

Greening Europe

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

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Time for reforms: is there hope for biodiversity?

2010 has been a year of reckoning. The EU has failed to meet its target of halting the decline of biodiversity. However evidence shows that where action has been taken, and when EU legislation has been properly implemented, species have recovered and habitats have improved. The EU has renewed its commitment, adopting a very ambitious target for 2020, but if we don't want that target to be missed, the time for action is now.

The Hungarian Presidency of the EU starts at a moment that offers a once in a lifetime opportunity to address the biodiversity crisis. EU policies with the greatest impact on the natural environment are set for reform simultaneously: agriculture and fisheries are the the most relevant. The reform of the EU budget also presents a fork in the road to shift away from perverse and wasteful subsidies towards targeted investments in a sustainable future. The new EU biodiversity strategy and the forthcoming Communication on the funding of the Natura 2000 network offer the possibility to bring all these processes together and provide answers that are up to the task.

A few decades ago, Hungary's most charismatic and iconic species were on the verge of extinction: Great Bustard *Otis tarda*, Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* and Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug* seemed doomed. A concerted conservation effort, and wise use of EU funds, reversed the trend and brought those species back. This example should be a source of inspiration as the EU sets about reforming its budget and sectoral policies so that they can offer a brighter future for Europe's ecosystems and its citizens. Presidencies often begin on a wave of hope and expectation, to then end with a sigh of regret for lost opportunity. This time, let us remember the words of the European Commissioner for the Environment Janez Potočnik: "biodiversity is the natural engine for our future, we must not mess it up and if we do, we will pay a very heavy cost..."



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BIRDLIFE'S KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL HUNGARIAN PRESIDENCY

- **The Presidency and the Council** should support an ambitious EU Biodiversity Strategy that incorporates new tools to radically improve implementation of EU nature legislation, and initiates the development of sectoral biodiversity strategies.
- **The Council**, in their reaction to the communication of the European Commission on the EU Budget review, must call for the delivery of environmental policy through all funding streams, the elimination of all perverse subsidies, and the provision of sufficient resources for environmental objectives.
- **The Council** conclusions on the European Commission communication on CAP reform must fully endorse a far-reaching reform based on rewarding farmers for the delivery of public goods and effectively addressing biodiversity loss and climate change.
- **The Presidency** should promote a strong initiative to address bird mortality caused by power lines, asking for immediate measures to coordinate the solution of the problem at a Community level, building on the outcomes of the expert workshop organised by the Presidency.
- **The Presidency, Member States and the European Parliament** should keep pressure on the European Commission to address the indirect land use change caused by biofuels and put in place mandatory biomass sustainability standards.



Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* © Simay Gabor »

“Financing will be critical to the success of biodiversity conservation efforts”

Meeting the 2020 biodiversity challenge

Hungary takes over the Presidency at a crucial time for biodiversity conservation. The October 2010 Nagoya meeting of the global Convention on Biodiversity has agreed a new global biodiversity target, and a new EU Biodiversity Strategy is being proposed by the European Commission.

If the EU's 2020 biodiversity target and the commitments agreed in Nagoya are to be met, those factors that contributed to the failure of the 2010 target must be tackled. Firstly, financing will be critical to the success of both global and EU biodiversity conservation efforts. During the Hungarian Presidency important decisions will be taken on whether the new “Financial Framework” for the EU (2014-2020) will deliver the resources needed to tackle the biodiversity crisis. Secondly, a proper and full implementation of existing EU nature laws are needed. The “4-I Initiative”, developed by BirdLife International and other NGOs, is based on the principles of Information, Induction, Inspection and Investigation and represents a concrete response to this challenge. Thirdly, during the Hungarian Presidency there will be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to combine the development of a new EU Biodiversity Strategy with reforms of the agricultural and fisheries policies (CAP and CFP). More: http://www.birdlife.org/eu/pdfs/2010_octBiodiversity_consultation_brief_final2.pdf

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- ✦ **The Presidency and the Council should support an ambitious EU Biodiversity Strategy that sets out in detail how the EU will achieve the 2020 biodiversity target, incorporating new tools to radically improve implementation of EU nature legislation and calling for the development of sectoral biodiversity strategies.**
- ✦ **The European Commission must develop and deliver workable solutions to financing biodiversity conservation both at the EU and global level. This is essential to tackle the ongoing loss of biodiversity as well as making sound economic sense.**
- ✦ **As part of the new biodiversity strategy, the European Commission should develop a system of “biodiversity footprint” assessment to ensure all relevant policy instruments such as Ecolabel, EMAS or Green public procurement take into account the potential impact on ecosystems.**



“The CAP should be refocused to deliver public goods”

Will the CAP serve both the environment and society?

Following the publication of the Communication on the future of the CAP in November 2010, the Hungarian Presidency will be in charge of starting discussions in the Council and putting in place the groundwork for the legislative proposal which is expected to come out mid 2011. The CAP is one of the most important policies at the European level which has an impact on biodiversity, water, soils and the environment at large. It urgently needs reform to tackle the decline in the quality of our agro-ecosystems, on which our long term food security depends.

For this reason BirdLife has long argued that the CAP should be refocused in order to prioritize the delivery of ‘public goods’. Clean water, clean air, thriving biodiversity, a stable climate and a resilient environment are not effectively delivered by the market and therefore require public policy intervention.

BirdLife is asking for a broad greening of the CAP through better funded agri-environment measures and more effective conditions on farm payments. Equally specific support for identified systems is needed, provided they consistently deliver environmental benefits, such as High

Nature Value (HNV) farming, organic farming, and farming in Natura 2000 sites that follows sound management plans and environmentally sustainable practices.

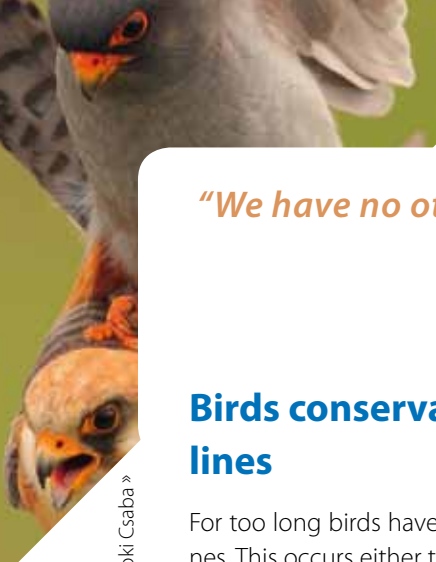
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Under the Hungarian Presidency:

- ✦ **The Council conclusions on the Commission communication on CAP reform must fully endorse a far reaching reform based on rewarding farmers for the delivery of public goods and effectively addressing biodiversity loss and climate change.**
- ✦ **The Presidency and the European Commission should provide platforms, involving a wide range of stakeholders, in order to give the best possible input to the future CAP proposal.**

Saker Falcon Falco cherrug © Bagyura Janos »





Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* © Loki Csaba »

“We have no other option but to change the CFP”

Birds conservation along power lines

For too long birds have been dying on electric power lines. This occurs either through electrocution when roosting on pylons or in collision with aerial cables. The negative impact of power lines on European bird populations represents one of the main mortality factors for several globally threatened species, such as Eastern Imperial Eagle and Spanish Imperial Eagle *Aquila adalberti*, Saker Falcon and Great Bustard.

Hungary has been leading the way in developing strategic and effective solutions to the problem of birds mortality on power lines, through successful cooperation between the government, NGOs and electricity companies. Capitalising on its own know-how and bringing in experience of other Member States, the Hungarian Presidency and MME/BirdLife Hungary are organising a high level workshop in the first half of 2011. The workshop should facilitate a more coordinated and strategic approach to solve the problem at EU level.

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CFP reform: Environment first

Following the publication of the Commission’s proposal for the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) reform, the Hungarian Presidency will have an important task to launch and steer the debate in the Fisheries Council.

The message from the European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Maria Damanaki is clear: we have no other option but to change the CFP, otherwise by the next reform in 2022 there will be hardly any fish left and coastal communities will be in deep decline. BirdLife echoes this message and calls for a radical reform resulting in a policy that aims to protect the whole marine environment and reward those fishermen who operate responsibly, respecting the environment.

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Under the Hungarian Presidency:

- **The Presidency should promote a stronger role for the European Commission in addressing bird mortality on power lines. This should include immediate coordination of measures at a Community level, building on the outcomes of the 2011 workshop.**
- **The European Commission should introduce EU wide safety standards for any new pylons to ensure that they are bird-friendly and should set up a reasonable timetable for minimising the problem on the existing network.**
- **The European Commission should ensure that any investment of EU funds into development of a new grid under the TEN-E is “biodiversity proofed” by requiring the implementation of safety standards, facilitating exchange of technical know-how and with a supporting legislative base.**

Under the Hungarian Presidency:

- **The Council and the European Parliament should ensure that environmental sustainability is the primary objective of the future CFP, underpinned with the precautionary principle and ecosystem approach.**
- **The Council and the European Parliament should ensure that the reformed CFP fulfils the obligations of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, in particular with regard to achieving Good Environmental Status by 2020, which includes effective mechanisms for tackling bycatch of seabirds and other non-target species.**
- **EU Institutions should ensure that the new European Fisheries Fund supports only sustainable fisheries, including freshwater fishpond systems, important for the conservation of birds, other species and habitats protected by EU legislation.**

“The EU Budget should address environmental challenges”

Framing our post-2013 finances: towards a green EU budget

The first trimester of 2011 will be an important time for the discussions on the EU's Multi-annual Financial Framework (2014-2020). The current framework is unclear in its delivery of policy priorities including tackling climate change, biodiversity loss and ecosystem services. Moreover, it disburses tremendous amounts of harmful subsidies and perverse investments to over-fishing, unsustainable agriculture practices and damaging transport infrastructure.

The post-2013 EU budget should aim to catalyse the transition towards a sustainable resource efficient society. Investments in Europe must guarantee the well-

being of citizens in a globally responsible way, within the ecological limits of the planet. An increase in supporting funds in Europe's natural capital (biodiversity and ecosystems) must be achieved. The EU budget should primarily address the great environmental challenges of our time such as climate change, biodiversity loss and resource overconsumption. All funding lines should be “climate”, “biodiversity”, and “resource” proofed to ensure that no EU funds have a detrimental effect on the environment. Significant investments should be sought out for energy efficiency, green technologies, sustainable land management and ecosystem resilience.

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European Bee-Eater, Merops apiaster © Dave Nye »

Under the Hungarian Presidency:

- ✦ **The Council and the Presidency, in their reaction to the communication of the European Commission on the Budget review, must call for a Budget reform that sees the delivery of environmental policy through all funding streams, eliminate all perverse subsidies, and provide sufficient resources to environmental objectives.**
- ✦ **The Presidency must lead the debate on the reforms of all funding streams (including the CAP, Cohesion Policy and CFP), supporting the principles of doing no harm to the climate and ecosystems, and contributing to biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration, resource efficiency, and climate mitigation and adaptation**
- ✦ **The Presidency must constructively engage with the Commission's communication on financing Natura 2000 and show leadership on ensuring that the next financial framework seriously tackles this issue with significant resources from all relevant funding streams.**





White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* ©Zoltán Orbán »

“ILUC and sustainability standards for biomass will be key in the discussions”

Bio-energy: not sustainable and damaging the climate

The EU has put in place targets for renewable energy that the EU countries are required to meet by 2020: 20% of all energy to come from renewables and 10% of energy in the transport sector. However, the supposed safeguards to ensure that these renewables are not harming climate, biodiversity, or people, are too often flawed or simply not in place. The main problem is that not all renewables are good for biodiversity or the climate. That is why organisations like BirdLife continue to fight for robust and properly implemented sustainability safeguards for biofuels and biomass.

On biofuels, the criteria put in place in the Renewable Energy Directive are unlikely to protect habitats and carbon stores because they contain too many elementary omissions and loopholes. They also ignore the important issue of Indirect Land Use Change (ILUC-land use change caused by displacement of food crops by fuel crops). This remains a fundamental omission in the accounting of greenhouse gas emission and other environmental impacts from these fuels. This means that Member States are supporting (through subsidies, mandates, tax breaks etc.) the production of biofuels which are damaging rather than helping climate change and biodiversity. In 2011, the International Year of Forests, people should also be worried about the growth in biomass use for which no mandatory sustainability standards are in place.

Both ILUC and sustainability standards for biomass will be key in the discussions led by the Hungarian Presidency.

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Under the Hungarian Presidency:

- ✦ **The European Commission must ensure that ILUC related emissions are properly accounted for in order to stop subsidies to harmful biofuels.**
- ✦ **The Presidency should lead the Council into accounting for ILUC in the life cycle analysis of biofuels.**
- ✦ **The Presidency, Member States and the European Parliament should maintain pressure on the European Commission to put in place mandatory biomass sustainability standards.**
- ✦ **The Presidency, Member States and the European Parliament should ensure that sustainability criteria are not watered down at the implementation stage.**





Conservation of steppe raptor species in Hungary

Hungary is a stronghold for the Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*, Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug* and Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*.

MME/BirdLife Hungary has been coordinating the international conservation work for these species for more than twenty years, running

several LIFE projects. Focused conservation efforts have worked: improvement of bird-friendly electric pylons, the installation of numerous artificial nests in key habitats and agri environment schemes have led to population recovery.



Saving Hungarian biodiversity

The Hungarian Meadow Viper *Vipera ursinii rakosiensis* is the most endangered Hungarian vertebrate, but thanks to MME's LIFE-Nature projects, the number of these snakes has been increasing.

Currently more than 700 vipers live in the Hungarian Meadow Viper Conservation Centre, founded six

years ago in one of the species' most important habitats. Halting the loss of biodiversity in the European Union by 2020 is one of the biggest challenges we have. Several conservation success stories show how the EU LIFE-Nature programme can effectively contribute to achieving this target.



Bird-friendly Hungary

Launched in 2002, the 'Bird-friendly Garden Programme' has become the most important and popular awareness raising conservation activity of MME/BirdLife Hungary. The programme provides professional advice and the tools with which to develop bird-friendly solutions to various working environments, from

gardens to schools, to houses and offices. Today more than 5000 enthusiastic members participate in this unique programme, working to make their own buildings more 'bird-friendly'.

HUNGARY



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 Hungarian EU presidency was produced by BirdLife Europe and MME/BirdLife Hungary, the Partner of BirdLife International in Hungary.

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



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