Apart from adding value to our everyday life they are very well researched and are often very good indicators for the state of the wider environment. The latter goes in particular for so called "common" birds, birds that are widespread across the landscape and that often depend on sustainable land use rather than on strictly protected areas.

**The status of common birds** in Europe is monitored through the Pan European Common Birds Monitoring Scheme resulting in the common wild bird indicator shown in Figure 11. The numbers of common birds have fallen by 13% since 1980, and they continue to do so. Much more dramatic is the loss of common farmland birds, which have declined 53% since 1980. The farmland bird indicator shows a deep and still unaddressed crisis in the sustainability of EU farming, which is discussed in detail on page 38.

**Further decline would be a clear failure** of the EU's Biodiversity Strategy. Full implementation and additional action under Targets 1, 2, 3 and 4 are needed if the loss is still to be halted by 2020.

## COMEBACK OF SPECIES THANKS TO EU NATURE LEGISLATION

**Many species** in the EU are threatened with extinction (see Figure 1). However, there are also many spectacular conservation successes. Over the last 50 years, many species have returned to EU Member States, sometimes after an absence of centuries, and the populations of many other species have increased spectacularly.

**The report** "Wildlife Comeback in Europe", published in 2013<sup>9</sup>, examined the comeback of selected mammal and bird species in Europe. The report examined historical evidence on population sizes, trends and distribution, and drivers for recovery of 18 mammal and 19 bird species.

**Several species** have had spectacular population increases; for example the populations of European Bison, White-headed Duck and Eurasian Beaver increased more than 30 times (3 000%). Among the analysed species, on average, the distribution

of mammals increased by 30% since the 1950s, while the distribution of the majority birds initially contracted, but then since the 1980s it has increased by 14%. The increase of the populations of mammals was the greatest in Southern and Western Europe. Not all species expanded throughout their range, as the distribution several bird species contracted in South Eastern Europe. In addition many species are still only occupying a fraction of their historical range and some are still at risk of extinction.

**The report concluded** that legal protection and active conservation are key drivers of the comeback of mammals and birds in Europe. In addition, for birds habitat management and protection of key sites was also crucial. The Birds and Habitats Directives have been crucial in ensuring the protection of many species in the EU, including key sites and habitats, and have thus provided a major contribution to the comeback of wildlife in the EU and in Europe as a whole.



~ FIGURE 2  
A Grey Seal. Historically Grey Seals were abundant throughout Europe, but several populations declined steeply because of overexploitation. Legal protection over the last 50 years, including protection under the Habitats Directive, has brought back Grey Seals to a large part of their historical range. However, seals are still illegally killed today because of the conflict with commercial fisheries, and legal protection needs to continue in order for the species to thrive. Source:<sup>10</sup>. Photo © Ronnie Martin

<sup>9</sup> Deinet, S., Ieronymidou, C., McRae, L., et al (2013) Wildlife comeback in Europe: The recovery of selected mammal and bird species. Final report to Rewilding Europe by ZSL, BirdLife International and the European Bird Census Council.

<sup>10</sup> Deinet, S., Ieronymidou, C., McRae, L., et al (2013) Wildlife comeback in Europe: The recovery of selected mammal and bird species. Final report to Rewilding Europe by ZSL, BirdLife International and the European Bird Census Council.

<sup>11</sup> Deinet, S., Ieronymidou, C., McRae, L., et al (2013) Wildlife comeback in Europe: The recovery of selected mammal and bird species. Final report to Rewilding Europe by ZSL, BirdLife International and the European Bird Census Council.



~ FIGURE 3  
Dalmatian Pelicans. Dalmatian Pelicans are a rare and globally threatened species. They were widespread throughout South Eastern Europe. However, degradation of wetlands where the main colonies were located caused a steep population decline. The pelicans have benefited from site protection under the Birds Directive, an EU Species Action Plan and projects under the EU LIFE Programme. This has resulted in a spectacular recovery in Greece, including the establishment of two new colonies. Source:<sup>11</sup>. Photo © Sebastian Bugariu

## BOX 1

### CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY: TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

Climate change is a major threat to biodiversity, although not directly addressed by the Biodiversity Strategy, many targets and actions under the Biodiversity Strategy contribute to mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. For example, protected areas such as the Natura 2000 network (Target 1) store significant amounts of carbon<sup>12</sup> and are of vital importance to help species adapt to new ranges<sup>13</sup>. Similarly, restoration of degraded ecosystems contributes to carbon sequestration<sup>14</sup>, and green infrastructure can help species find new habitat in the face of climate induced change<sup>15</sup>.

A 2007 study on the effects of climate change on European bird species<sup>16</sup> found that the effects of climate change are likely to be severe. With a 3 °C global average temperature increase, the range of the average European bird species is expected to shift 550 km to the northeast, and the range in the warmer climate is about 20% the size of their current range. Arctic and sub-Arctic species, as well as some Iberian endemic species, are especially likely to lose a large part of their range. Several European endemics, with no or only small populations elsewhere, are likely to face an increased extinction risk.

The EU is a major emitter of greenhouse gases<sup>17</sup> and therefore needs to show ambition and leadership in combating climate change. Concretely, the EU should increase its commitment on greenhouse gas mitigation to 2030 and ensure global accounting rules for emissions relating to land use and forestry support effective climate action, and are not damaging to the natural environment. The EU should also develop ambitious targets and require effective policies for energy efficiency and saving and develop policies for ambitious deployment of renewable energy, in harmony with the natural environment. Finally, the EU should ensure its bioenergy dependency is within sustainable limits, that all bioenergy use delivers genuine emissions reductions, and develop the energy infrastructures needed for the sustainable energy transition in harmony with nature.



<sup>12</sup> ten Brink P., Badura T., Bassi S. et al. (2011) Estimating the Overall Economic Value of the Benefits provided by the Natura 2000 Network. Final Report to the European Commission, DG Environment on Contract ENV.B.2/SER/2008/0038.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas C.D., Gillingham P.K., Bradbury, R.B. et al. (2012) Protected areas facilitate species' range expansions. *PNAS* 2012 109 (35). Pages 14063-14068.

<sup>14</sup> Naumann S., Anzaldúa G., Berry P. et al. (2011) Assessment of the potential of ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and mitigation in Europe. Final report to the European Commission, DG Environment, Contract no. 070307/2010/580412/SER/B2, Ecologic Institute and Environmental Change Institute, Oxford University Centre for the Environment.

<sup>15</sup> European Commission (2013) Guidelines on Natura 2000 and climate change.

<sup>16</sup> Huntley, B., Green, R.E., Collingham Y.C. et al. (2007) A climatic atlas of European breeding birds.

<sup>17</sup> EEA (2014) Annual European Union greenhouse gas inventory 1990–2012 and inventory report 2014. Technical report No 09/2014.

◀ An industrial area in the Netherlands. The European Union is one of the major emitters of greenhouse gases worldwide. Photo © Hans Peeters



**TARGET 1****FULLY IMPLEMENT THE BIRDS AND HABITATS DIRECTIVES**

To halt the deterioration in the status of all species and habitats covered by EU nature legislation and achieve a significant and measurable improvement in their status so that, by 2020, compared to current assessments: **(i)** 100% more habitat assessments and 50% more species assessments under the Habitats Directive show an improved conservation status; and **(ii)** 50% more species assessments under the Birds Directive show a secure or improved status.



◀ The Peneda-Gerês Natura 2000 site in Portugal. Natura 2000 sites need proper management and financing if they are to be preserved for future generations.

Photo © Elodie Cantaloube

**MAIN MESSAGE**

Current progress is insufficient to achieve Target 1 by 2020. Although the status of some species and habitats protected by the Birds and Habitats Directive is improving, many others are deteriorating and more needs to be done to meet the target. All Member States must contribute to achieving the target, although some Member States have a larger responsibility for threatened species and habitats.

The implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives needs to improve urgently, as there are major gaps in site designation, site protection and site management and financing, and there are persistent problems with illegal killing of birds.

**Action needed to achieve the Target by 2020:**

- › The EU Member States and the Commission need to urgently complete designation of Natura 2000 sites in the marine environment.
- › The EU Member States and the Commission also need to ensure better implementation of site protection, and to put in place management plans for Natura 2000 sites.
- › The EU needs to increase financing for Natura 2000 during the mid-term review of the EU budget in 2017.
- › The European Commission should urgently propose new and effective solutions to address the failed integrated approach of EU biodiversity funding.
- › The EU needs to adopt legislation on Environmental Inspections as a key tool for tackling illegal killing of birds, improving site protection, and improving surveillance and prosecution of bird crimes.

◀ A Little Tern.  
Photo © John Fox

PROGRESS ASSESSMENT OF TARGET 1

**Target 1 is at the core of the Strategy** in so far as it provides a clear and measurable way to deliver the Headline Target: halting the decline of all EU protected species and partly restoring them. Also, Target 1 can only be fully achieved if actions under Targets 2-5 are implemented at the same time.

The EEA report the "State of Nature in the EU"<sup>18</sup>, published in 2015, provides, for the first time, an overview of progress towards Target 1. The report is based on the data provided by the Member States in the 2007-2012 report under Article 12 of the Birds Directive and Article 17 of the Habitats Directive.

The report uses the 2001-2006 report under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive as a baseline for habitats under the Habitats Directive<sup>19</sup>, in which 17% of the habitat types had a favourable conservation status. For species under the Habitats Directive the report also uses the 2001-2006 report. However, since the knowledge on the conservation status of species under the Habitats Directive has improved significantly since 2001-2006<sup>20</sup>, it became apparent that it was likely that 23% already had a favourable conservation status, this is now used as the baseline. The report uses the 2004 assessment of status of birds in the European Union<sup>21</sup> for birds protected under the Birds Directive (all wild birds), as a baseline in which 52% of bird species in the EU had a secure status.

**Target 1 requires** that an additional 17% of the habitat types and an additional 11,5% of species under the Habitats Directive show an improved status,

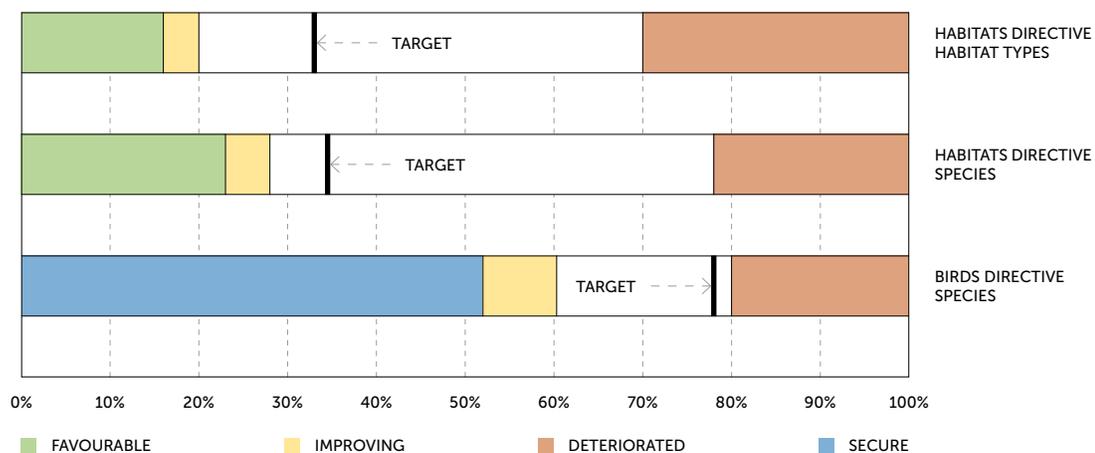
and that 78% of bird species protected under the Birds Directive show a secure or improved status.

**Figure 4 shows the result** of the EEA assessment. The assessment shows that there has been some progress towards Target 1, as 4% of the habitats, 5% of the non-bird species and 8% of the birds species showed an improving status. However we are still very far from achieving Target 1, as many more species and habitats will need to improve in the EU to achieve the target.

**Significantly, the conservation status** of some habitat types in favourable conservation status has deteriorated, 1% less habitat types had a favourable conservation status in 2007-2012 compared to 2001-2006.

The conservation status of in total 30% of the habitat types and 22% of the species under the Habitats Directive in unfavourable conservation status has deteriorated, and the status of 20% of the birds with a non-secure status has deteriorated.

FIGURE 4



Progress towards Target 1 of the Biodiversity Strategy. The green part of the bars indicates the proportion of species and habitats under the Habitats Directive in favourable conservation status and the blue indicates the proportion of birds with a secure status). Yellow indicates the proportion species that are not favourable or secure but improving, the black lines show the 2020 target (of secure/favourable with improving). Note that the Birds Directive protects all wild bird species, while the Habitats Directive protects other threatened species and habitats, hence the higher proportions of birds with a secure status, compared to proportion of species and habitats in favourable status. The red bars shows the percentage of habitats and species whose condition (conservation status/population) has deteriorated. This shows that the improvements toward the target cannot be taken at face value and that we may be still facing a net loss of biodiversity.

<sup>18</sup> EEA (2015) The State of Nature in the EU.  
<sup>19</sup> EEA (2015) The State of Nature in the EU.  
<sup>20</sup> EEA (2015) The State of Nature in the EU.  
<sup>21</sup> BirdLife International (2004). Birds in the European Union: a status assessment.

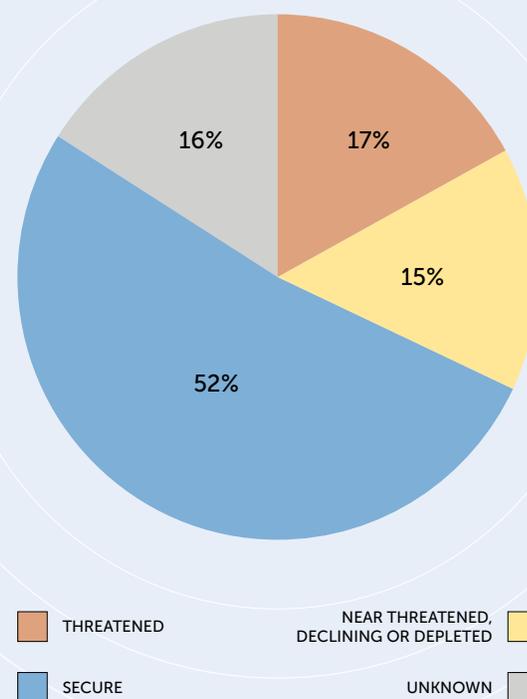
## FOCUS ON THE POPULATION STATUS OF BIRDS

**Target 1 calls on the EU** to ensure that 50% more species assessments under the Birds Directive show an improved or a secure status. Improved status means having an increasing short-term population trend, or a stable or fluctuating trend following long-term population declines.

**Species that meet the IUCN Red List criteria** for Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable have a threatened population status and species that are close to meeting these IUCN Red List criteria have a Near Threatened population status. Species for which the population or range declined more than 20% since 1980 have a declining population status if the decline continued since 2001, and a depleted status if the decline no longer continues. Species for which information was missing have an unknown status. All other species have a secure status.

**The results of the EU population status** assessment are shown in Figure 5 below. In total 17% of EU wild bird species are threatened in the EU, and another 15% are near threatened, declining or depleted. The status of 16% of bird species in the EU is unknown, largely due to a lack of long-term population trend data. The remaining 52% of bird species have a secure status, which is exactly the same as in the last assessment in 2004. In total 8% of the bird species that are not secure have an improving status. To achieve Target 1, an additional 18% of bird species with a secure or improving status is required, and therefore we are still very far from achieving Target 1 for birds.

FIGURE 5



The population status of birds in the European Union. Source:<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> EEA (2015) The State of Nature in the EU.



~ An Eurasian Curlew. The Curlew is one of the many threatened species on the EU Red List of Birds, suffering from a loss of breeding habitat due to agricultural intensification and moorland afforestation. Photo © Shay Conolly

## MEMBER STATES' CONSERVATION RESPONSIBILITY AND PERFORMANCE ON THE CONSERVATION OF THREATENED SPECIES

**Halting biodiversity loss** is the responsibility of all EU Member States. However, biodiversity itself is unequally distributed over the EU, which means that some Member States have a greater responsibility than others in terms of achieving overall EU targets. The European Red List of Birds<sup>23</sup> provides important information on the distribution of threatened bird species. We used the Red List of Birds to identify EU Member States who face the greatest responsibility for conserving and restoring threatened bird species. The methodology is described in detail in Box 2.

### BOX 2 CALCULATING CONSERVATION RESPONSIBILITY AND PERFORMANCE IN THE CONSERVATION OF THREATENED SPECIES

**To calculate the responsibility of Member States** for threatened species, we used a methodology based on the European Red List of Birds and the national Birds Directive Article 12 reports of Member States, with supplementary information provided by CSO/BirdLife Czech Republic and HOS/BirdLife Greece.

First, for all threatened species, the Member State's proportion of the EU population was calculated, and then these were added up for all species present in the country (e.g. a Member State with three threatened species that holds 20%, 55% and 80% of the respective EU populations would score  $0,20 + 0,55 + 0,80 = 1,55$ ). The result is a ranking of Member States in terms of responsibility for threatened species.

**We then used the calculated responsibilities** to assess the performance of EU Member States in the conservation of the threatened species on their territory. We extracted the reported national population trends from Article 12 reports, with supplementary information from CSO/BirdLife Czech Republic and HOS/BirdLife Greece (to fill in gaps in Member States reporting). The trends were assigned a score of +1 for increasing, -1 for declining, and 0 for unknown, stable or fluctuating trends. These scores were then multiplied with the responsibility scores and added of up for each of the Member States.

<sup>23</sup> BirdLife International (2015). European Red List of Birds.

The results are shown in Table 2 and Table 3. The Member State with the highest conservation responsibility score is Spain, followed by Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Portugal. Spain and Portugal have a high number of threatened species that only occur on the Iberian Peninsula or on the Canary Islands, Madeira and the Azores (endemics). Finland and Sweden have a high number of threatened boreal species and large breeding populations of threatened ducks and waders. The United Kingdom has a large breeding population of threatened seabirds.

The Member States with the best conservation performance appears to be Cyprus, followed by Portugal and Hungary. Cyprus has only 4 threatened species, but has an increasing population of Greater Sand Plover and the Spur-winged Lapping, both widespread species at the edge of their distribution. The Cyprus score is thus more of a biogeographical artefact than a genuine result. Portugal has increasing populations of two endemic and globally threatened species, the Monteiro's Storm-petrel and Zino's Petrel, and Hungary has an increasing and large population of the globally threatened Saker Falcon. These results are much more significant.

The Member States with the worst conservation performance, under this exercise, are Finland, the United Kingdom and Sweden. In Finland and Sweden, many boreal species and seabirds are declining, and in the United Kingdom several species of seabird are declining.

The Birds Directive requires all Member States to conserve all wild bird species and all Member States must contribute to achieving Target 1. However, some Member States have a greater responsibility to avoid the extinction of bird species in the EU, and BirdLife will follow their progress and performance to 2020 closely.

) TABLE 2 (

MEMBER STATE (TOTAL NUMBER OF THREATENED SPECIES)	BIRD CONSERVATION RESPONSIBILITY SCORE	MEMBER STATE (TOTAL NUMBER OF THREATENED SPECIES)	BIRD CONSERVATION RESPONSIBILITY SCORE
1 Spain (30)	13,95	15 Latvia (25)	1,21
2 Finland (43)	13,68	16 Germany (27)	1,17
3 Sweden (41)	10,47	17 Ireland (18)	0,77
4 United Kingdom (29)	8,46	18 Lithuania (26)	0,77
5 Portugal (18)	6,6	19 Bulgaria (19)	0,66
6 Poland (23)	3,02	20 Denmark (23)	0,49
7 Estonia (32)	2,75	21 Austria (18)	0,37
8 Netherlands (19)	2,24	22 Czech Republic (16)	0,24
9 Greece (16)	2,17	23 Slovakia (14)	0,16
10 France (28)	2,07	24 Belgium (16)	0,11
11 Romania (18)	2,03	25 Slovenia (13)	0,03
12 Italy (20)	1,57	26 Luxembourg (8)	0
13 Cyprus (4)	1,53	27 Malta (0)	0
14 Hungary (14)	1,47		

) TABLE 3 (

MEMBER STATE (TOTAL NUMBER OF THREATENED SPECIES)	BIRD CONSERVATION RESPONSIBILITY SCORE	MEMBER STATE (TOTAL NUMBER OF THREATENED SPECIES)	BIRD CONSERVATION RESPONSIBILITY SCORE
1 Cyprus (4)	1,53	14 Germany (27)	-0,42
2 Portugal (18)	1,03	15 Romania (18)	-0,55
3 Hungary (14)	0,24	16 Italy (20)	-0,55
4 Lithuania (26)	0,12	17 Bulgaria (19)	-0,61
5 Czech Republic (16)	0,11	18 Ireland (18)	-0,65
6 Denmark (23)	0,1	19 France (28)	-0,93
7 Slovakia (14)	0,09	20 Spain (30)	-1,03
8 Austria (18)	0,08	21 Estonia (32)	-1,13
9 Luxembourg (8)	0	22 Poland (23)	-1,64
10 Slovenia (13)	-0,01	23 Netherlands (19)	-2,21
11 Belgium (16)	-0,03	24 Sweden (41)	-3,92
12 Latvia (25)	-0,1	25 United Kingdom (29)	-6,97
13 Greece (16)	-0,32	26 Finland (43)	-7,19

◀ The conservation responsibility score of EU Member States for European threatened species. A score of 1,00 is equivalent to 100% of the population of a European threatened species. Croatia is excluded from this table as Croatia was not yet part of the EU at the time of the Birds Directive Article 12 reporting. Note that this assessment does not cover responsibility for threatened species during their migration due to a lack of data, which means that some countries of importance for migrating birds such as Malta have a lower score than they would have if this aspect was included.

◀ The conservation performance score of EU Member States for European threatened species. A score of +1,00 is equivalent to 100% of the population of a European threatened species that is increasing and a score of -1,00 is equivalent to 100% of the population of a threatened species that is decreasing. Croatia is excluded from this table as Croatia was not yet part of the EU at the time of the Birds Directive Article 12 reporting. Malta is also excluded as it does not host any threatened breeding or wintering bird species.



~ A European Treefrog. The Habitats Directive protects some of Europe's most charismatic wildlife.  
Photo © Francois van Bauwel

## MEMBER STATE PERFORMANCE REGARDING OTHER SPECIES AND HABITATS

As Figure 4 shows, the EU still needs to make significant progress towards achieving Target 1 of the Biodiversity Strategy also in regard to non-bird species and habitat types protected by the EU Habitats Directive. There are large differences in performance between the Member States, illustrated by specific national reports submitted to the European Commission for the period 2007-2012. All EU Member States except Greece have submitted a report. The report from Cyprus is excluded in this chapter as there is sufficient evidence which shows their report is severely overestimating the conservation status of habitats and species, for example there are major problems with soil sealing in Cyprus<sup>24</sup>.

When comparing the proportion of species in favourable conservation status, only three Member States achieve more than 50% (Estonia, Bulgaria and Ireland). For habitat types it is only two (Romania and Estonia). On the other hand there are 15 countries with more than half of the species, and 19 countries with more than half of the habitat types in unfavourable conservation status (Table 4).

Table 5 shows a similar analysis for improving or declining species and habitat types. This can be seen as an indicator for special efforts or lack of action. The Netherlands are the only Member State where more than 50% of species that are in unfavourable status are improving, and there are no Member States where more than 50% of the habitat types are improving. On the other hand, there are a number of Member States where more than half of the species or

habitats that are already in unfavourable status are declining further.

It is difficult however, to assess progress by comparing the 2010 baseline with the 2015 data, as the knowledge on many species and habitats has greatly improved in this period. Member States have indicated that more than 80% of changes in status of the habitats and species between the reporting periods are not genuine, but a result of better knowledge on conservation status.

The status of all species is known only for Sweden, and the status of habitats for Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta and the Netherlands. Portugal and Denmark reported more than 25% of species assessments as unknown, and Spain more than 25% of habitat assessments as unknown.

Member States performance is therefore best assessed by the proportion of species and habitats currently in favourable conservation status and the proportion of habitats and species in unfavourable status, which indicates the proximity to favourable conservation status for all species and habitats. For the species and habitats that are in unfavourable conservation status the proportion improving or declining is also relevant, as this reveals conservation action or a lack of conservation action.

The ranking of Member States on the different indicators are shown in Table 4 and Table 5. The top performing Member States for conservation status are Estonia, Bulgaria and Romania, probably because these Member States have a rela-

tively low intensity of land use, Ireland, which has many bat species in favourable status, and Malta, which has relative few Annex I habitats. The worst conservation status is found in the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Ireland, Belgium and Austria, all of which have a high intensity of land use.

**The top performing Member States** in terms of achieving an improving the status of species and habitats in unfavourable status are the Netherlands, Belgium, the United Kingdom and Poland, possibly linked to the considerable investment of resources in conservation and restoration in these Member States, and Estonia, which has relatively few Annex II species with unfavourable status. The worst performance of any Member States, i.e. the highest proportion of declining species and habitats with unfavourable conservation status, is found in Italy, possibly due to inadequate site protection (see Box 1), followed by Bulgaria and Slovenia, potentially linked to loss of grassland species (Box 4). Agricultural intensification and the resulting eutrophication of water bodies may also explain similar trends in Finland and Sweden.

) TABLE 4 (

MORE THAN 50% OF SPECIES IN FAVOURABLE STATUS	MORE THAN 50% OF HABITATS IN FAVOURABLE STATUS	MORE THAN 50% OF SPECIES IN UNFAVOURABLE STATUS	MORE THAN 50% OF HABITATS IN UNFAVOURABLE STATUS
1 Estonia (54%)	1 Romania (63%)	1 Austria (82%)	1 Netherlands (96%)
2 Bulgaria (54%)	2 Estonia (52%)	2 Luxembourg (75%)	2 Ireland (91%)
3 Ireland (52%)		3 Netherlands (73%)	3 Belgium (90%)
		4 Romania (73%)	4 Denmark (90%)
		5 Czech Republic (69%)	5 United Kingdom (90%)
		6 Belgium (68%)	6 Bulgaria (88%)
		7 Lithuania (65%)	7 Latvia (86%)
		8 Hungary (62%)	8 Czech Republic (83%)
		9 Slovakia (61%)	9 Hungary (80%)
		10 Germany (60%)	10 Austria (80%)
		11 Latvia (59%)	11 Lithuania (76%)
		12 France (56%)	12 Luxembourg (75%)
		13 Sweden (55%)	13 France (74%)
		14 Spain (54%)	14 Sweden (72%)
		15 Slovenia (52%)	15 Poland (70%)
		16 Italy (50%)	16 Germany (70%)
		17 Poland (50%)	17 Italy (68%)
			18 Portugal (67%)
			19 Finland (65%)
			20 Spain (62%)
			21 Malta (57%)
			22 Slovenia (56%)
			23 Slovakia (55%)

◀ Proportion of species and habitats protected under the Habitats Directive in favourable and unfavourable conservation status. Source:<sup>24</sup>.

) TABLE 5 (

MORE THAN 50% OF UNFAVOURABLE SPECIES ARE IMPROVING	MORE THAN 50% OF UNFAVOURABLE HABITATS ARE IMPROVING	MORE THAN 50% OF UNFAVOURABLE SPECIES ARE DECLINING	MORE THAN 50% OF UNFAVOURABLE HABITATS ARE DECLINING
1 Netherlands (55%)	No Member States	1 Italy (79%)	1 Italy (66%)
		2 Bulgaria (73%)	2 Sweden (59%)
			3 Finland (58%)
			4 Latvia (55%)
			5 Slovenia (52%)
			6 Lithuania (51%)

◀ Proportion of species and habitats protected under the Habitats Directive in unfavourable-improving and unfavourable-declining conservation status. Source:<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> European Commission (2011). Report on best practices for limiting soil sealing and mitigating its effects.

<sup>25</sup> EEA (2015) The State of Nature in the EU.

<sup>26</sup> EEA (2015) The State of Nature in the EU.

**DESIGNATION OF NATURA 2000 SITES**  
**ACTION 1A OF THE BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY**

↑ "Member States and the Commission will ensure that the phase to establish Natura 2000, including in the marine environment, is largely complete by 2012".

**DESIGNATION OF SPECIAL PROTECTION AREAS (SPAS) UNDER THE EU BIRDS DIRECTIVE**

BirdLife has developed a methodology to identify Important Bird Areas (IBAs) to help Member States identify and designate the most appropriate sites as SPAs. IBAs have been recognised by the European Court of Justice as the scientific reference for SPA designation. Although it took a long period of time, by at this point IBAs, in some countries up to 100% have been designated as SPAs and therefore form part of Natura 2000. Figure 6 shows the differences among Member States as far as terrestrial sites are concerned.

In the marine environment, Member States have been extremely slow at designating SPAs, especially in high seas<sup>27</sup> (see Figure 7). Seabirds make use of terrestrial, coastal, inshore and offshore habitats, and face a range of direct and indirect threats from human activity on land and at sea, including bycatch in fisheries (see page 55), over-fishing, invasive alien predators (see page 56), habitat destruction. Furthermore, with the increased investments on maritime sectors such as offshore energy, aquaculture, and seabed mining, marine protected areas face increased competition for space. Once identified, it is essential that SPAs are assessed for threats, managed accordingly and monitored over time. The lack of progress in

completing the network has meant that seabirds are facing persistent and pervasive threats across Europe without sufficient protection in their most important areas, such as in feeding areas at sea.

The Commission should continue to take legal action to ensure the designation of marine SPAs. First priority are the Member States where no marine inventories have been developed and where marine IBA inventories have been developed but where national authorities have failed to designate them as SPAs. In addition, management across the Natura 2000 network is insufficient (see page 22), a problem that is especially pressing in the marine environment. Furthermore, the European Commission should ensure that future spatial plans in the marine environment follow an ecosystem based approach as set out under the Maritime Spatial Plan Directive. This therefore requires that Member States designate and implement their marine protected areas, include their SPAs, as part of their spatial planning.

<sup>27</sup> BirdLife Europe (2014) Marine Natura 2000 progress assessment. Protection of marine Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (mIBAs), and sites at sea for seabirds. [http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2014.11\\_MarinaN2K\\_ProgressReport\\_0.pdf](http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2014.11_MarinaN2K_ProgressReport_0.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> BirdLife International (2013) Designating Special Protection Areas in the European Union. Presented as part of the BirdLife State of the world's birds website. Available from <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/sowb/casestudy/244>



Proportion of terrestrial Important Bird Areas designated as SPAs. Source:<sup>28</sup>

FIGURE 7 (



Proportion of marine Important Bird Areas designated as SPAs. Source:<sup>29</sup>

## DESIGNATION OF SITES OF COMMUNITY INTEREST (SCIs) AND SPECIAL AREAS OF CONSERVATION (SACs) UNDER THE EU HABITATS DIRECTIVE

The European Commission regularly assesses progress of the Member States in designating SCIs. The last update in 2014<sup>30</sup> showed that while largely complete in most Member States there were still major insufficiencies in some, for example in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In Spain and Portugal the current designation of SCIs was, as of 2014 particularly insufficient in the marine areas.

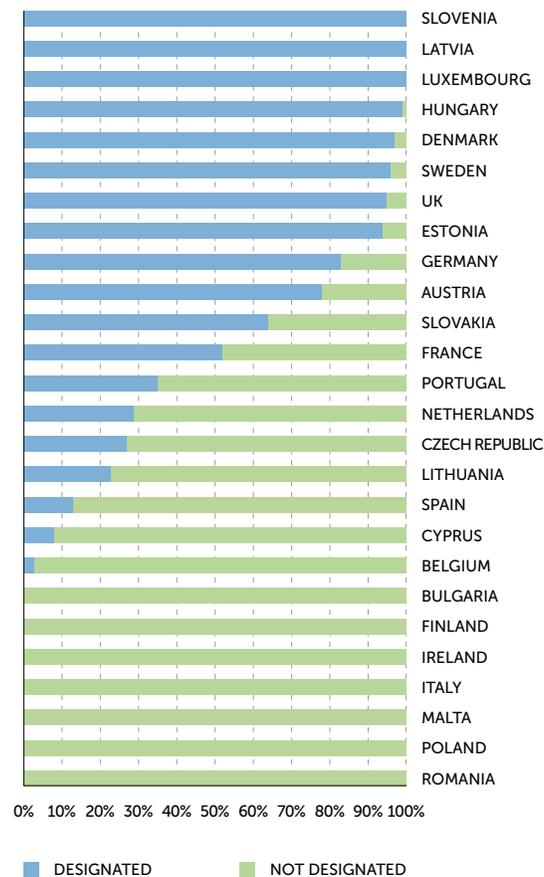
Member States have six years after the adoption of SCIs to designate the sites legally as SACs. Member States reported the designation of SACs as part of the 2007-2012 report under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive. The results are shown in Figure 8. In three Member States the process is complete (Slovenia, Latvia and Luxembourg) and in another five Member States the designation is almost complete. However, there are fourteen Member States in which less than half of the SCIs are designated as SACs, including seven which have not designated a single SAC. The European Commission has started to take legal action against some of the Member States.

<sup>29</sup> BirdLife Europe (2014) Marine Natura 2000 progress assessment. Protection of marine Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (mIBAs), and sites at sea for seabirds. [http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2014.11\\_MarinaN2K\\_ProgressReport\\_0.pdf](http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2014.11_MarinaN2K_ProgressReport_0.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> European Commission (2014) Commission Conclusions on the representativity of habitat types and species of Community interest in the Natura 2000 network. Available on CIRCABC.

<sup>31</sup> EEA (2015) The State of Nature in the EU.

FIGURE 8 (



The proportion of Sites of Community Interests (SCIs) designated as Special Area of Conservation (SACs). Source:<sup>31</sup>. Note that the designation of SACs is on-going, and some Member States have designated additional SACs since the submission of their report under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive.

**PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT OF NATURA 2000 SITES**  
**ACTION 1C OF THE BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY**

↑ "Member States will ensure that management plans or equivalent instruments which set out conservation and restoration measures are developed and implemented in a timely manner for all Natura 2000 sites".

The number of management plans established forms a useful indication of the quality of management of the Natura 2000 network, although also much will depend on the implementation of the plans in practice. Table 1 shows the number of management plans adopted for Natura 2000 sites. The majority of Member States do not have management plans for most of their sites. Only Sweden and Denmark are close to having a management plan for all Natura 2000 areas, while Ireland and Bulgaria to date have not adopted a single management plan. Overall, fewer SPAs have management plans compared to SCIs/SACs and in addition to Ireland and Bulgaria also Slovakia, Cyprus and Poland have not adopted a single management plan for SPAs.

A key of the success of Natura 2000 is, next to management planning, the prevention of activities that undermine the conservation objectives of the sites or damage them. Article 6.3 and 6.4 of the Habitats Directive requires authorities of the EU Member States to scrutinize all plans and projects that could potentially damage a site. Only plans and projects, which, following an appropriate assessment, are assessed as unlikely to damage the site, or plans and projects of imperative reasons of overriding public interest under Article 6.4, can go ahead. Together with addressing diffuse pollution and tackling climate

change this should offer the Natura 2000 network adequate protection. Over the last decades many Natura 2000 sites have been destroyed in spite of the protection afforded under the Habitats Directive. Many local and regional authorities have authorized damaging projects, sometimes unaware of the consequences and sometimes willingly for short-term political gains. Cases of damaging projects can unfortunately be found in most EU Member States, although there are a few Member States in Europe where this issue is particularly pressing such as Cyprus, Bulgaria and Italy (see Box 3). For the European Commission and the Member States the first priority should be to adopt the long overdue EU legislation on Environmental Inspections (see also page 29), which should require Member States to invest sufficient resources in enforcement of environmental law. Many damaging activities in Natura 2000 site can be easily seen on the ground or by looking satellite data, as such there is no excuse for the Member States and the European Commission to let wholesale destruction of protected sites go undetected.

<sup>32</sup> EEA (2015) The State of Nature in the EU.  
<sup>33</sup> EEA (2015) The State of Nature in the EU.

TABLE 6

MEMBER STATE	SPAS WITH MANAGEMENT PLANS	MEMBER STATE	SPAS WITH MANAGEMENT PLANS
1 Denmark	112 (99%)	14 Luxembourg	3 (23%)
2 Sweden	518 (95%)	15 Germany	143 (19%)
3 Slovenia	26 (84%)	16 Spain	90 (15%)
4 Austria	68 (69%)	17 United Kingdom	32 (12%)
5 Latvia	58 (59%)	18 Portugal	6 (10%)
6 Czech Republic	21 (51%)	19 Netherlands	4 (5%)
7 Estonia	33 (51%)	20 Romania	7 (5%)
8 Lithuania	34 (41%)	21 Belgium	3 (1%)
9 France	142 (36%)	22 Bulgaria	0 (0%)
10 Finland	145 (31%)	23 Cyprus	0 (0%)
11 Malta	4 (31%)	24 Ireland	0 (0%)
12 Italy	162 (27%)	25 Poland	0 (0%)
13 Hungary	13 (23%)	26 Slovakia	0 (0%)

↗ Number of management plans for SPAs and percentage of SPAs with a management plan. Source:<sup>32</sup>. Note that the development of management plans is ongoing, and some Member States have developed additional plans designated since the submission of their report under Article 12 of the Birds Directive.

TABLE 7

MEMBER STATE	SPAS WITH MANAGEMENT PLANS	MEMBER STATE	SPAS WITH MANAGEMENT PLANS
1 Sweden	3988 (100%)	14 Finland	314 (19%)
2 Denmark	255 (98%)	15 Latvia	53 (17%)
3 Cyprus	39 (98%)	16 Spain	217 (15%)
4 Slovenia	260 (80%)	17 Portugal	14 (15%)
5 Austria	117 (68%)	18 Lithuania	53 (13%)
6 Italy	1011 (44%)	19 Hungary	27 (6%)
7 France	591 (43%)	20 Belgium	9 (3%)
8 Germany	1740 (38%)	21 Poland	15 (2%)
9 Luxembourg	14 (29%)	22 Slovakia	8 (2%)
10 Czech Republic	287 (27%)	23 Netherlands	1 (1%)
11 Malta	7 (22%)	24 Romania	4 (1%)
12 United Kingdom	142 (22%)	25 Bulgaria	0 (0%)
13 Estonia	105 (19%)	26 Ireland	0 (0%)

↗ Number of management plans for SCIs/SACs and percentage of SCIs/SACs with a management plan. Source:<sup>33</sup>. Note that the development of management plans is ongoing, and some Member States have developed additional plans designated since the submission of their report under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive.

**BOX 3****A WAVE OF DESTRUCTION:  
POOR PROTECTION  
OF NATURA 2000 SITES IN ITALY**

In Italy many Natura 2000 sites have been damaged or completely destroyed over the last few years, in many cases in clear breach of the Habitats Directive. The Italian BirdLife Partner LIPU and WWF Italy gathered extensive evidence from all over the country, including a dossier of before- and after photos. The result is a disheartening catalogue of drainage of wetlands, clear-cuts of riparian forests and mountain slopes ruined by ski-lifts and quarries. An example is shown below in Figure 9. It is clear that these projects do not fall under the exemptions that are possible for plans or projects of "imperative reasons of overriding public interest". In many cases no appropriate assessment was carried out.

If Member States fail to look after their natural heritage in compliance with EU law, the European Commission must take action and bring relevant cases to the European Court of Justice. The Court then can hold Italy accountable and even impose fines if the situation does not improve sufficiently.

When a Member State, as in the case of Italy, systematically fails to implement EU legislation on a large scale, the Commission can bring action before the European Court of Justice based on a systemic failure rather than trying to resolve the problems site-by-site.

This means that in this case, Italy would have to ensure that its nature administration functions properly and that assessments of plans and projects are of sufficient quality to ensure no damaging plans or projects are authorised illegally.



~ BEFORE



~ AFTER

**FIGURE 9**  
The SCI Biviere e Macconi di Gela and SPA Torre Manfredia, Biviere e Piana di Gela have been severely damaged by the expansion of greenhouses, resulting in a permanent loss of sand dune habitat protected under the Birds and Habitat Directive. Greenhouse expansion is not of overriding public interest and should not have been allowed. LIPU/ BirdLife Italy has documented over 30 similar cases of damage to Natura 2000 sites.

**FINANCING NATURA 2000**

**ACTION 2**

↑ "The Commission and Member States will provide the necessary funds and incentives for Natura 2000, including through EU funding instruments, under the next multiannual financial framework. The Commission will set out its views in 2011 on how Natura 2000 will be financed under the next multi-annual financial framework".

**The European Commission** has estimated that a minimum of 5.8 billion EUR per year will be needed for the EU to manage and restore the sites in the Natura 2000 network (without Croatia)<sup>34</sup>. This is a minimum figure, and compares very favourably indeed with the estimated 200 – 300 billion Euros worth of environmental and socio-economic benefits<sup>35</sup> generated by the network, which now covers 18% of the terrestrial area.

**The EU Habitats Directive** requires co-financing of prioritised Natura 2000 measures from the EU budget. The European Commission estimated in 2011 that only 10-20% of costs were covered by EU funds<sup>36</sup>. It is likely that domestic Member State funding from private and public sources similarly falls short of what is required. Inadequate tracing mechanisms for actual spending on nature conservation at Member State level make it difficult to arrive at a precise figure, although the shortfall is likely to be at least 50%.

**The EU's Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) 2014-2020** was agreed after EU Member States had adopted of the EU Biodiversity Strategy. However, there are no indications that the funding gap will become significantly smaller by 2020. Under this new budget framework the EU dedicates only a very small share of funding to

biodiversity and nature conservation (less than 150 Million EUR annually, 55% of the LIFE funds or 0.11% of the overall EU budget). Although this is a slight increase compared to the previous period, it would cover only 2.5% of the costs of implementing Natura 2000. At the same time EU Member States and European Parliament agreed to continue spending annually more than 40 billion EUR (almost 30% of the entire EU budget) of public funding on direct agricultural subsidies with largely negative effects on biodiversity<sup>37</sup>.

**The EU Institutions** have repeatedly committed to delivering the main part of Natura 2000 funding through other EU funds, following an "integration" approach. At the time of writing of this report Member State programming of the EU



Agricultural and Rural Development Fund, the Maritime and Fisheries Fund and the Cohesion Funds have not been concluded, so there are no final figures available on expected Natura 2000 spending.

**However, there are already signals** that the integration approach will not mobilise sufficient funding for Natura 2000 and wider biodiversity. For example, the total budget of the Rural Development Fund has been reduced, more than half of the Member States have reduced spending on biodiversity (see page 41) and Regional Funds are inaccessible for biodiversity in many EU Member States (see page 34). New instruments introduced by the European Commission, like the Prioritized Action Frameworks for Natura 2000 and bilateral Partnership Agreements do not seem to have led to a significant reversal of the funding crisis in conservation. NABU/BirdLife Germany has already shown that the funding for 2014-2020 will be insufficient, as much less than half of the expenses are covered<sup>38</sup>.

**In the short term**, Member States must urgently make better use of the funding opportunities provided by the EU budget, and make up any shortfall in funding through domestic funding streams. The Commission must actively work to ensure that what little funding has been committed in the new programming period is actually spent, and spent efficiently. These actions alone will not secure sufficient financing for biodiversity conservation now or in the long term. The EU must ensure that the upcoming mid-term reviews of the EU budget and sectoral policies deliver urgently needed improvements to funding provision and scrutiny.

<sup>34</sup> European Commission (2011): Financing Natura 2000. Investing in Natura 2000: Delivering benefits for nature and people. Staff Working Paper. SEC(2011) 1573 final.

<sup>35</sup> ten Brink P., Badura T., Bassi S. et al. (2011) Estimating the Overall Economic Value of the Benefits provided by the Natura 2000 Network. Final Report to the European Commission, DG Environment on Contract ENV.B.2/SER/2008/0038.

<sup>36</sup> European Commission (2011): Financing Natura 2000. Investing in Natura 2000: Delivering benefits for nature and people. Staff Working Paper. SEC(2011) 1573 final.

<sup>37</sup> Pe'er G., Dicks L.V., Visconti P. et al (2014). EU agricultural reform fails on biodiversity. Science 2014 6188 (344) pp. 1090-1092.

<sup>38</sup> NABU (2015) Analysis of biodiversity spending under the 2014-2020 Multi-annual Financial framework. Unpublished.

◀ **A Long-eared Owl.**  
Photo © Richard Mills

## ILLEGAL KILLING, TAKING AND TRADE OF BIRDS

### ACTION 3C OF THE BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

↑ "The Commission and Member States will facilitate enforcement of the nature directives by providing specific training programmes on Natura 2000 for judges and public prosecutors, and by developing better compliance promotion capacities".

**Illegal activities, such as wildlife crime**, have severe consequences for biodiversity conservation, including for birds. Throughout the EU the illegal killing of birds still occurs, including the illegal trapping of migratory birds as part of organised crime, shooting of migratory birds for taxidermy and deliberate persecution of raptors. Action is urgently needed to improve compliance with the Birds Directive provisions on protection of wild birds, nests and eggs (see Figure 11).

**The effective protection of birds** needs a strong enforcement chain. This means that first, illegal activities must have a high probability of detection through efficient surveillance of the areas where they are likely to occur. The detected illegalities should then be investigated thoroughly. Finally, offenders should be prosecuted and subject to deterrent and dissuasive penalties. The Commission has in 2012 published a Roadmap to eliminate illegal killing

of birds, which covers several parts of the enforcement chain, including the training of judges and prosecutors.

**More action is needed** to improve compliance with the bird protection provisions before 2020 on the entire enforcement chain. For the Commission and the Member States the first priority should be to adopt the long overdue legislation on Environmental inspections (see also page 22), which requires Member States to invest sufficient resources in enforcement and to plan enforcement strategically at a national level. Specific attention needs to be paid to develop and implement protocols for surveillance, investigation and protocols for prosecution and sharing best practice, as well as communication with stakeholders and the general public.

**The Commission should also take action** to improve the implementation of the Environmental Crime Directive, which covers the killing of protected bird species. The Commission should issue guidance on how to set dissuasive and proportionate penalties, and take swift legal action against Member States who failed transposition of the Environmental Crime Directive.



◀ **FIGURE 10**  
A trapped blackcap in Cyprus. Cyprus is one of the main hotspots for illegal killing in Europe, in autumn 2014 likely more than 1,5 million birds have been trapped and sold for consumption.  
Photo © BirdLife Cyprus

**BIRD CRIME IN THE EU**



**FRANCE** <-----

**The trapping of Ortolan buntings.** The birds are trapped in small cage-traps, using live decoys, fattened up and killed for consumption – often sold to restaurants for significant profits. The Ortolan bunting is in sharp decline in the European Union.



**SPAIN** <-----

**The poisoning of eagles, vultures and other birds of prey.** The birds are poisoned because of their perceived effects on populations of game species, or are victims of the persecution of large carnivores. Over 7 000 individuals of threatened species have been poisoned in the last decade, including 114 Globally threatened Spanish Imperial Eagles.



**The trapping of songbirds (parany).** The birds are trapped with limesticks in specially created tree stands and killed for consumption. This form of illegal killing is widespread in the eastern regions of Spain, involving an extremely large number of birds.



**ITALY** <-----

**The trapping of migratory songbirds with nets, traps and decoys.** The birds are killed for consumption and sold to restaurants. The demand for birds in Italy is also fuelling illegal activities abroad, such as for example in the Balkan countries. The persecution of birds of prey (shooting) is also a significant problem in Italy.



**UNITED KINGDOM** <-----

**The persecution of Hen Harriers** associated with intensive driven grouse moors. The birds are shot and their nests destroyed to boost the shootable surplus of Red grouse on intensively managed private estates. The Hen Harrier is now close to extinction as a breeding species in England.





#### CYPRUS

**The trapping of migratory songbirds with limesticks and nets.** The birds are killed for consumption – often sold to restaurants. The bird trappers and sellers have often links to organised crime, as significant profits can be made from selling the birds.



#### HUNGARY

**The persecution of birds of prey.** The birds are poisoned with poison baits and shot because of their perceived effects on populations of game species. Between 2001 and 2009 33% of the dead Eastern Imperial Eagles that were found had died due to poisoning.



#### GREECE

**The poisoning of eagles and vultures.** The birds are a victim of secondary poisoning. Poison baits are commonly used against large carnivores, hunting dogs and stray dogs. Many eagles and vultures have been killed on their migration. This included endangered species such as the Egyptian Vulture as demonstrated by the death of vultures that were radio tagged as part of the LIFE+ NEOPHRON project<sup>39</sup>. In Greece the illegal shooting of migratory birds in spring is also a significant problem, mainly on the Ionian Islands.



#### MALTA

**The shooting of protected migratory birds** during the spring and autumn hunting seasons. The birds are shot for taxidermy. The spring hunting season is allowed under an unlawful derogation. Many rare species have been shot, including European threatened species such as the Pallid Harrier. In 2014, Malta also opened an unlawful finch trapping season, which already has had an impact on Natura 2000 sites.

◀ Bird crime in the EU. The map indicates the worst instances of illegal killing of birds in the EU where illegal killing of birds is happening on a large scale, where illegal killing is known to have a detrimental impact on the conservation of bird species or where illegal killing is a persistent problem.

<sup>39</sup> BSPB (2010) Return of the Neophron. <http://www.lifenephron.eu>



**TARGET 2****MAINTAINING AND ENHANCING ECOSYSTEMS AND THEIR SERVICES**

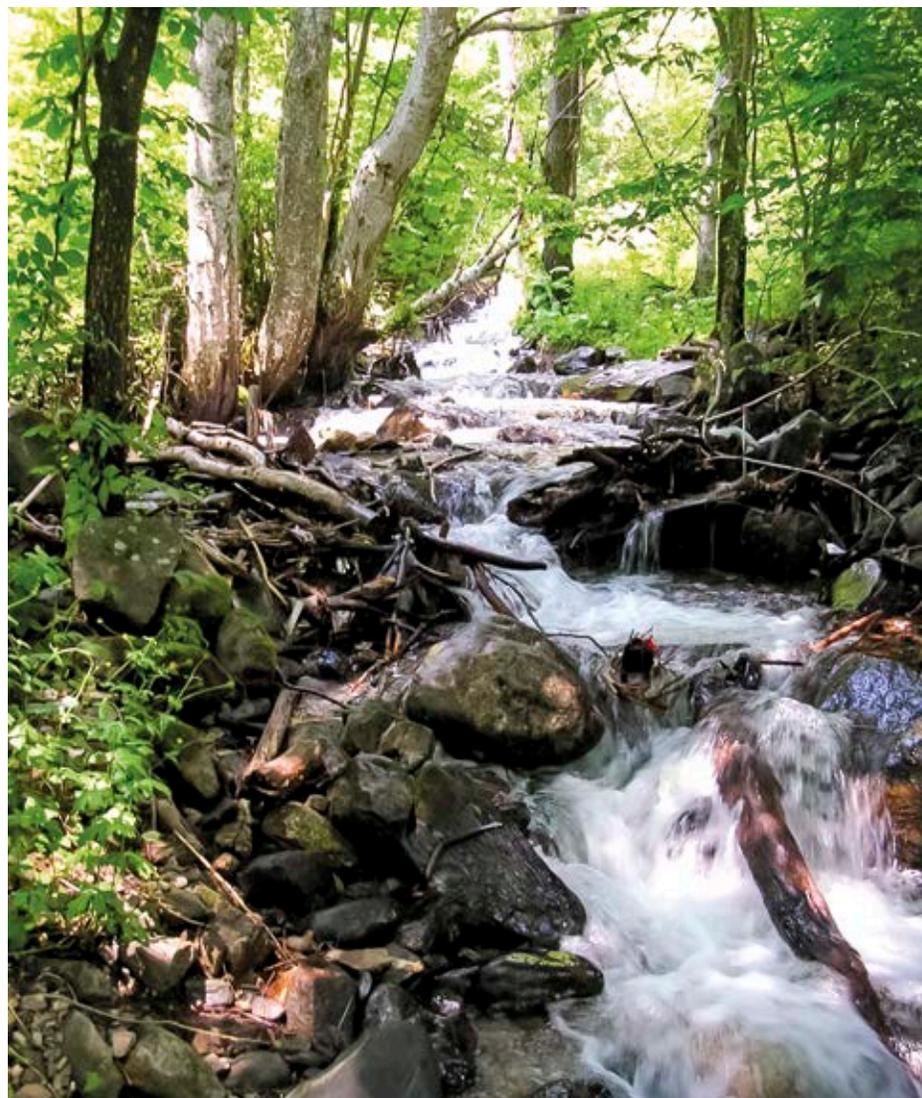
By 2020, ecosystems and their services are maintained and enhanced by establishing green infrastructure and restoring at least 15% of degraded ecosystems.

**MAIN MESSAGE**

Target 2 commits the EU to restore 15% of degraded ecosystems and to establish Green Infrastructure. To achieve this, the EU Member States committed to prepare restoration prioritisation frameworks by 2014 and the Commission committed to launch a Green Infrastructure Strategy and a No net loss initiative. However, no Member State had put a restoration prioritisation framework in place at the end of 2014, and it is uncertain whether Green Infrastructure will receive adequate funding.

**Action needed to achieve the Target by 2020:**

- › All EU Member States need to urgently develop a restoration prioritisation framework.
- › The Commission need to ensure that the 2012 Green Infrastructure Strategy is implemented, in particular that Green Infrastructure receives adequate funding to achieve a significant increase of area and quality.
- › The Commission also needs to propose a No net loss initiative which improves implementation of existing legislation, and ensures no net biodiversity loss by EU funded projects.



~ A small stream in Bulgaria. Small linear landscape elements, such as streams and hedgerows, help plants and animals to disperse through the landscape. Photo © Nicky Petkov

~ A mountain lake in Greece. Ecosystems provide several important services to humanity, such as carbon storage, disaster prevention and water retention. Photo © Peri Kourakli

RESTORING DEGRADED ECOSYSTEMS

**Target 2 commits the EU to restore 15%** of degraded ecosystems by 2020. The restoration prioritization frameworks that Member States committed to develop by 2014 under action 6a) is a crucial starting point for achieving this target. The frameworks can also be used as basis to target EU funds towards restoration projects, for example under the LIFE Fund or the European Regional Development Fund. It is obviously not possible to restore 15% of the EU to pristine wilderness by 2020. Restoration should therefore be approached as an incremental process, which leads to a significant improvement to a degraded ecosystem.

**There is no reporting obligation on restoration,** but only Finland and Latvia reported the preparation of a restoration prioritisation framework in their reports to the CBD<sup>40</sup>, which at the time of writing had not been published. France reported having a framework through the Trame Verte et Bleue<sup>41</sup>, which predates the EU Biodiversity Strategy. It is therefore very likely that no Member States had developed a restoration prioritisation framework by the end of 2014. Neither the Commission nor the Member States have developed as strategic framework to set priorities for restoration at EU level. The Commission has not published guidelines

for Member States on how to achieve the 15% restoration target, in spite of contracting a consultant to carry out the preparatory work<sup>42</sup>. As a result, the risk is that Member States will interpret the target differently.

**In conclusion,** with no restoration frameworks developed and no EU restoration framework or guidelines, the EU is not on track to restore 15% of its degraded ecosystems. The EU is unlikely to achieve a significant improvement in the condition of its ecosystems by 2020 unless the Member States significantly step up their efforts.



**FIGURE 12**  
A restored wetland in the Senne SPA, Slovakia. The Senne SPA of major importance for several species of water birds in Slovakia. The Senne SPA is part of a natural floodplain. River regulation in the 1970s had stopped flooding of the floodplain, which resulted in a decline of water birds. As part of the LIFE Project SENNERESTSK the water regime in several parts in the SPA was restored through an improved water infrastructure.  
Photo © Miroslav Demko

- <sup>40</sup> CBD (2014-15) Fifth national reports of EU Member States. Available at <https://www.cbd.int/reports/nr5>
- <sup>41</sup> Centre des ressources TVB (2015). Trame verte et bleue. <http://www.trameverteetbleue.fr>
- <sup>42</sup> Lammerant J., Peters R., Snethlage M (2013) Implementation of 2020 EU Biodiversity Strategy: Priorities for the restoration of ecosystems and their services in the EU. Report to the European Commission. ARCADIS (in cooperation with ECNC and Eftec) <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/pdf/2020/RPF.pdf>
- <sup>43</sup> European Commission (2013) Guidelines on Natura 2000 and climate change.
- <sup>44</sup> European Commission (2013) An EU-wide strategy on Green Infrastructure: Enhancing Europe's Natural Capital. COM(2013) 249 final.
- <sup>45</sup> European Parliament and Council of the European Union (2013) Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the European Regional Development Fund and on specific provisions concerning the Investment for growth and jobs goal and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006. Official Journal of the European Union L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 289–302.
- <sup>46</sup> Centre des Ressources TVB (2015). Trame verte et bleue. <http://www.trameverteetbleue.fr>
- <sup>47</sup> Tucker G., Allen B., Coway, M. et al (2013) Policy Options for an EU No Net Loss Initiative. Report to the European Commission. Institute for European Environmental Policy, London.

## GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

**Target 2 commits the EU to establish** a green infrastructure by 2020 and action 6b calls on the Commission to develop a Green Infrastructure strategy. Tackling habitat fragmentation in the wider countryside, and enhancing the coherence of the Natura 2000 network<sup>43</sup> are crucial steps to building the EU's Green Infrastructure.

**The Commission published** its Green Infrastructure Strategy in 2013<sup>44</sup>. The strategy contains very few concrete actions, but mainly commits the Commission to do further studies on a range of topics. Green Infrastructure is defined very broadly in the Strategy, without any clear priorities. Significantly, it does not contain any targets for the amount of EU funds to be mobilized for Green Infrastructure.

As part of the Green Infrastructure Strategy, the Commission focussed on mobilizing funds for Green Infrastructure from the new European Regional Development fund (ERDF) for 2014-2017. However, none of the EU funds, including

the ERDF, have a specific part of their budget allocated to green infrastructure. In more developed regions only 20% of the national allocation of the ERDF is available for the environment and six other thematic priorities combined<sup>45</sup>. It is therefore unlikely that a large investment of EU funds in Green Infrastructure will happen, as most of the funds are likely to be absorbed by grey infrastructure, such as roads and railways. The Commission will therefore need to ensure sufficient allocation of EU funds to Green Infrastructure during the mid-term review of the EU budget in 2017.

**There are no indications** that the EU Member States are on track to establish a significant area of green infrastructure by 2020, although there are several good examples, such as the Trame verte et bleue in France<sup>46</sup>. It is unlikely that significantly more EU funds will be available for Green Infrastructure over the next years, and improvement will be needed during the mid-term review of the EU budget.



◀ **FIGURE 13**  
A floodplain near Diest in Belgium. In addition to connecting nature areas, Green Infrastructure can offer a variety of benefits such as flood protection. Photo © Francois van Bauwel

## NO NET LOSS INITIATIVE

**Target 2 commits the EU** to maintain ecosystems and their services. Under action 7b (above) the Commission commits to put forward an initiative to ensure no net loss of ecosystems and their services. At the time of writing of this report, the Commission has not proposed a No net loss initiative yet, but has commissioned a study to explore several options<sup>47</sup>.

**There are several actions** that the Commission should take to achieve no net loss of ecosystems and their services. The first and most important is the full implementation of existing legislation that protects biodiversity. The Birds and the Habitats Directives protect a large proportion of EU biodiversity and ecosystems directly and indirectly, and require Member States to deliver conservation measures in the wider countryside through Article 3, 4 and 5 of the Birds Directive and Article 10, 12 and 13 of the Habitats Directive. The Water Framework Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (see page 43) protect all surface waters in the EU. The Commission therefore needs to put additional resources in the identification and follow-up of breaches of EU law.

**As part of the No net loss initiative** the Commission should put forward several "horizontal" proposals – proposals that if adopted deliver better implementation for all EU environmental legislation. Giving civil society a better legal standing through legislation on Access to Environmental Justice and improving inspections regimes in the EU through legislation on Environmental Inspections (see also page 22 and 25) are two key proposals in this respect. The Commission should also ensure that projects funded by the are compliant with the Birds and Habitats Directive, apply the mitigation hierarchy properly and result in no net loss of biodiversity.



**TARGET 3****INCREASE THE CONTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY TO MAINTAINING AND ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY**

Agriculture: By 2020, maximise areas under agriculture across grasslands, arable land and permanent crops that are covered by biodiversity-related measures under the CAP [...].\*

**MAIN MESSAGE**

Target 3 commits the EU to maximise agricultural areas covered by biodiversity related measures under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). However, farmland biodiversity continues to decline, and important grasslands habitats are still being destroyed at an alarming rate in many EU Member States.

The 2014 "reform" of the CAP delivered an essentially empty set of greening measures, both in terms of land coverage and environmental content. The Rural Development Pillar suffered financial cuts during the 2013 EU Budget deal and was fundamentally undermined by the decision to allow Member States to transfer Rural Development funds into Pillar I. The first Rural Development Programmes adopted so far indicate a further step away from targeted biodiversity funding and delivery. The CAP as it stands, therefore has no legitimacy as a tool to support biodiversity recovery in the EU.

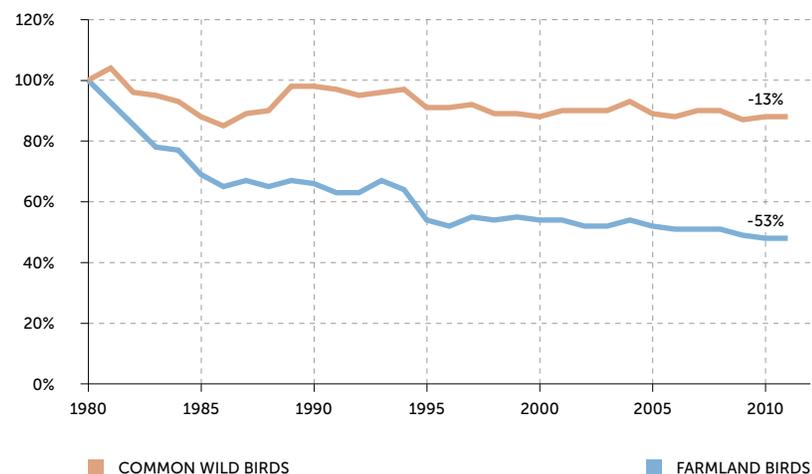
**Action needed to achieve the Target by 2020:**

- › It will be impossible to achieve Target 3 through current CAP interventions. However, the Commission should address the Policy's most glaring environmental problems as a matter of urgency, in particular relating to Pillar 1 greening, cross compliance and Rural Development programmes, through forthcoming reviews.
- › The 2020 reform of the CAP must mark the end of wasteful, untargeted and damaging payments. The Commission should therefore start immediately working towards replacing the CAP with a policy that delivers genuine public benefits in return for public money. An honest policy targeting the conservation of farmland biodiversity must urgently be developed.
- › The Commission and EU Member States must halt the destruction of environmentally important grasslands through the enforcement of relevant CAP rules and the Birds and Habitats Directives, including the full restoration of grasslands that have been destroyed since the Directives came into force.

\* Forestry is not covered in this chapter, but the progress on the actions related to forestry is assessed in Annex 1.

◀ A White Stork in the countryside in Poland.  
Photo © Tomka Skorupskiego

) FIGURE 14 (



~ The trends of farmland birds (in blue, bottom) and all common wild birds (in red, top). Data from the Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring scheme (RSPB/EBCC/BirdLife/Statistics Netherlands).

REFORM OF THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY

**The Commission will propose** that CAP direct payments will reward the delivery of environmental public goods that go beyond cross-compliance (e.g. permanent pasture, green cover, crop rotation, ecological set-aside, Natura 2000).

**Target 3 committed the Commission**, via its proposals to reform the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), to ensure that Pillar I direct payments reward (and incentivise) the delivery of environmental public goods on farmland from 2014 onwards. CAP direct payments are the biggest single source of EU expenditure: in 2015 they represent more than 40 billion EUR of public money (around 30% of the EU budget).

**In the period leading up** to the Commission’s proposals in 2011, the trajectory of CAP reform was to move away from untargeted and inefficient payments towards targeted environmental delivery

(for example, via the introduction of agri-environment measures in 1992 and mandatory transfers of funding from direct payments into the Rural Development Pillar from 2003 onwards). The 2014 reform, however, has reversed this trend.

**The Commission’s CAP reform proposals**<sup>48</sup> lacked the ambition to ensure that new greening measures would have the necessary environmental impact. For example, proposals for Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs), a measure supposed to support biodiversity on farms receiving direct payments, immediately exempted significant areas of farmland from the requirement. The Commission also failed to include the agronomically sound crop rotation measure as part of greening, instead opting for a much weaker crop diversification version.

**Subsequent negotiations** with the European Parliament and EU Member States virtually emptied

greening of any environmental content<sup>49</sup>. For example, rather than providing havens for biodiversity, the final EFAs rules now allow the production of commercially viable commodities and the use of pesticides and fertilizers (see page 37). In 2014, scientists concluded that new greening rules will not drive the delivery of environmental public goods to any meaningful extent and will therefore not contribute to the EU’s Biodiversity Strategy<sup>50</sup>. Whatever the original intention of Pillar 1 greening, it has quite clearly become an attempt to make Pillar 1 direct payments more publicly acceptable, rather than a genuine effort to increase environmental delivery through the CAP.

**CAP negotiations also seriously weakened** the basic rules attached to direct payments, referred to as cross-compliance: provisions under the Birds Directive relating to the illegal killing of birds were removed and cross compliance controls and penalties were reduced.

**The Commission must correct** these problems as far as possible through the next review of the CAP. Such steps, whilst necessary, will not be sufficient to achieving Target 3 however. Therefore, the 2020 reform of the CAP must mark the end of wasteful untargeted payments. The Commission should immediately start working towards replacing the CAP with a policy that delivers genuine public benefits in return for public money. A targeted and effective biodiversity conservation policy in farmland, delivered by competent conservation authorities, must urgently be developed.

<sup>48</sup> European Commission (2011) Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL establishing rules for direct payments to farmers under support schemes within the framework of the common agricultural policy COM(2011) 625 final/2.

<sup>49</sup> European Parliament and Council of the European Union (2013) Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 establishing rules for direct payments to farmers under support schemes within the framework of the common agricultural policy and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 637/2008 and Council Regulation (EC) No 73/2009. Official Journal of the European Union L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 608–670.

<sup>50</sup> Pe’er G., Dicks L.V., Visconti P. et al (2014). EU agricultural reform fails on biodiversity. *Science* 2014 6188 (344) pp. 1090-1092.

◀ **Fields in Denmark. Large monocultures full of pesticides and fertilizers support very little biodiversity, but still receive large amounts of subsidies under the Common Agricultural Policy.**  
Photo © Jan Skiver



## ECOLOGICAL FOCUS AREAS

The flagship "greening" measure of the CAP, Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs) are intended to contribute to the conservation of biodiversity, and can include fallow land, landscape features and buffer strips.

A review of scientific evidence in 2013 showed that at least 10% of farm area would need to be designated as EFAs for the measure to be effective<sup>51</sup>. The Commission however proposed just 7%, which was then watered down to 5% by EU Member States and the European Parliament. In addition, numerous exemptions were introduced during negotiations, so that only farms with more than 15 ha have to apply the measure and farms with permanent crops are exempted completely from the measure. As a result, 89% of EU farms do not have to implement the EFA requirement<sup>52</sup>. On top of that, more Member States are including the option of nitrogen fixing crops – doubtful on their biodiversity impacts – than there are Member States including landscape features as part of the list of elements that they are offering to farmers.

In order to be effective, and deliver genuine added value for biodiversity, EFAs should not be used to produce commercially viable commodities and should be kept free of pesticides and fertilizers. However the final rules allow both to take place. Despite their questionable biodiversity benefit, 27 out of 28 Member States have decided to include nitrogen fixing crops on the list of EFA options they offer to farmers – more than those offering landscape features,



◀ Natural vegetation surrounded by farmland in the Slovakia. Ecological Focus Areas were intended to be like this, refuges for wildlife in the farming landscape. Photo © Ivan Nemeč

even though the latter are much more ecologically robust. The potential biodiversity gains of EFAs are further undermined by a complex weighting system which "over scores" the environmental value of certain EFA land types e.g. every 1 linear meter of buffer strip can count as 9 square meters of EFA, regardless of the actual width of the buffer strip.

**With EFAs lacking ecological content,** and restricted to only 5% of arable area on just 11% of EU

farms, the greening framework is fundamentally flawed. EFAs will therefore not make a significant contribution to the conservation of biodiversity on EU farmland. The Commission review, set for March 2017, of whether the mandatory EFA area should increase from 5 to 7% is likely to be hotly contested. This review must be driven by the scientific evidence: Only ecologically valuable elements should be eligible, EFAs should increase to at least 7% and all farms should have to undertake the measure.

<sup>51</sup> Oppermann R., Gelhausen J., Matzdorf B. et al. (2012) Common Agricultural Policy from 2014 - Perspectives for more Biodiversity and Environmental Benefits of Farming? Policy recommendations from the project "Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) 2013 and achievement of the biodiversity and environment goals".

<sup>52</sup> Eurostat(2014) Soil cover indicator. [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/index.php/Agri-environmental\\_indicator\\_-\\_soil](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Agri-environmental_indicator_-_soil)

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

**Target 3 commits the Commission and EU Member States** to integrate quantified biodiversity targets into Rural Development strategies and programmes. If this were achieved, it would be a very important step forward, especially since the European Court of Auditors has concluded in the past that Rural Development Programmes were insufficiently targeted and suffered from a lack of clear objectives<sup>53</sup>.

**At the time of writing**, Commission approval of all new Rural Development Programme (RDPs) was not complete, so full analysis of their likely biodiversity delivery was not possible. However, the 27 RDPs that had been adopted at that

point (out of a total of over 100 programmes) give some indication of the progress towards this target.

**Under the new CAP**, RDPs include as a target indicator "area under contracts supporting biodiversity and/or landscapes". According to Commission data<sup>54</sup>, the area ranges from less than 10% (Romania, Belgium, Croatia and the Netherlands) to more than 80% in the case of Austria, and overall the area under contract covers 19% of the relevant regions/Member States' agricultural area. However, and crucially, these numbers do not indicate the quality of measures and their benefit for biodiversity.

The reported area includes some very well designed biodiversity schemes, but also many of questionable benefit to biodiversity, such as integrated production, "conservation (i.e. no tillage) farming" or broad and shallow schemes on grasslands or arable land.

**We see little evidence** of the urgently needed increase in investment into ecosystems' viability. On the contrary, several EU Member States (for example Slovakia, Poland, Slovenia, Lithuania) have decreased their budgets for biodiversity management schemes compared to 2007-2013. As a consequence some very well-designed schemes in countries such as Finland, Poland, Lithuania or the Spanish Castile-León region are underfunded and applied on insufficient area needed to protect farmland biodiversity. In countries like Latvia or Cyprus, targeted biodiversity schemes are missing completely. In others, the payments are not competitive hence making it unattractive for farmers to enter the schemes (e.g. in Slovenia, Poland, Lithuania, several regions in Italy). There are some positive exceptions, such as Austria which took its commitment to protect biodiversity seriously and devoted more RDP budget to support biodiversity friendly management than in the last period. Overall, however, the RDPs indicate inadequate funding for ecosystems and a lack of progress towards real targeted biodiversity conservation funding. At the same time, the general lack of effective biodiversity advisory services does not allow the biodiversity schemes which are in place to fulfill their potential.



<sup>53</sup> European Court of Auditors (2011) Is agri-environment support well designed and managed?, Special Report No 7/2011.

<sup>54</sup> European Commission (2015) First analysis of RDPs. Unpublished.

◀ Extensive olive groves in Italy. Biodiversity friendly farming supports a high level biodiversity, but needs support, such as through Rural Development. Photo © Ariel Brunner

**BOX 4****MEADOW BIRDS DISAPPEARING: GRASSLAND CRISIS IN GERMANY AND THE EU**

**European meadows** are important ecosystems, hosting a wide variety of animals and plants. The value of meadows has been recognized in the Birds and Habitats Directive, which protect several meadow species and habitats. The Birds Directive requires Member States to maintain a sufficient area and diversity of habitats for meadow birds and to strictly protect bird habitats in SPAs.

**In Germany, BirdLife Partner NABU** has sounded the alarm for farmland birds. More than half of the breeding pairs of Lapwing, Black-tailed Godwit and Common Snipe have disappeared over the last 12 years - a loss of more than 200 000 birds. Ecologists have discovered that while adult bird survival is still good, breeding success is too low to maintain population levels.

**The reasons for low breeding success** are manifold, but conversion to agricultural crops (particularly maize) and drainage of wet meadows top the list. In the German region Bavaria more than 50 000 hectares of meadow habitat have been lost between 2001 and 2006. In the German Regions of Niedersachsen and Schleswig Holstein almost 2 000 hectares of grassland have been lost inside SPAs.

**Sadly, in many other EU Member States,** including Slovenia and Bulgaria, the situation is similar. The Commission must take urgent

steps to ensure the Birds Directive is respected in all EU Member States and that farmland birds are adequately protected.

**To meet its obligations** under the Birds Directive, EU Member States must ensure that meadow bird numbers are restored. New CAP rules require Member States to designate environmentally sensitive pastures in Natura 2000 areas which are then protected from conversion. However, there is much to do to

ensure EU Member States actually designate all such pastures and then enforce the rules seriously. Other measures which support the appropriate management of such pastures, including water level management and delayed mowing dates, can be delivered through voluntary agri-environmental schemes, or through statutory legal obligations. Such proactive management measures are as important as protecting these pastures in the first place.



◀ **FIGURE 15**  
A ploughed up grassland  
near Pelm, Germany.  
Photo © NABU/G. Ostermann

**BOX 5****PESTICIDES AS A PERSISTENT THREAT TO BIRDS**

**Pesticides, chemicals designed to kill** pest species, are widely used in agriculture. Increased use of pesticides was one of the most obvious elements of the intensification of farming in the immediate post war period<sup>55</sup> and evidence of their impact on non-target species has grown over time including for birds. Pesticides can have a direct effect on birds through lethal or sub-lethal effects on individual birds that are exposed to the pesticide. Pesticides can also have an indirect effect, which are negative effects on bird populations through removal of food sources and habitat loss or decline in habitat quality for breeding and foraging. For example, a study in the Netherlands found that local bird population trends were significantly more negative in areas with higher surface-water concentrations of imidacloprid, probably due to the depletion of insect food resources<sup>56</sup>.

**The EU regulates the substances** that can be used as pesticides, through the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive<sup>57</sup>. This has had the result that in the EU some notoriously damaging pesticides such as DDT have been replaced by presumably safer alternatives. However, there is still a lot of scope to improve the implementation of the Directive. In particular, Member States have shown a lack of willingness to engage with Integrated Pest Management or any other way to benchmark good practice. This means that in some countries a wide range of farming systems are being defined as Integrated Pest

Management and are receiving publicly-funded government support, or benefiting in other ways such as through membership of certification schemes. Some of these farming systems are not meeting what Birdlife would consider to be basic good practice. Member State governments need to define what Integrated Pest Management is, setting out clear IPM standards required of growers and making these the baseline for receiving any public support<sup>58</sup>.

**The reform of the CAP in 2014** offered a key opportunity to address the indirect effects of pesticides. Concretely, organic farming could have been more strongly promoted through the

organic farming measure, advisory, knowledge transfer and information on conversion to organic farming for farmers. On top of that, the use of pesticides in Ecological Focus Areas (see page 36) and in areas under agri-environment measures (see Box 6) could have been prohibited and Integrated Pest Management could have been made mandatory for receiving direct payments. Together, these measures would have greatly reduced the impacts of pesticides in the farming landscape. However, the EU failed to properly introduce several of these measures, missing a key opportunity to help achieve favourable conservation status for farmland species and habitats.



<sup>55</sup> Robinson, R. and Sutherland, W (2002) Post-war changes in arable farming and biodiversity in Great Britain. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 39:157–176.

<sup>56</sup> Hallman, C.A. et al (2013). Declines in insectivorous birds are associated with high neonicotinoid concentrations. *Nature* 511, 341–343.

<sup>57</sup> European Parliament and Council of the European Union (2009) Directive 2009/128/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 establishing a framework for Community action to achieve the sustainable use of pesticides. *Official Journal of the European Union* L 309, 24.11.2009, p.71.

<sup>58</sup> BirdLife Europe (2014) BirdLife Position preventing poisoning of birds from agricultural pesticides.

◀ **A tractor spraying pesticides. The use of pesticides can have severe effects on non-target species, including birds.**

**BOX 6****TOWARDS RECOVERY OF THE LITTLE BUSTARD IN FRANCE THROUGH AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL MEASURES**

**Agri-environment measures** are a key element of EU Rural Development – one of the very few measures that Member States are obliged to develop. Farmers enrol in agri-environment measures on a voluntary basis and receive a payment for the work they undertake (calculated on a costs incurred and income foregone basis).

**Little Bustard is a threatened bird species** in Europe that is dependent on farmland and steppe habitat. Numbers of Little Bustards breeding on farmland in western France (the last migratory population in Western Europe) have decreased by over

98% between 1978 and 2008<sup>59</sup>. The reasons for the decline are linked to agricultural intensification, which resulted in loss of suitable habitat for nesting, destruction of clutches and chicks and less food availability for Little Bustard chicks.

To save the Little Bustard from extinction in western France, LPO/BirdLife France set up the first LIFE for the Little bustard in 1997-2001. The project first explored the best way to increase food availability and then designed three targeted agri-environment schemes which supported the growing of alfalfa and grassland (which provided food and nesting habitat), a delayed harvesting date (to allow

chicks time to fledge) and no application of pesticides.

**As a result of these agri-environment measures**, the population of Little Bustards in the SPA Niort Sud-est in Western France grew from six males in 2003 to about 30 males in 2009<sup>60</sup>. By 2009, there were 6 176 hectares covered by the Little Bustard schemes. Nearly 60% of Little Bustards in western France now nest in these fields, while elsewhere the decline of Little Bustard continues. Unless the area under agri-environment schemes is increased significantly this small population remains at serious risk.



◀ A Little Bustard. Historically a bird of European steppes, the Little Bustard has adapted to a life on farmland when its steppe habitats were converted to farmland. The Little Bustard is now threatened by intensive agriculture.

Photo © Ignacio Yúfera

<sup>59</sup> Bretagnolle V., Villers A., Denonfoux L. et al. (2011) Rapid recovery of a depleted population of Little Bustards Tetrax tetrax following provision of alfalfa through an agri-environment scheme. *Ibis* (2011), 153, pp. 4-13.

<sup>60</sup> Bretagnolle V., Villers A., Denonfoux L. et al. (2011) Rapid recovery of a depleted population of Little Bustards Tetrax tetrax following provision of alfalfa through an agri-environment scheme. *Ibis* (2011), 153, pp. 4-13.



**TARGET 4****ENSURE THE SUSTAINABLE USE OF FISHERIES RESOURCES**

Achieve Maximum Sustainable Yield by 2015. Achieve a population age and size distribution indicative of a healthy stock, through fisheries management with no significant adverse impacts on other stocks, species and ecosystems, in support of achieving Good Environmental Status by 2020 [...].

**MAIN MESSAGE**

Target 4 commits the EU to restore and maintain fish stocks capable of producing maximum sustainable yield by 2015 and to eliminate adverse impacts of fisheries on other species and ecosystems. Many fish stocks in the EU are being overfished, and fisheries have significant impacts on marine life such as seabirds.

The reformed Common Fisheries Policy sets out a vision to achieve sustainable fisheries. The implementing legislation must conform to this vision if the CFP is to achieve its objectives. Progress towards developing indicators Good Environmental Status has been insufficient.

**Action needed to achieve the Target by 2020:**

- › The EU Member States should ensure that future catch limits are set below scientific recommendation for all fish stocks.
- › The EU should integrate the ecosystem based approach within future legislation that implements fishing management measures and data collection.
- › The EU Member States need to readjust the targets for GES and improve the collection of data through their Monitoring Programmes and Programmes of Measures.
- › The EU Member States should ensure that data is collected on the impact of their fisheries on seabird populations and that multi-annual plans monitor and mitigate incidental catches of seabirds.



↪ Balearic shearwater. Several species of shearwaters and petrels are threatened in the EU. Fisheries, especially seabird-bycatch, is one of the main drivers behind their decline. Photo © Pep Arcos

↩ Gulls following a boat. Photo © Pep Arcos

REFORM OF THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY

**Target 4 commits the EU** to restore and maintain fish stocks capable of producing maximum sustainable yield by 2015 and to achieve a population age and size distribution indicative of a healthy stock, through fisheries management with no significant adverse impacts on other stocks, species and ecosystems.

**In 2013, the EU adopted** the Common Fisheries Policy<sup>61</sup> which includes the objectives: to restore and maintain fish stocks above levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield by 2015 if possible, and latest by 2020, to integrate an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management as well as to manage fisheries in a way which is coherent with EU environmental

legislation. As a result, the Common Fisheries Policy 2014-2020 is overall better for the environment, setting out a vision to achieve sustainable fisheries.

**To ensure that the vision of the CFP** becomes reality, the objectives of the CFP must be reflected in the future implementing regulations and decisions including when setting fishing opportunities and legislation which regulates fishing technical measures, data collection, and regionalised multi-annual plans. However, in 2014, EU Member States set the total allowable catches above scientific recommendation, therefore catch limits (FMSY) were set too high, a violation of the CFP. This has meant that the

EU has failed the first important test for achieving fish stocks above levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield. Furthermore, in 2014, the Commission failed to integrate the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management in the multi-annual plan for the Baltic<sup>62</sup>.

**The European Commission** and the EU Member States can still meet Target 4 by 2020. To achieve this, the EU Member States should ensure that future catch limits are set below scientific recommendation for all fish stocks. The EU should also integrate the ecosystem based approach within future legislation that implements fishing management measures and data collection.



↳ Tori lines, plastic streamers to scare birds away from the baited hooks, are an effective method of reducing incidental catches of seabirds.

Photo © B. Watkins

<sup>61</sup> European Parliament and Council of the European Union (2013).REGULATION (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC. Official Journal of the European Union L 354/22. 28.12.2013.

<sup>62</sup> European Commission (2014) Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL establishing a multiannual plan for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks, amending Council Regulation (EC) No 2187/2005 and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1098/2007. COM/2014/0614 final.

## ACHIEVING GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS OF EUROPEAN SEAS AND OCEANS

**Target 4 commits the EU** to support achieving Good Environmental Status (GES) by 2020, as required under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. This means minimising the impact of several maritime activities to the wider environment, including fishing, nutrient pollution, marine litter, and noise pollution, as well as generally improving the state of marine biodiversity.

The Commission published in 2014 a report on the progress of EU Member States towards achieving GES<sup>63</sup>. The report found that 39% of stocks in the Northeast Atlantic and 88% of stocks in the Mediterranean and Black Seas were still overfished. In some places, pollution in the marine environment has decreased, but nutrients levels and certain hazardous substances are still too high. Oxygen depletion, as a result of nutrient pollution, is particularly serious in the Baltic and Black seas. Marine litter is increasing with several negative impacts on marine ecosystems.

Unsurprisingly, the report concluded that European seas are not in GES, and Member States are not on track in achieving GES, having, so far, set unambitious targets. The Commission recommended that more progress is needed to avoid an insufficient, inefficient, piecemeal and unnecessarily costly approach to the protection of the marine environment.

There is still an opportunity for Member States to readjust the targets for GES and improve the collection of data through their Monitoring Programmes and Programmes of Measures. Further-

more, actions need to be implemented through the appropriate implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy to minimise the adverse impacts on the fisheries sector, including implementing technical measures to fishing vessels (see page 50) as well as collecting more data on marine ecosystems.

TABLE 8 (

MEMBER STATE	ADEQUATE	PARTIALLY ADEQUATE	INADEQUATE OR NO TARGETS
1 Belgium	4	5	2
2 Bulgaria	2	2	7
3 Cyprus	0	1	10
4 Denmark	1	7	3
5 Estonia	2	0	9
6 Finland	1	8	2
7 France Atlantic	0	3	8
8 France Mediterranean	0	6	5
9 Germany	0	3	8
10 Greece	0	2	9
11 Ireland	1	6	4
12 Italy	0	1	10
13 Latvia	0	3	8
14 Lithuania	1	5	5
15 Netherlands	2	2	7
16 Portugal	0	1	10
17 Romania	0	2	9
18 Slovenia	1	5	5
19 Spain	1	9	1
20 Sweden	0	6	5
21 United Kingdom	7	3	1

Overview of adequacy of environmental targets for Good Environmental Status under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. The targets were evaluated against the SMART criteria. Source:<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> European Commission (2014) The first phase of implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC) The European Commission's assessment and guidance. COM/2014/097 final.

<sup>64</sup> European Commission (2014) The first phase of implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC) The European Commission's assessment and guidance. COM/2014/097 final.



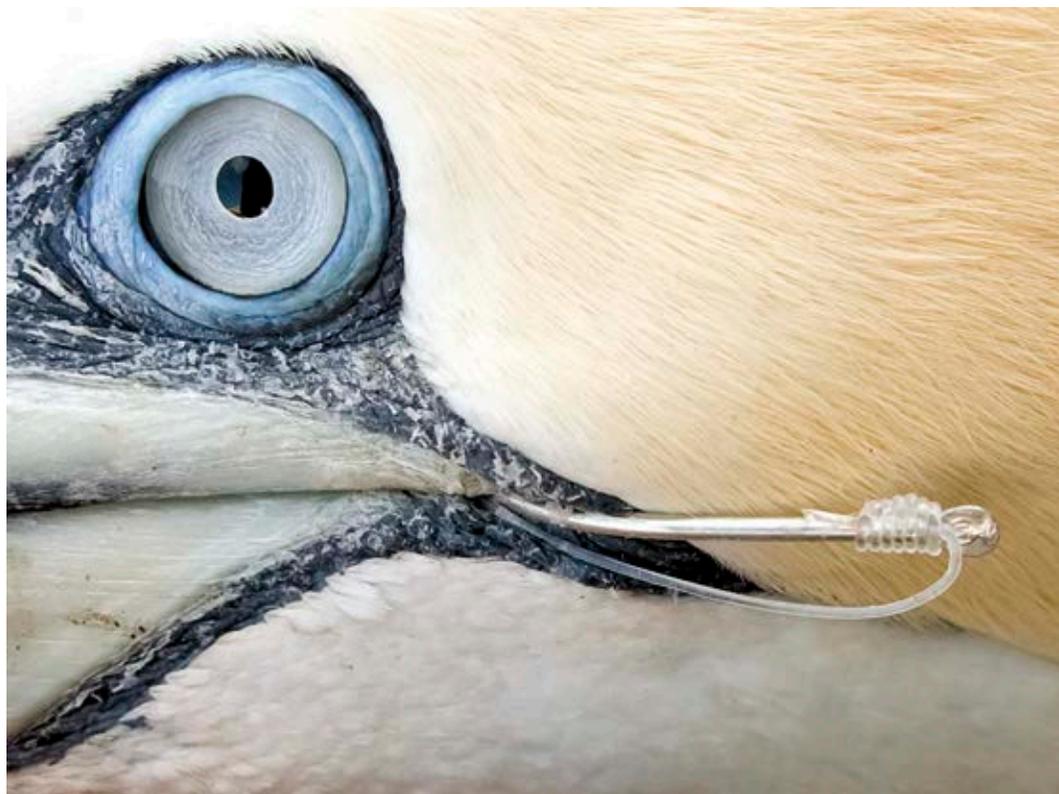
◀ **FIGURE 16**  
A Steller's Eider entangled  
in a fishing net. An estimated  
200 000 seabirds drown  
in the EU every year.  
Photo © Margus Vetemaa

## ELIMINATING INCIDENTAL CATCHES OF SEABIRDS

**Target 4 commits the EU** to design measures to avoid the bycatch of unwanted species, including seabirds. Seabirds are a group that forages in highly productive areas of the seas and oceans, which are unfortunately often the very same places targeted by commercial fishing vessels. As a result, seabirds end up caught on the hooks of longlines, or entangled in nets as they dive for their food. In Europe alone this results in the estimated drowning of 200 000 seabirds every year<sup>65</sup>.

**The European Commission** published a Seabird Plan of Action to mitigate incidental catches in Europe in 2012<sup>66</sup>, which identifies EU actions, such as implementation of measures within fisheries management plans, and national actions, such as establishing seabird monitoring programmes. The plan is, however, non-binding, and very little progress has been achieved in the EU as a whole to minimise the impact of fisheries to seabirds. Fortunately, the 2014-2020 Common Fisheries Policy ensures that seabird-bycatch is addressed under fishing management plans (see page 43). Specifically, mitigating measures should be attributed regionally in multi-annual plans, taking into account the particular fishing methods, and implemented by fishers and their vessels.

**The Baltic Sea is the first region** for which a multi-annual plan will be developed. The gillnet fisheries in the Baltic Sea catch an estimated 76 000 seabirds every year<sup>67</sup>. Although the European Parliament and the Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers have included minimising impact



◀ A Northern Gannet with a hook in its bill. Seabirds are often caught in fisheries as bycatch - EU action is needed to stop this. Photo © David Grémillet

of fisheries on wider environment in the fisheries management plan for the Baltic Sea, in their respective positions, the Commission's original proposal (see page 43), did not include any measures to address environmental obligations, including for incidental catches of seabirds.

**The EU must ensure that the bycatch** of seabirds is minimised. The EU should ensure that data is collected by member states on

their impact on seabird populations and that multi-annual plans monitor and mitigate incidental catches of seabirds. Furthermore, the EU should also increase its control and enforcement efforts such as on-board monitoring. As this is fundamental to achieving the CFP objectives, the European Commission should take legal actions against Member States if they fail to take measures towards minimising the impact of their fisheries on seabirds

<sup>65</sup> ICES (2010) Report of the Working Group on Seabird Ecology (WGSE), 15-19 March 2010, ICES CM 2010/SSGEF.

<sup>66</sup> European Commission (2012) Action Plan for reducing incidental catches of seabirds in fishing gears. COM(2012) 655 final.

<sup>67</sup> Zydalis R., Bellebaum J., Osterblom H. et al. (2009) Bycatch in gillnet fisheries – an overlooked threat to waterbird populations. Biological conservation 142 pp. 1269-1281.



**TARGET 5****COMBATING INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES**

By 2020, Invasive Alien Species and their pathways are identified and prioritised, priority species are controlled or eradicated, and pathways are managed to prevent the introduction and establishment of new IAS.

**MAIN MESSAGE**

A new Regulation on Invasive Alien Species was adopted in 2014 by the European Parliament and the EU Member States following a proposal by the Commission; it entered into force in January 2015. This is in line with the Biodiversity Strategy Target. The Regulation focuses on prevention, early detection and rapid eradication, and management of widespread invasive alien species, following the guiding principles of CBD. The EU is now properly equipped to tackle this growing threat to biodiversity. The next step is the adoption of the list of invasive alien species of EU concern, which is a crucial part of the legislation.

**Action needed to achieve the Target by 2020:**

- › Commission and the EU Member States need to adopt a coherent, representative list of invasive alien species of EU concern. Focus must be on the preventative aspect, making sure the list contains enough species that risk being introduced in the EU in the near future, but which have not become established yet.
- › The EU Member States should ratify the Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments to address this pathway for invasive alien species.



~ Giant Hogweed. This plant is phototoxic, in this case causing skin inflammation after exposure of the plant's juices to sunlight. Other invasive alien species can also cause health problems. Photo © GBNNSS

◀ **FIGURE 17**  
American Mink attacking a juvenile Northern Gannet. Invasive alien predators such as American Mink can wipe out complete colonies of breeding birds. Photo © John W. Anderson



68 EEA (2012) The impact of Invasive Alien Species in Europe. Technical report No 16/2012.

69 Maran T., Skumatov D., Palazón S., et al. (2011). *Mustela lutreola*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2014.3.

70 Hulme P., Pysek P., Nentwig W. and Vila M. (2009) Will threats of Biological Invasions Unite the European Union? *Science* 2009 324 pp. 40-41.

◀ **Common pennywort. Invasive alien plant species can quickly fill up canals and small waterbodies, exterminating native plants and animals.**

Photo © Trevor Renals

## THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES

**In the run-up to the proposal** for the Invasive Alien Species Regulation (see page 53) the European Environmental Agency examined the impacts of invasive alien species in Europe<sup>68</sup>. The main findings of the study are highlighted below.

**As a result of its long history** and the recent increase in international trade, Europe is now home to some 12 000 introduced species, most of which (85-90%) are harmless. However, a fraction (10-15%) of these species have become invasive and are causing damage to biodiversity, ecosystem services, public health or the economy.

**Many invasive alien species** have caused large-scale ecological impacts in Europe and global-



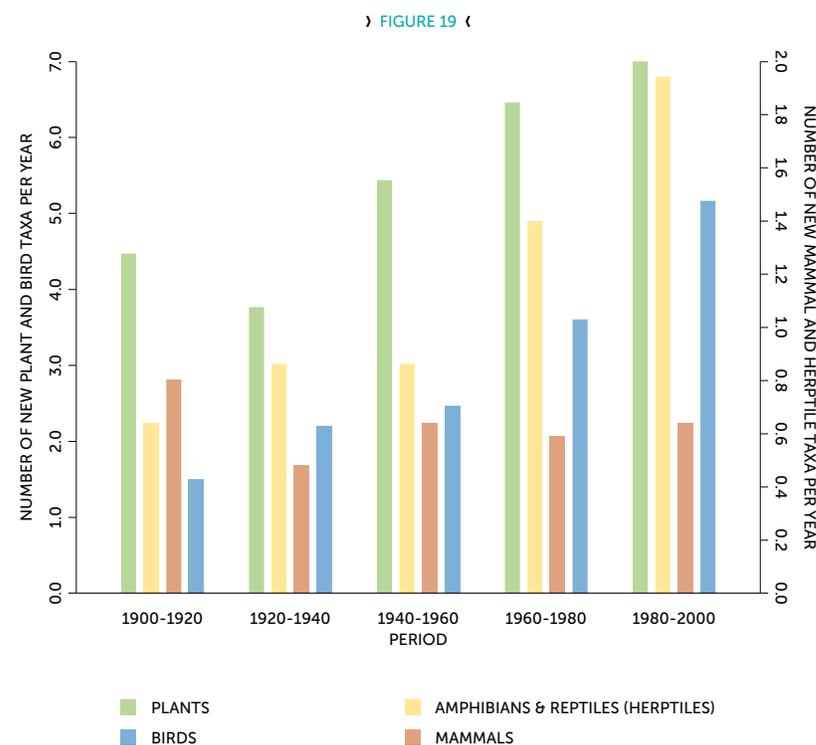
~ FIGURE 18

Chilean Gunnera on the Azores. Islands are particularly sensitive to invasive alien species, as they have often a large number of endemic species which can be driven to extinction by invasive alien species. Photo © SPEA

ly. Invasive alien species affect native species through predation, competition, transmission of diseases and through hybridization. The invasive American Mink has wiped out complete breeding bird colonies on islands and, on the mainland, it is causing severe declines in several species, including European Water Vole and the critically endangered European Mink<sup>69</sup>. Hybridization with the introduced Ruddy Duck continues to be a real threat for the globally endangered White-headed Duck.

**In addition to the damage to ecosystems**, there are also important socioeconomic impacts. Invasive alien species cause damage to infrastructure (waterways, flood defences, roads), agriculture and forestry. Populations of Coypu and Muskrat, escaped from fur farms in the past, cause significant harm to river banks in Central and Eastern Europe. Some species are a major public health concern, such as Giant Hogweed, phototoxic to humans, Common Ragweed, with its highly allergenic pollen, and Asian Tiger Mosquito, a vector for West Nile Virus, Chikungunya and other viral diseases.

**Figure 19 shows** that the number of alien species and subspecies detected in Europe every year continues to increase, as the world's economy becomes more globalised. Without effective implementation of the new IAS Regulation, the number and scale of impacts is expected to get worse as undoubtedly some of the newly introduced species will eventually become invasive.



~ The number of plant species, amphibians and reptile species, bird species and mammal species that are per year newly recorded as established in Europe. Reprinted with permission from the authors. Source:<sup>70</sup>

THE INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES REGULATION

**Target 5 commits the Commission** to develop a dedicated legislative instrument to combat invasive alien species. The Commission tabled a proposal for a Regulation on Invasive Alien Species, which was adopted by the Council and the European Parliament in 2014 and entered into force in January 2015<sup>71</sup>.

**In line with the CBD principles**, the Regulation covers (a) prevention; (b) early detection and rapid eradication; and (c) management of widespread invasive alien species. A key provision in the Regulation is the adoption of a list of invasive alien species of EU concern. The Regulation prohibits the import, transport and possession of the species on the list, effectively banning them from the EU. Member States are also obliged to put in place a surveillance system for these species, and to eradicate them upon detection if feasible. For species of EU concern that are already widely spread, the Regulation requires Member States to put in place effective management measures. The Commission proposal for an initial list is due in January 2016. It will then be updated as and when needed, and fully reviewed together with the Regulation in 2021.

**It is important that the list** of invasive alien species of EU concern covers a sufficient number of species that are not yet present in the EU or are in the early stages of invasion, because it is in those early stages that direct action can be most effective. Those species with a major or massive impact on biodiversity should also be adequately covered, to reduce the current level of threat

on European flora and fauna. Listing proposals need to be accompanied by a risk assessment and, while there may be knowledge gaps about the specific impacts in Europe, following the precautionary principle this should not be a reason for inaction. For many species, there is sufficient evidence from other ecologically similar regions of the world.

**A major gap in the Regulation** is ballast water, which is the most important pathway for marine invasive alien species. The Commission and the EU Member States urgently need to take further legislative action to address this problem through ratification of the IMO Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments.



<sup>71</sup> European Parliament and Council of the European Union (2014) Regulation (EU) No 1143/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2014 on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species. Official Journal of the European Union L 317, 4.11.2014, p. 35–55.

◀ **Zebra mussels.** Zebra mussels have caused severe economic damage by blocking discharge pipes and other water infrastructure. Photo © GBNNSS

**BOX 7****IMPACT OF INVASIVE RATS ON THE SCILLY ISLES**

**Many species which are native** or harmless on the mainland can become invasive when introduced to islands. Seabirds are particularly vulnerable to invasive alien species, as they nest on the ground where the chicks and eggs are a ready meal for invasive mammals such as rats, mice and cats.

**The Scilly isles are a group of islands** in the south west of the UK. The islands support a great diversity of breeding seabirds – 20 000 birds of 14 species, including large numbers of Storm Petrels and Lesser Black-backed Gulls. However, the breeding seabird popu-

lation in Scilly has declined by nearly a quarter in the last 25 years, a loss of 3,000 breeding pairs. One of the major threats to the seabirds is predation of eggs and chicks by Brown Rats. The rats not only threaten the existing colonies, but also limit the distribution of birds on the islands.

**The RSPB/BirdLife UK** therefore started a project to eradicate the rats and to increase the knowledge on seabirds on the islands in 2012, with the financial support of the LIFE Programme and the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project was the largest community-based rat eradication project in the world. The rat eradi-

cation took place in 2013 and was highly successful, as no rats have been seen on the islands since 2013. Significantly, the Manx Shearwater has returned as a breeding bird, with at least 10 chicks hatching in 2014.

**The Scilly isles project** shows that on islands, it can be still possible to completely eradicate invasive species, with great conservation success. On the mainland however, complete eradication will have to follow quickly after establishment, otherwise efforts must focus on managing the established species and stopping further spreading.

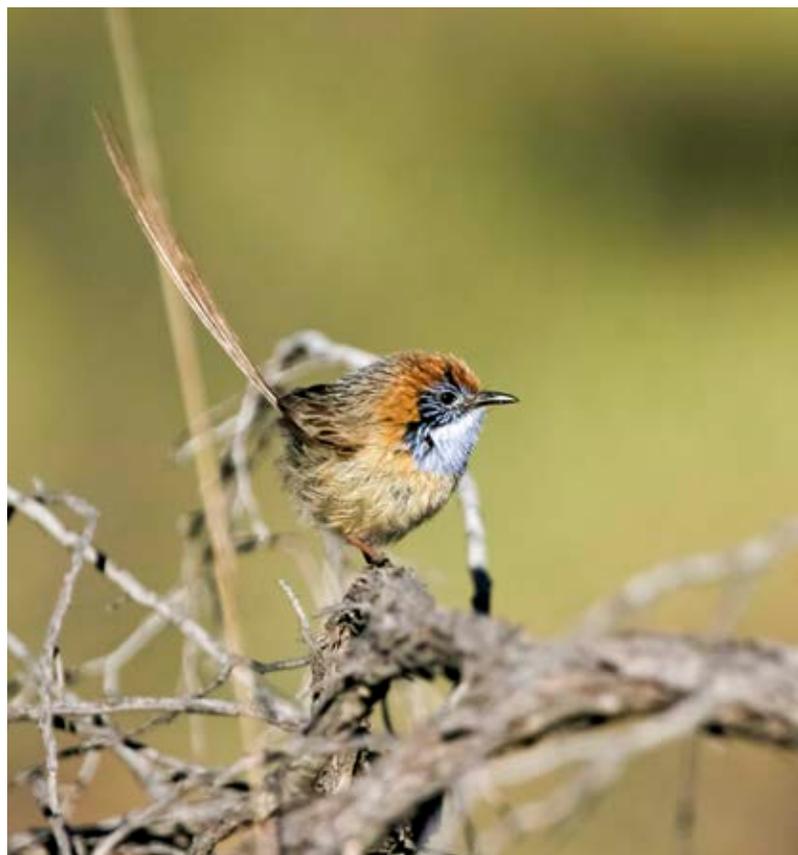


◀ **Manx Shearwater.** Following the removal of invasive rats, the Manx Shearwater has returned to the Scilly Isles as a breeding bird.  
Photo © John Fox



**TARGET 6****ADDRESSING THE GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY CRISIS**

By 2020, the EU has stepped up its contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.



~ A Mallee Emu-wren. Many birds are threatened with extinction worldwide, pushed towards extinction by habitat loss, invasive alien species or other threats. Photo © Tony Crittenden

**MAIN MESSAGE**

Target 6 commits the EU to step up its contribution to tackling global biodiversity loss, through resource efficiency, reforming environmentally harmful subsidies and providing additional funding for biodiversity action outside the EU.

While the EU's Resource Efficiency Flagship Initiative so far has not had significant effects, the European Commission has recently withdrawn its "circular economy package", a key part of the initiative. EU consumption and production patterns continue to have an impact on natural resources around the world, with a wide range of negative effects for biodiversity. The recent reform of the EU budget 2014-2020 has left most of the environmentally harmful subsidies unchanged. On the positive side, the EU and its Member States collectively have increased their financial contribution to global biodiversity action, confirming their role as biggest donor in this area globally.

**Action needed to achieve the Target by 2020:**

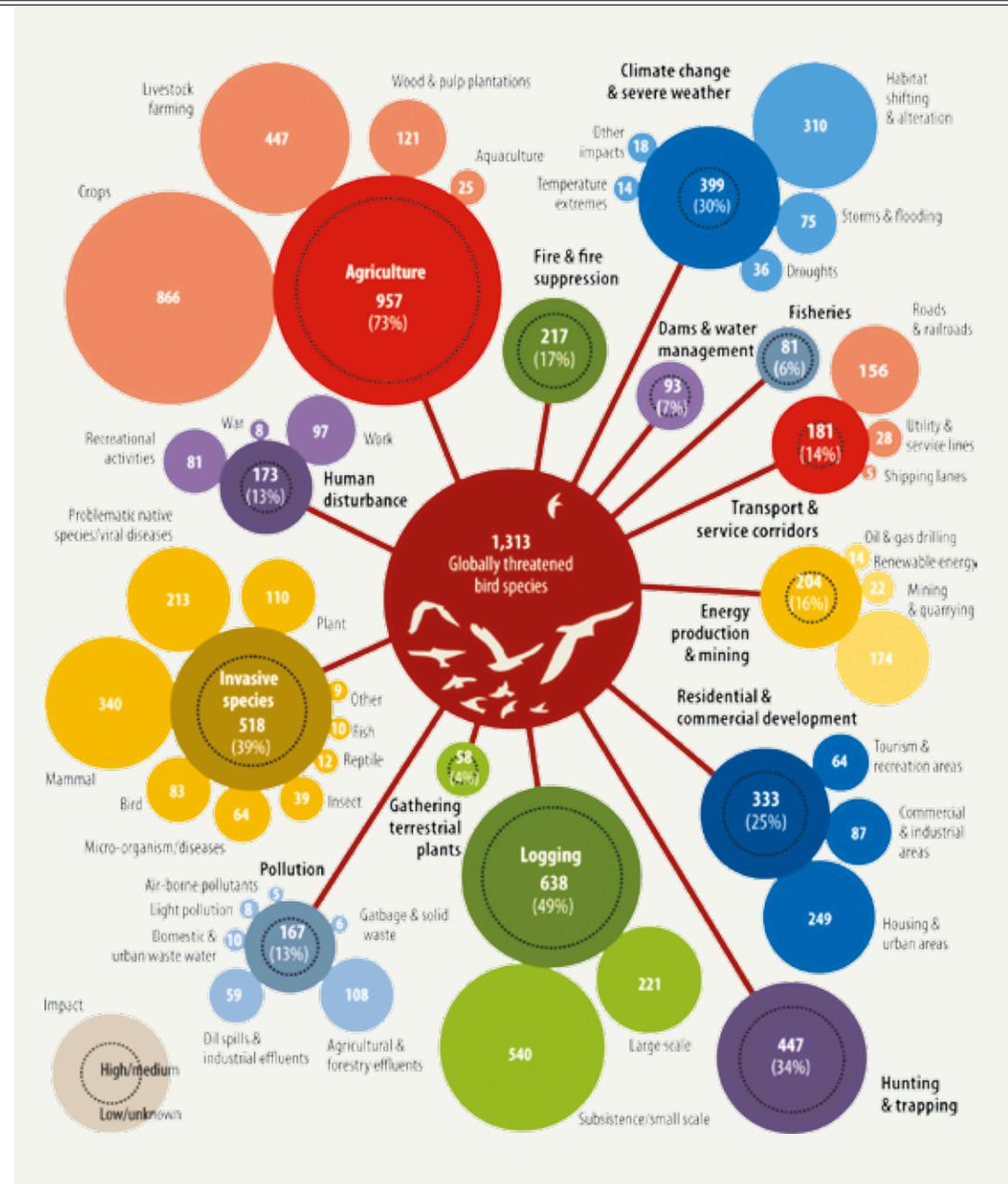
- › The European Commission needs to table an ambitious proposal on circular economy, and place resource efficiency again at the centre of its political priorities.
- › The EU needs to develop an EU Action Plan on Deforestation and Forest Degradation.
- › To avoid breaching global commitments the European Commission must, without further delay, develop concrete proposals on the elimination of subsidies harmful to biodiversity for the EU budget mid-term review.
- › EU and Member States should further step up biodiversity aid to developing countries, in particular with a view to increase public and civil society capacities of these countries to implement international aid.
- › The European Commission should adopt an Action Plan on Wildlife Crime and Conservation to protect the migratory birds that Europe and Africa share.

◀ A Red Spotted Purple.  
Photo © John Flannery

**BIRDS AND BIODIVERSITY UNDER THREAT WORLDWIDE**

Many bird species are threatened with extinction worldwide. In 2013 BirdLife International published the State of the World's birds report<sup>72</sup>, a landmark publication, which outlines the state, the pressures and conservation responses for biodiversity conservation worldwide. The report found that in 2012 according to IUCN Red List criteria 1 313 bird species (13% of all bird species) are "Threatened" (by extinction) and another 880 are "Near Threatened". Of the 1 313 threatened bird species 727 are "Vulnerable", 389 are "Endangered" and 197 are "Critically Endangered". Birds face a variety of threats, with agricultural intensification, logging of forests, invasive species and climate change as the most frequently reported threats. Figure 20 gives an overview of all threats reported for globally threatened species.

To save biodiversity, identification and protection of the most important areas for biodiversity is key. The BirdLife report highlighted that national BirdLife Partner NGOs have identified 12 000 Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) worldwide, to date. These areas are not only relevant for bird protection, but also for a suite of other taxa, for example threatened mammals and amphibians. IBAs also provide a huge variety of free ecosystem services to people - they provide wild food, medicinal plants and fibres to the local communities, they purify and regulate water, and they prevent huge amounts of greenhouse gases from being released into the atmosphere. Unfortunately, governments are still only formally protecting 20% of all IBAs and many are under imminent threat from destruction or degradation. Many IBAs still lack proper management and monitoring, a prerequisite for their effectiveness to provide shelter for birds from the many threats they face worldwide.



**FIGURE 20**  
Threats reported for globally threatened bird species. The size of the circle corresponds to the number of threatened species for which the threat is reported.

<sup>72</sup> BirdLife International (2013) State of the world's birds indicators for our changing world.

## REDUCING THE EU'S BIODIVERSITY FOOTPRINT ACTION 17A OF THE BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

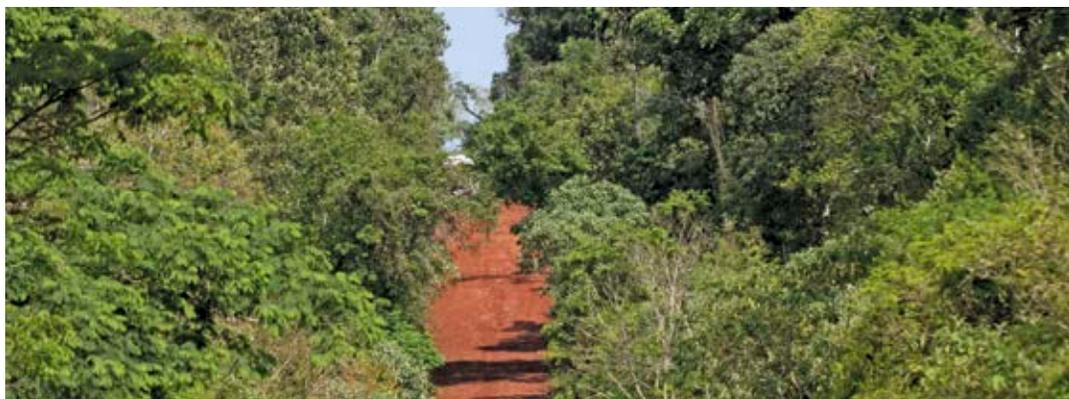
↑ "Under the EU flagship initiative on resource efficiency, the EU will take measures (which may include demand and/or supply side measures) to reduce the biodiversity impacts of EU consumption patterns, particularly for resources that have significant negative effects on biodiversity".

The **European Environment Agency** indicator on Ecological footprint<sup>73</sup> showed that "Europe's ecological deficit is considerable; its total demand for ecological goods and services exceeds what its own ecosystems supply. If everyone on the planet had the same ecological footprint as the average resident of the EU-28, we would need approximately 2.6 Earths to support our demands on nature... In a world that is already in overshoot, Europe's ecological deficit can have major environmental implications, including degradation of ecological assets, depletion of natural reserves, biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse".

The previous European Commissioner for the Environment, Janez Potočnik, launched a "Resource Efficiency Flagship Initiative" which sought to integrate a holistic environmental agenda into the overarching EU 2020 Strategy, which was a promising step forward. However, to date this is the main environmental initiative next to climate action to come from the European Commission and it is hard to identify any significant positive outcome for biodiversity under this action so far. The main and most promising outcome under this flagship initiative, the circular economy package which included revised waste targets,

was withdrawn by the new Commission under a promise of replacing it with a "new more ambitious" proposal. It remains highly uncertain whether the European Commission will live up to this commitment<sup>74</sup>. According to communications from the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) ongoing processes such as assessments of the environmental footprint of products (PEF) and of organisations (OEF) are, so far, still in a methodological testing phase and have had very limited practical impact on product policy in the EU. The import of biodiversity friendly products into the EU has not been boosted.

**Biodiversity loss is also caused** by deforestation and forest degradation, 80% of which is caused by large-scale agriculture<sup>75</sup>. While a study funded by the European Commission<sup>76</sup> found that the EU has had the world's largest "forest footprint" in the period 1990-2008, the European Commission has taken the issue of the impact of EU consumption on deforestation off the work programme.



← A tropical forest near Iguazu, Argentina. The EU has the world's largest forest footprint in 1990-2008, with EU consumption being responsible for a massive amount of deforestation.

Photo © Konstantin Kreiser

<sup>73</sup> EEA (2015) Ecological footprint of European countries (SEBI 023) - Assessment published Mar 2015.

<sup>74</sup> EEB (2015) Circular Economy Package 2.0. Some ideas to complete the circle.

<sup>75</sup> Kissinger G., Herold M., De Sy V (2012) Drivers of Deforestation and Forest Degradation: A Synthesis Report for REDD+ Policymakers. Lexeme Consulting report.

<sup>76</sup> European Commission (2013) The impact of EU consumption on deforestation: Comprehensive analysis of the impact of EU consumption on deforestation. Technical Report - 2013 - 063.

## TRADE AND BIODIVERSITY

**Whether increased references to biodiversity** concerns in "ex-ante Trade Sustainability Impact Assessments and ex-post evaluations" and in specific chapters on sustainable development in new trade agreements has already helped to "enhance the contribution of trade policy to conserving biodiversity and address potential negative impacts" (as announced under Action 17b of the Biodiversity Strategy), was not possible to assess in this report. Greater progress could be achieved if sustainable development chapters were systematically included in trade agreements, and were conferred explicit references to the highest biodiversity threats in the given country. However, it

is positive to see that the European Commission's "Biodiversity for Life Flagship Initiative" (B4Life, see below) includes an objective to support capacity building in developing countries with the aim of greater awareness and prioritisation of biodiversity concerns in trade negotiations.

**Although not specifically mentioned** in the Biodiversity Strategy it is worth stressing progress made in the implementation of the EU "Forest law enforcement, governance and trade" (FLEGT) action plan to prevent illegal timber from being placed on the European market. The EU Timber Regulation, in force since 2013, pro-

hibits operators to place illegally harvested timber and products derived from it on the EU market. Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) have been concluded with a number of timber exporting countries (so far Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo (Brazzaville), Ghana, Indonesia and Liberia).

**As far as trade of species is concerned**, the EU has overall remained a progressive force in the respective multilateral frameworks, such as the CITES Convention. It is also positive that the import ban for wild-caught birds has remained in place.



◀ An Orange-bellied Parrot. Many parrot species worldwide are very rare and threatened by wildlife trade. The import of birds caught in the wild has been banned in the EU since 2007.

Photo © Chris Tzaros

## ENVIRONMENTALLY HARMFUL SUBSIDIES

### ACTION 17C OF THE BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

↑ "The Commission will work with Member States and key stakeholders to provide the right market signals for biodiversity conservation, including work to reform, phase out and eliminate harmful subsidies at both EU and Member State level, and to provide positive incentives for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use".

**Despite repeatedly committing** at all political levels to do so, the EU has largely failed under this action so far. The main problem remains the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Initial scientific studies indicate that despite "greening" attempts, the CAP will further accelerate biodiversity loss<sup>77</sup>. At the same time, a key potential source of incentives for farmers to take

action for biodiversity, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), is likely to contribute less funds to biodiversity measures in the coming years, not more. To make things worse the remaining EAFRD budget available is unlikely to be spent in a sufficiently targeted way and therefore with a lower cost effectiveness (see page 37).

**At global level the EU** has reiterated its willingness to reform environmentally harmful subsidies at the last Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD-COP12 in Pyeongchang) by adopting a timetable for action until 2020<sup>78</sup>. The only chance to meet this commitment will be through decisive reforms during the mid-term review of the EU budget in 2017.



↳ Intensive agriculture in Denmark. Subsidies under the Common Agricultural Policy will further accelerate biodiversity loss.  
Photo © Jan Skriver

<sup>77</sup> Pe'er G., Dicks L.V., Visconti P. et al (2014). EU agricultural reform fails on biodiversity. *Science* 2014 6188 (344) pp. 1090-1092.

<sup>78</sup> CBD (2)12 Annex I of CBD Decision XII/3 (<http://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-12/cop-12-dec-03-en.pdf>)



↪ Restoration of nests of Zino's Petrel. Many species, such as the Zino's Petrel, have extremely small ranges and populations and are dependent on conservation for their survival on the short-term. Photo © Joel Pereira

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND MECHANISMS FOR GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION**  
**ACTION 18A OF THE BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY**

↑ "The Commission and Member States will contribute their fair share to international efforts to significantly increase resources for global biodiversity as part of the international process aimed at estimating biodiversity funding needs and adopting resource mobilisation targets for biodiversity at CBD CoP11 in 2012".

**The EU made progress to deliver on this action** as it continues to lead the world in providing financial and other support to developing countries in the area of biodiversity. Indications are that the EU will stick to committed increases.

**At the 11th Conference** of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP-11 in Hyderabad, India, in October 2012) the EU was instrumental in paving the way for progressive global targets on Resource Mobilisation for biodiversity, helped by a constructive attitude of African governments. These targets were confirmed at COP-12 in the Republic of Korea two years later: Relevant international financial flows to developing countries should be doubled by 2016, based on the 2006-2010 average, and be kept at this level at a minimum until 2020. The average allocation under the EU external assistance budget for biodiversity during 2006-2010 was 1.7 billion EUR with the larger part is coming from national Member State budgets<sup>79</sup>.

In addition, the EU and other donor countries promised to support capacity building to enable developing countries to plan, apply for, implement and monitor the use of additional funds. Although most recent figures on current financial

flows are lacking, there are no indications that the agreed CBD targets on international financial flows for biodiversity will be missed by the EU Member States collectively (Table 9).

**It must be recognised**, that progress was mainly possible thanks to the efforts of the European Commission under the leadership of former Commissioner Janez Potočnik who managed to convince several reluctant Member State governments to live up to their global responsibility in times where some are especially keen to focus resources on short term measures for banks and growth rather than on long term investments in sustainable development and healthy ecosystems.

However, given the financial needs up to 2020 far more support from developed nations is necessary to stabilise and restore diverse ecosystems and thus human livelihoods around the world. Alongside this, the EU should continue to support policy alignment, such that collective Overseas Development Aid recognises and supports the intimate links between human development and environmental and social resilience. This is particularly relevant for the formulation of the global Sustainable Development Goals.

<sup>79</sup> European Commission (2014): Fifth report of the European Union to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

To underpin these commitments, the European Commission has started the "EU Biodiversity for Life Flagship Initiative" (B4Life). The leading Directorates General (DGs) for Development Cooperation and Environment expect to mobilise an estimated 800 million EUR between 2014 and 2020, for projects with biodiversity and ecosystems protection as main objective, and see the potential of the initiative to form a B4Life Trust Fund<sup>80</sup>.

**A positive step taken** has been the opening of the EU LIFE programme for funding projects that benefit species and habitats of relevance to the EU also in third countries. However, the overall budget of LIFE (0.3% of the EU budget) is far too small to expect large scale impacts.

**It should also be noted** that DG Development Cooperation has led an ambitious process to tackle the wildlife crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa, seeking to protect healthy and resilience ecosystems alongside supporting livelihoods and human development.

The work has a strong focus on poaching and illegal wildlife trade in Africa, but in order to deliver for wildlife across the board it must also tackle the fundamental, indirect drivers of biodiversity declines, including habitat loss through agricultural expansion and deforestation, poor quality infrastructure and extractive industry developments, and lack of capacity and awareness amongst local communities. The EU Birds Directive currently protects European migratory birds on the breeding grounds, but Member States must support this initiative in order to provide protection for those birds throughout their lifecycle.

TABLE 9

YEAR / PERIOD	ALL OECD-DAC COUNTRIES (BILLION USD, ROUNDED)	EU (BILLION USD, ROUNDED)
Baseline 2006–2010	4,3	2,4
2011	6,1	3,3
Increase 2011	42%	38%
2012	5,0	3,2
Increase 2012	16%	33%
Accumulated 2011 + 12	58%	71%

↪ Bilateral biodiversity-related aid of the EU compared to all member countries of the OECD Development Assistance Committee. Source:<sup>81, 82, 83</sup>.



↪ Deforestation in Rio Branco, Brazil. The EU has the world's largest forest footprint in 1990-2008, with EU consumption being responsible for a massive amount of deforestation. Photo © Kate Evans

**Progress can also be noted** under Action 20 (access and benefit sharing regarding genetic resources). The EU has been supportive overall to a swift implementation of the "Nagoya Protocol", however in a number of cases lobby pressure from businesses, including from the EU, has resulted in gaps and potential loopholes in the Protocol itself as well in the implementing legislation in the EU<sup>84</sup>. The EU as a whole became a Party to the Protocol in October 2014, and adopted a Regulation binding to the 28 Member States (Regulation (EU) No 511/2014). In April 2015 only three EU Member States (Denmark, Hungary, Spain) have become a Party to the Protocol themselves<sup>85</sup>, others seem still to work on national legislation to implement it.

<sup>80</sup> European Commission (2014). The EU Biodiversity.

<sup>81</sup> OECD (2013) OECD-DAC Statistics on Biodiversity Related Aid [http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/documentupload/Biodiversity-related%20aid%20Flyer%20-%20December%202013\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/documentupload/Biodiversity-related%20aid%20Flyer%20-%20December%202013_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>82</sup> OECD (2013) OECD-DAC Aid to Biodiversity <http://www.oecd.org/dac/environment-development/Biodiversity-related%20aid%20Flyer%20-%20May%202014.pdf>

<sup>83</sup> BirdLife, Conservation International, The Nature Conservancy and WWF. Unpublished analysis.

<sup>84</sup> Berne Declaration, Natural Justice and UNU-IAS (2014): The Ambiguous March to Equity: A Commentary on the Limitations of the European Union Regulation on Access and Benefit Sharing.

<sup>85</sup> CBD (2015) Signatories to the Nagoya Protocol. Accessed 1 April 2015. <http://www.cbd.int/abs/nagoya-protocol/signatories/default.shtml>

**BOX 8**  
**THE EXPANDING FOOTPRINT**  
**OF BIOENERGY**

**The use of bioenergy** in the EU is set to almost double between 2005 and 2020. The demand for bioenergy originates from the Renewable Energy Directive and EU targets to produce 20% of all energy consumed and 10% of energy in transport from renewable sources. The growing demand has led to increased imports of biomass and biofuels, especially of wood and vegetable oils, for energy use.

**This policy driven demand** on natural resources is leading to increased demand on arable land as well as an increased level of forest harvesting. Only a part of the demand has been, and is expected to be met with residues from forestry and agriculture or with byproducts of existing industrial processes, which add less direct pressure on land and forests<sup>86</sup>. EU's ecological footprint<sup>87</sup>, meaning its total demand for ecological goods and services is already about twice what its own ecosystems supply. The demand for bioenergy will further expand the footprint.

**For biomass consumed in the EU** for electricity and heating, the Renewable Energy Directive sets no requirements on their sustainability. For biofuels used in transport some sustainability requirements have been set but they do not cover key aspects of sustainability such as limiting use of agricultural land for energy production.





**EU's bioenergy use** has already had disastrous consequences for the environment and for the climate. Increasingly crops such as rapeseed and maize are used for biofuels and biogas, leading to displacement of food and feed production elsewhere. This has led to vast greenhouse gas emissions due to indirect land use change (ILUC) from carbon rich ecosystems such as forests to crop land. It has also caused direct land use change, for example conversion of grasslands to intensive cultivation in Europe. In the case of biofuels, amendments in legislation aim to cap the use of food crops grown on agricultural land for energy, limiting emissions from ILUC. More than 5.5 million hectares<sup>86</sup> of arable land have never the less already been taken up by fuel production and the agreed cap will let this expand even further. In the case of crop use for biogas and electricity, no limitations have so far been proposed.

**Growing use of wood for energy** is leading to increased forest harvesting in Europe, declining their capacity to act as sinks and storages of carbon. Increased bioenergy use has also resulted in increasing imports, especially from Southern forest of the United States where whole trees are being cut, taken to a mill, pelletized and shipped across the Atlantic to be burnt in European power plants (see Figure 21). Native forests are rapidly being cleared, resulting in greenhouse gas emissions, and putting forest species such as the Prothonotary warbler<sup>89</sup> at risk.

**The experience of the past few years** shows that additional policies are needed for bioenergy to be truly sustainable and to contribute to the aims of the Biodiversity Strategy to "anchor biodiversity objectives into key sectorial policies", to reduce Europe's ecological footprint and to reduce the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss (action 17). The imperatives of stabilizing climate while protecting biodiversity cannot be achieved at the expense of the other. The EU therefore needs comprehensive safeguards for bioenergy use to be a part of the next renewable energy policy post 2020.

**These safeguards must include** an overall cap to limit the use of bioenergy to levels that's in line with EU's own bio-capacity and minimizes additional pressure on land and forests. Safeguards need to also ensure efficient and optimal use of biomass resources, in line with the cascading use principle, introduce comprehensive sustainability criteria to tackle negative biodiversity impacts and include correct accounting of greenhouse gas emissions from bioenergy use that includes emissions caused in the land sector and in forests.

#### ◀ FIGURE 21

The trees in this hardwood forest in Southamton, North Carolina have been pelletized and shipped to the EU to be burnt for electricity while harvesting residues have been left behind. Forest ecosystems are storing greenhouse gases and are of crucial importance in the fight against climate change.

Photo © Dogwood Alliance

- <sup>86</sup> Atanasiu B. 2010. The role of bioenergy in the National Renewable Energy Action Plans: a first identification of issues and uncertainties. IEEP/ BiomassFutures.
- <sup>87</sup> EEA (2015) Ecological footprint of European countries (SEBI 023) - Assessment published Mar 2015.
- <sup>88</sup> Elbersen B., Startisky I., Hengeveld G. et al. (2010) Spatially detailed and quantified overview of EU biomass potential taking into account the main criteria determining biomass availability from different sources. Deliverable 3.3. of BiomassFutures.
- <sup>89</sup> Dogwood Alliance (2013) Enviva's Wood Pellet Mill in Ahoskie, North Carolina Threatens Endangered Ecosystems and Wildlife. <http://www.dogwoodalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Enviva-Mill-in-Ahoskie-Dogwood-Report.pdf>

**BOX 9****CONSERVING BIODIVERSITY IN THE FRENCH OUTERMOST REGIONS AND EUROPEAN OVERSEAS COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES**

**The overseas countries and territories** and outermost regions of EU Member States are of major importance for the conservation of biodiversity. The European overseas entities hold 151 globally threatened bird species; this is particularly true of the tropical overseas territories of France, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. The five outermost regions belonging to France are outside of continental Europe: French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Mayotte and Reunion Island. Outermost regions are an integral part of the EU, although some EU legislation (including the Birds and Habitats Directives) does not apply.

**To successfully conserve biodiversity** in the outermost regions, a stable financial resource is needed. Following pressure by NGOs the EU acknowledged the importance and need to fund conservation action in these regions and allowed the EU LIFE Programme to fund projects in the outermost regions of France in 2007. This has allowed LPO/BirdLife France to start the LIFE+ CAP DOM Project. The project supports actions carried by the partners, small NGOs GEPOG in French Guiana, AOMA in Martinique, SEOR in Reunion Island together with the National Park. The project provides funding to carry out large scale projects such as control of invasive species (Reunion Island to help the critically endangered Reunion cuckoo shrike, and

an endangered habitat, savannah grassland in French Guiana). An important aspect of the project is exchange of know-how between these NGOs working in a tropical climate where European methods do not necessarily apply. The project has also supplied the opportunity to bring together stakeholders not used to sitting around the same table: local authorities, land management agencies, research institutions, universities which has led to much increased cooperation<sup>90</sup>.

**In general however**, uptake of LIFE funding in the French outermost regions was slow due to the administrative burden and the complexity of the LIFE Programme, and a lack of capacity in civil society and/or interest by local authorities to implement LIFE Projects successfully. In addition, a lack of basic knowledge of biodiversity may prevent spending 25% of the project budget on concrete conservation action, a requirement under the LIFE Programme.

**The European Parliament** and European Commission recognized the need to build capacity and provide funding in outermost regions and overseas countries and territories and created the BEST initiative (voluntary scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of European overseas<sup>91</sup>). Following pilot projects in 2011 and 2012, which included funding for a RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) project to address invasive species in the Caribbean UK Overseas Territories, in 2013 a call for tender to





prepare the structure "to achieve the transition towards a sustainable scheme" was launched. This work is still ongoing. The European Commission (DG DEVCO) announced at the end of 2014 the allocation of 8 million euros for administration and projects for the BEST initiative to continue as part of the EU Biodiversity for Life Flagship Initiative (see page 55). Small and medium grant funding calls, open to just overseas countries and territories, are expected to be launched in 2015 and 2016.

◀ A forest in the French overseas territory New Caledonia. The EU supports conservation in the overseas countries and territories through the BEST initiative.

Photo © Yannick Boisnard

<sup>90</sup> LPO (2011) LIFE CAP DOM. [www.lifecapdom.org](http://www.lifecapdom.org)

<sup>91</sup> European Commission (2015) BEST Voluntary Scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of European overseas. [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/best/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/best/index_en.htm)

Table A1 gives an overview of progress in the EU towards the achievement of the actions of the Biodiversity Strategy. Out of the 37 actions, good progress was made on only ten actions. Insufficient progress was made on sixteen actions, and little or no progress was made on seven actions. Four actions have not been assessed, action 13b because the plans in question are not yet due, and the other three actions because of a lack of expertise or available data.

) TABLE A1 (

ACTION 1	COMPLETE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATURA 2000 NETWORK AND ENSURE GOOD MANAGEMENT	PROGRESS ASSESSMENT
1A	Member States and the Commission will ensure that the phase to establish Natura 2000, including in the marine environment, is largely complete by 2012.	
1B	Member States and the Commission will further integrate species and habitats protection and management requirements into key land and water use policies, both within and beyond Natura 2000 areas.	
1C	Member States will ensure that management plans or equivalent instruments which set out conservation and restoration measures are developed and implemented in a timely manner for all Natura 2000 sites.	
1D	The Commission, together with Member States, will establish by 2012 a process to promote the sharing of experience, good practice and cross-border collaboration on the management of Natura 2000, within the biogeographical frameworks set out in the Habitats Directive.	
ACTION 2	ENSURE ADEQUATE FINANCING OF NATURA 2000 SITES	
	The Commission and Member States will provide the necessary funds and incentives for Natura 2000, including through EU funding instruments, under the next multiannual financial framework. The Commission will set out its views in 2011 on how Natura 2000 will be financed under the next multi-annual financial framework.	

↪ Assessment of progress towards the actions of the Biodiversity Strategy. To each of the actions a progress score was assigned based on expert judgment. Green: good progress or completed. Amber: insufficient progress. Red: little or no progress. Four actions have not been assessed.

**ACTION 3 INCREASE STAKEHOLDER AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT AND IMPROVE ENFORCEMENT**

**PROGRESS ASSESSMENT**

- 3A The Commission, together with Member States, will develop and launch a major communication campaign on Natura 2000 by 2013. 

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- 3B The Commission and Member states will improve cooperation with key sectors and continue to develop guidance documents to improve their understanding of the requirements of EU nature legislation and its value in promoting economic development. 

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- 3C The Commission and Member States will facilitate enforcement of the nature directives by providing specific training programmes on Natura 2000 for judges and public prosecutors, and by developing better compliance promotion capacities. 

**ACTION 4 IMPROVE AND STREAMLINE MONITORING AND REPORTING**

- 4A The Commission, together with Member States, will develop by 2012 a new EU bird reporting system, further develop the reporting system under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive and improve the flow, accessibility and relevance of Natura 2000 data. 

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- 4B The Commission will create a dedicated ICT tool as part of the Biodiversity Information System for Europe to improve the availability and use of data by 2012. 

**ACTION 5 IMPROVE KNOWLEDGE OF ECOSYSTEMS  
AND THEIR SERVICES IN THE EU**PROGRESS  
ASSESSMENT

Member States, with the assistance of the Commission, will map and assess the state of ecosystems and their services in their national territory by 2014, assess the economic value of such services, and promote the integration of these values into accounting and reporting systems at EU and national level by 2020.

**ACTION 6 SET PRIORITIES TO RESTORE AND PROMOTE  
THE USE OF GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**

6A By 2014, Member States, with the assistance of the Commission, will develop a strategic framework to set priorities for ecosystem restoration at sub-national, national and EU level.



6B The Commission will develop a Green Infrastructure Strategy by 2012 to promote the deployment of green infrastructure in the EU in urban and rural areas, including through incentives to encourage up-front investments in green infrastructure projects and the maintenance of ecosystem services, for example through better targeted use of EU funding streams and Public Private Partnerships.



**ACTION 7 ENSURE NO NET LOSS OF BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES**

PROGRESS  
ASSESSMENT

- 7A In collaboration with the Member States, the Commission will develop a methodology for assessing the impact of EU funded projects, plans and programmes on biodiversity by 2014.
- 
- 7B The Commission will carry out further work with a view to proposing by 2015 an initiative to ensure there is no net loss of ecosystems and their services (e.g. through compensation or offsetting schemes).
- 



**ACTION 8 ENHANCE DIRECT PAYMENTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC GOODS IN THE EU COMMON AGRICULTURE POLICY**

- 8A The Commission will propose that CAP direct payments will reward the delivery of environmental public goods that go beyond cross-compliance (e.g. permanent pasture, green cover, crop rotation, ecological set-aside, Natura 2000).
- 
- 8B The Commission will propose to improve and simplify the GAEC (Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions) cross-compliance standards and consider including the Water Framework Directive within the scope of cross-compliance once the Directive has been implemented and the operational obligations for farmers have been identified in order to improve the state of aquatic ecosystems in rural areas.
- 



**ACTION 9 BETTER TARGET RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
TO BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION**PROGRESS  
ASSESSMENT

9A The Commission and Member States will integrate quantified biodiversity targets into Rural Development strategies and programmes, tailoring action to regional and local needs.

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9B The Commission and Member States will establish mechanisms to facilitate collaboration among farmers and foresters to achieve continuity of landscape features, protection of genetic resources and other cooperation mechanisms to protect biodiversity.

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**ACTION 10 CONSERVE EUROPE'S AGRICULTURAL GENETIC DIVERSITY**

The Commission and Member States will encourage the uptake of agri-environmental measures to support genetic diversity in agriculture and explore the scope for developing a strategy for the conservation of genetic diversity.

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**ACTION 11 ENCOURAGE FOREST HOLDERS TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE FOREST BIODIVERSITY**

PROGRESS  
ASSESSMENT

- 11A Member States and the Commission will encourage the adoption of Management Plans, inter alia through use of rural development measures and the LIFE+ programme.
- 
- 11B Member States and the Commission will foster innovative mechanisms (e.g. Payments for Ecosystem Services) to finance the maintenance and restoration of ecosystem services provided by multifunctional forests.
- 



**ACTION 12 INTEGRATE BIODIVERSITY MEASURES IN FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANS**

Member States will ensure that forest management plans or equivalent instruments include as many of the following measures as possible:

- maintain optimal levels of deadwood, taking into account regional variations such as fire risk or potential insect outbreaks;
- preserve wilderness areas;
- ecosystem-based measures to increase the resilience of forests against fires as part of forest fire prevention schemes, in line with activities carried out in the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS);
- specific measures developed for Natura 2000 forest sites;
- ensuring that afforestation is carried out in accordance with the Pan-European Operational Level Guidelines for SFM33, in particular as regards the diversity of species, and climate change adaptation needs.

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**ACTION 13 IMPROVE THE MANAGEMENT OF FISHED STOCKS****PROGRESS  
ASSESSMENT**

- 13A The Commission and Member States will maintain and restore fish stocks to levels that can produce MSY in all areas in which EU fish fleets operate, including areas regulated by Regional Fisheries Management Organisations, and the waters of third countries with which the EU has concluded Fisheries Partnership Agreements.
- 
- 13B The Commission and Member States will develop and implement under the CFP long-term management plans with harvest control rules based on the MSY approach. These plans should be designed to respond to specific time-related targets and be based on scientific advice and sustainability principles.
- 
- 13C The Commission and Member States will significantly step up their work to collect data to support implementation of MSY. Once this objective is attained, scientific advice will be sought to incorporate ecological considerations in the definition of MSY by 2020.
- 

**ACTION 14 ELIMINATE ADVERSE IMPACTS ON FISH STOCKS, SPECIES, HABITATS AND ECOSYSTEMS**

- 14A The EU will design measures to gradually eliminate discards, to avoid the by-catch of unwanted species and to preserve vulnerable marine ecosystems in accordance with EU legislation and international obligations.
- 
- 14B The Commission and Member States will support the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, including through providing financial incentives through the future financial instruments for fisheries and maritime policy for marine protected areas (including Natura 2000 areas and those established by international or regional agreements). This could include restoring marine ecosystems, adapting fishing activities and promoting the involvement of the sector in alternative activities, such as eco-tourism, monitoring and managing marine biodiversity, and combating marine litter.
- 



**ACTION 15 STRENGTHEN THE EU PLANT AND ANIMAL HEALTH REGIMES**

PROGRESS  
ASSESSMENT

The Commission will integrate additional biodiversity concerns into the Plant and Animal Health regimes by 2012.

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**ACTION 16 ESTABLISH A DEDICATED INSTRUMENT ON INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES**

The Commission will fill policy gaps in combating IAS by developing a dedicated legislative instrument by 2012.

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**ACTION 17 REDUCE INDIRECT DRIVERS OF BIODIVERSITY LOSS**

17A Under the EU flagship initiative on resource efficiency, the EU will take measures (which may include demand and/or supply side measures) to reduce the biodiversity impacts of EU consumption patterns, particularly for resources that have significant negative effects on biodiversity.

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17B The Commission will enhance the contribution of trade policy to conserving biodiversity and address potential negative impacts by systematically including it as part of trade negotiations and dialogues with third countries, by identifying and evaluating potential impacts on biodiversity resulting from the liberalisation of trade and investment through ex-ante Trade Sustainability Impact Assessments and ex-post evaluations, and seek to include in all new trade agreements a chapter on sustainable development providing for substantial environmental provisions of importance in the trade context including on biodiversity goals.

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17C The Commission will work with Member States and key stakeholders to provide the right market signals for biodiversity conservation, including work to reform, phase out and eliminate harmful subsidies at both EU and Member State level, and to provide positive incentives for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.

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**ACTION 18 MOBILISE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES  
FOR GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION**PROGRESS  
ASSESSMENT

- 18A The Commission and Member States will contribute their fair share to international efforts to significantly increase resources for global biodiversity as part of the international process aimed at estimating biodiversity funding needs and adopting resource mobilisation targets for biodiversity at CBD CoP11 in 2012.
- 
- 18B The Commission will improve the effectiveness of EU funding for global biodiversity inter alia by supporting natural capital assessments in recipient countries and the development and/or updating of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, and by improving coordination within the EU and with key non-EU donors in implementing biodiversity assistance/projects.
- 



**ACTION 19 "BIODIVERSITY PROOF" EU DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

PROGRESS  
ASSESSMENT

The Commission will continue to systematically screen its development cooperation action to minimise any negative impact on biodiversity, and undertake Strategic Environmental Assessments and/or Environmental Impact Assessments for actions likely to have significant effects on biodiversity.



**ACTION 20 REGULATE ACCESS TO GENETIC RESOURCES AND THE FAIR AND EQUITABLE SHARING OF BENEFITS ARISING FROM THEIR USE**

The Commission will propose legislation to implement the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilisation in the European Union so that the EU can ratify the Protocol as soon as possible and by 2015 at the latest, as required by the global target.



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PUBLISHED  
MAY 2015



Partnership for **nature** and **people**

