



Greening Europe

BirdLife Europe's priorities for the **Polish** EU Presidency

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Reforms crunchtime

Last year the EU failed to reach its target of halting biodiversity decline, but Heads of States have renewed the pledge, aiming at 2020 and promising that, this time around, they are actually serious about it. The new Biodiversity Strategy is supposed to chart a concrete path for the EU towards stemming the ongoing ecological crisis. Sadly, the sub-targets and actions recently proposed by the Commission are underwhelming. Meanwhile, the real action is happening elsewhere - in the reform of the EU budget and the big policy sectors: agriculture, fisheries, regional policy and development aid. Here, the signs are more encouraging, but the jury is still out. The legal proposals expected over and after the summer will be the moment of truth on whether the EU commitment to biodiversity is a real one or just written on ice that melts away with rising temperatures.

We will be carefully watching three main areas where we expect a genuine progress. The first is the phasing out of perverse subsidies and the introduction of safeguards against harmful investments. The second will be the provision of adequate funding for biodiversity conservation, most notably for the management of the Natura 2000 network. The third will be a new start on the way we use our living resources: an end to over-fishing, strong reorientation of farming toward ecologically compatible practices and a reduction in energy demand to help achieve 30% less greenhouse gases by 2020. President Barroso has made the resource efficiency initiative a flagship of his vision for the future of Europe. The coming months offer a life size test to his ability to deliver.



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BIRDLIFE EUROPE'S KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL POLISH PRESIDENCY

- The Presidency, Member states and the European Parliament should endorse the proposed EU Biodiversity strategy and ensure its full implementation, especially as regards necessary reforms in sectoral policies and the EU budget. In particular, they should call for a strengthening of sub-targets and measures if a 2014 review will not show a positive change of trends for the majority of species and habitats of European concern.
- The European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament must ensure that the budget for LIFE, the EU's only dedicated financial instrument for the environment, will be increased five-fold, and delivers at least 1 billion EUR annually for biodiversity.
- The Presidency should ensure that the Environment Council is fully engaged in the debate on the CAP and that all voices in society are being heard and can participate.
- The Presidency and Member States should support robust and urgent action on seabird bycatch, based on the Commission's EU Plan of Action for seabirds
- Following the Commission proposal on Indirect Land Use Change (ILUC) related to biofuels, the Presidency should give the dossier high priority while ensuring that ILUC is fully taken into account in sustainability criteria under Renewable Energy Directive.



White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* © C.Korkosz »

“The targets highlight the right priorities but are either unambitious or vague.”

EU must deliver on its commitments for biodiversity

The new Biodiversity Strategy recently adopted by the European Commission has the ambition of ensuring that the 2020 biodiversity target of halting and reversing the decline of species and ecosystems does not go the way of the failed 2010 one. Unfortunately, it falls much short of what was called for. Its targets highlight the right priorities but they are either unambitious or vague. There are also important gaps in terms of clear stepping stones and concrete actions to be taken. The Council and the European Parliament must improve on the Strategy, committing to take all the actions necessary to actually reach the 2020 target. One crucial commitment should be to stop deterioration for all species and habitats by 2015 (instead of 2020) and to achieve measurable recovery for all of them by 2020 (and not just for a small group) in order to get us on a realistic pathway to 2050, when according to EU and global agreements biodiversity and ecosystems must be fully restored. There should also be a concrete target of 60% of EU farmland to be covered by specific biodiversity conservation schemes. On the international front the promises made by Member States at EU and global level require the EU to put on the table credible additional financial commitments to support developing countries in conserving the Earth's richest and most vulnerable ecosystems. The biodiversity crisis is still far from being addressed, and ten years are but a blink of an eye when it comes to natural cycles.



Action is urgently needed and the following must be addressed during the Polish Presidency:

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- **The Presidency, Member states and the European Parliament should endorse the proposed EU Biodiversity strategy and ensure its full implementation, especially as regards necessary reforms in sectoral policies and the EU budget. In particular, they should call for a strengthening of sub-targets and measures if a 2014 review will not show a positive change of trends for the majority of species and habitats of European concern.**
- **The Commission must roll out concrete and more ambitious initiatives for the proper implementation of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. These need to cover appropriate training for national civil servants, magistrates and planners, targeted dialogue with key economic sectors, robust standards for conservation objectives and site management and better inspection regimes and law enforcement, including through information and communication technology (ICT) such as remote sensing, and systematic public disclosure of data on habitat loss in Natura 2000 sites.**
- **The Commission, in cooperation with Member States and civil society must accelerate its work on a dedicated legal instrument to tackle the rapidly growing problem of the uncontrolled spread of Invasive Alien Species.**
- **The Commission and the Polish Presidency should reanimate the discussion on instruments for protecting healthy soils, which besides clean water and air are the basis for all life on earth.**

“A stable economy can only be achieved if public money supports public goods.”

Investing in nature, investing in our future

The second trimester of 2011 will be a decisive time for the discussion on the EU's next Multi-Annual Financial Framework post-2013. The EU has to demonstrate to taxpayers that its budget delivers added value, that it supports long-term well-being and prosperity, and that it matches EU policy priorities and needs. It is beyond doubt that a stable economy can only be achieved if public money is supporting public goods, and biodiversity is, just like a stable climate, a public good that is essential not only for human welfare but also for our economic activities. The Polish Presidency's actions will be fundamental in ensuring that biodiversity and the Natura 2000 network are taken as priorities within this debate. Biodiversity transcends national boundaries, it is not evenly distributed across the EU, and poorer Member States need support for biodiversity conservation.

Not only the Member States but also the EU should therefore invest in biodiversity.

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White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* © C.Korkosz »

Under the Polish Presidency:

- ✦ The European Commission, working with the Presidency, must ensure that a clear reference to a mandatory, national Prioritized Action Framework for Natura 2000¹ is included in every relevant funding line regulation, ensuring that Member States allocate and earmark sufficient finances for nature conservation measures of European importance.
- ✦ The European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament must ensure that the budget for LIFE, the EU's only dedicated financial instrument for the environment, will be increased five-fold, and delivers at least 1 billion EUR annually for biodiversity.
- ✦ The Presidency must ensure that the BEST scheme; a voluntary scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of European Overseas, has clear and continuous funding support.
- ✦ The European Commission, working with the Presidency, must ensure, under the Cohesion Policy, the support for “Green Infrastructure”, enabling an interconnection of natural habitats that is crucial for the maintaining of ecological processes, the provision of ecosystem services and effective climate change adaptation.
- ✦ The Presidency must ensure that the EU budget is biodiversity- and climate-proofed; ensuring adequate impact assessments and thus contributing to the necessary phasing out of environmentally harmful subsidies, such as those favouring road transport over more sustainable solutions within the Cohesion policy.
- ✦ The Presidency must ensure that environmental indicators are used to improve the result-oriented approach of the EU budget



Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* © C.Korkosz »

“CAP should reward farmers who do more than simply baseline good agronomic practices.”

New Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) must deliver for society

Following the discussion period on the Commission’s Communication on the CAP post-2013, a legislative proposal is expected in the second half of 2011. BirdLife Europe believes that this legislative proposal must include a serious re-orientation of the CAP towards the delivery of public goods. It must also acknowledge the role of agriculture in the environment. If it fails to do so, the policy will not stand up to public scrutiny and debate. We need a CAP that on the one hand guides the majority of farmers towards more sustainable practices, and on the other hand gives support to specific types of farming which deliver consistently more for the environment. These should include High Nature Value farming, Organic farming and farming in Natura 2000 sites which have specific management requirements and therefore deliver specific public goods. On top of that, the CAP should reward farmers who do more than simply baseline good agronomic practices, by putting in place a framework for well designed and well funded agri-environment schemes, and other tools.

The Polish presidency will be guiding the legislative proposal through the first stage of negotiations and discussions. Therefore, it will have a key role in engaging all those stakeholders which are influenced by the CAP in the debate on its future. These include environmental NGOs, taxpayers, consumers, farmers from developing countries and from weaker regions and sectors within the

EU, among many others. The size of the CAP budget and the fact that almost half of the EU’s surface is influenced by agriculture mean that the debate cannot be limited to the farming circle.

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Under the Polish presidency:

- ▶ **The Presidency, Member States and the European Parliament should support and strengthen the Commission’s proposals ensuring that the new CAP includes:**
 - a solid cross-compliance baseline
 - a farm-level mandatory greening component within pillar 1
 - specific pillar 1 top-up payments for High Nature Value farming, organic farming and farmers within Natura 2000 sites
 - a well targeted and well resourced pillar II
- ▶ **The Presidency should ensure that the Environment Council is fully engaged in the debate and that all voices in society are being heard and can participate.**



“Only environmentally-friendly vessels should be allowed to access the fish.”

High time for new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)

The Polish Presidency will be crucial in setting the tone and ambition for the discussions on the new EU fisheries policy, enabling all the EU institutions to work together towards a fisheries policy which will stop over-fishing and provide a sound framework for sustainable fisheries and for protecting marine ecosystems.

Firstly, the EU fleet must be cut to match available fisheries resources, and only environmentally-friendly vessels should be allowed access to fish. Secondly, fisheries should be allowed only on the basis of the 'long term management plans', which should first pass the scrutiny of Environmental Impact Assessments. Special attention must be given to safeguarding the marine Natura 2000 network – the cornerstone of the EU's nature protection policies.



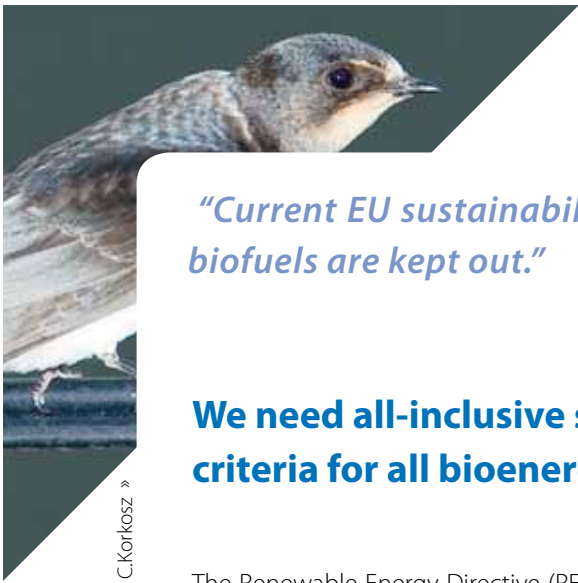
Fish stocks are not the only victim of unsustainable fisheries. It is unacceptable that tens of thousands of marine mammals, and at least 200,000 seabirds, continue to die annually as bycatch in European fisheries, including the critically endangered Balearic Shearwater. Without any further delay the EU must publish its long overdue seabird action plan and in parallel introduce effective measures to tackle the problem as part of the CFP reform.

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Under the Polish Presidency:

- ✦ **The Council and the European Parliament should support a radical CFP reform which will**
 - Set a primary objective of delivering healthy marine ecosystems
 - Include legally binding and time-limited targets for reducing the EU fishing fleet
 - Make an ecosystem-based approach operational through obligatory long term management plans for all fisheries
 - Provide safeguards for marine Natura 2000 sites
 - Ensure that official scientific advice is strictly followed when catch quotas are set
- ✦ **The Presidency and Member States should support robust and urgent action on seabird bycatch, based on the Commission's EU Plan of Action for seabirds**
- ✦ **EU institutions should ensure that the new European Fisheries Fund supports only sustainable fisheries and contributes to the ecologically sustainable management of marine and inland water Natura 2000 sites (including extensive fishponds).**

Black Guillemot *Cepphus grylle* © Colum Clarke »



Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* © C.Korkosz »

“Current EU sustainability criteria are not guaranteeing that unsustainable biofuels are kept out.”

We need all-inclusive sustainability criteria for all bioenergy resources

The Renewable Energy Directive (RED) is one of the key pieces of legislation aimed at driving down emissions in Europe. BirdLife Europe, and other environmental NGOs, have demonstrated that some of the renewables the EU ended up stimulating are increasing emissions and putting pressure on areas of high environmental value all over the world.

The RED sets in place two targets, the first is to bring more renewables into the transport sector. This target revealed itself to be a key driver for biofuels. The EU, under huge pressure of civil society, put in place sustainability criteria to try and keep environmentally and climatically damaging biofuels out of the system. Unfortunately, the EU ignored the issue of Indirect Land Use Change (land use change caused by the displacement of food crops by fuel crops). This means that the sustainability criteria currently in place are not guaranteeing that unsustainable biofuels are kept out.

Biomass (mainly used for heat and power production) is another source of renewable energy that has seen a boost thanks to the RED. While at least biofuels are subject to some sustainability criteria, biomass is being used without any such criteria in place at all.



It's high time that European Commission fixed its previous irresponsible policy-making, giving a strong signal to citizens and industry that only bioenergy that fulfils strong sustainability criteria and results in genuine greenhouse gas savings will have a place in the European market.

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Under the Polish presidency:

- ✦ The European Commission must come out with a proposal to ensure that ILUC related emissions are properly taken into account.
- ✦ The Presidency should give the ILUC dossier high priority so that it can move quickly through the process.
- ✦ The Commission must come out with a report on biomass that asks for strong mandatory standards.
- ✦ The Presidency, Member States and the European Parliament should ensure that sustainability criteria are not watered down at the implementation stage.

STOP BAD BIOFUELS



BirdLife Europe, together with other NGOs developed a video cartoon to stop EU biofuels targets harming the climate, forests and people.



<http://www.facebook.com/stopbadbiofuels?sk=info>



IBA Programme

Important Bird Areas (IBAs) are sites where rare and endangered species, or large congregations of birds occur. These sites are vital for preserving birds and other wildlife. In Poland, 174 IBAs have been recognized so far. 144 Polish IBAs have already been included in the European ecological network Natura 2000, protecting some of the most valuable and threatened species and habitats in Europe. OTOP's main goal is to ensure their proper protection, monitor their status and oppose threats (regular monitoring is performed by volunteers – so called IBA caretakers).



Species conservation through farming and business

The Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* is globally threatened and is Europe's rarest migratory songbird. Poland holds a quarter of the world's population. OTOP is leading on the effective conservation of the species and its fen mire habitat. Supported by two projects funded by the EU's LIFE-Programme, OTOP has managed to prevent fen mires from overgrowing through landscape-scale habitat management, using new mowing techniques and financing options. OTOP has arranged a targeted agri-environment scheme, now implemented on about 8,000 ha in the famous Biebrza Valley. In the future, regular mowing will be financed through the production of alternative fuels from the biomass harvested during habitat management, making Aquatic Warbler protection attractive for farmers and entrepreneurs while also delivering climate change benefits



Integrating European networks: Natura 2000 and TEN-T

The European Commission's 2010 TEN-T consultation expressed strong emphasis on integrating biodiversity and wider environmental objectives into the future TEN-T policy. Since 2002, OTOP together with other NGOs has worked on changing the route of the European express road "Via Baltica" to save the most valuable nature site in NE Poland. Eventually, it was re-routed to bypass Natura 2000 sites, which include the outstanding Rospuda Valley. OTOP participated in consultations of the Polish proposal for TEN-T review, stressing the importance of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for European transport corridors.

POLAND IN THE SPOTLIGHT



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BirdLife International Partnership in the EU

The BirdLife International Partnership strives to conserve birds, their habitats, and global biodiversity working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources.

This memorandum on the Polish EU Presidency was produced by BirdLife Europe and OTOP (BirdLife in Poland), the Partner of BirdLife International in Poland.

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For more information on the BirdLife Partnership visit <http://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/national/index.html>



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Credits pictures Greening Europe Polish Presidency

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