

# GREENING EUROPE

## PRIORITIES OF BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL FOR THE LUXEMBOURG PRESIDENCY - JANUARY TO JUNE 2005

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### Introduction from the President of Lëtzebuergesch Natur- a Villeschutzliga (the Luxembourg Partner of BirdLife International)

*Luxembourg is known as the green heart of Europe. With more than a third of its territory covered with forest, preserving nature and environment is vital for our quality of life, as it is all over Europe. Taking over the Presidency of the EU, the Luxembourg government will have the opportunity to 'green Europe'. In particular we would like to see the Luxembourg government take a constructive role in the following areas:*

### Financing Natura 2000

The Commission's proposal to finance the Natura 2000 network of EU-protected wildlife sites from Structural and Rural Development Funds outlines a sensible approach to large-scale nature protection, but these funds will not cover some of Europe's most vulnerable species and habitats. Furthermore, insufficient funds have been allocated to Rural Development post 2006 and no funds have been earmarked for Natura 2000 sites, creating undesirable competition between measures.

The Commission's proposal to axe LIFE-Nature, the EU's only funding programme dedicated to biodiversity conservation, from 2007, is very regrettable. The decision contradicts recommendations from experts appointed by the Commission and many Member States. The Luxembourg Presidency will play an important role in reinstating specific funding for biodiversity under the 'LIFE+' instrument for environment financing after 2006.

### Rural Development policy

The EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has encouraged intensive production and created massive changes in farming and land management. Alongside technological advances, this has seriously damaged the environment and threatens our quality of life. Also costly to operate, the CAP offers poor value for money to the European taxpayer.

The new Rural Development Regulation proposal is an opportunity to stop the loss of biodiversity in the old EU Member States and to safeguard the rich biodiversity of the new EU Member States. The Luxembourg Presidency has the opportunity to broker an agreement on this proposal that guarantees public benefits for public payments in the countryside.

### Biodiversity

The Lisbon agenda which aims to make the EU the most competitive, knowledge based economy of the world was supplemented in 2001 by the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, which includes the commitment to halt biodiversity decline by 2010. It is vital that decision-makers are able to assess progress towards meeting this commitment.

A biodiversity indicator based on wild birds is available immediately. The bird indicator will enable policy makers to assess changes in biodiversity and the environment and take appropriate corrective action. It will also serve to increase public awareness of the need to conserve wildlife.

### Hunting in Malta

Finally during the Luxembourg Presidency, we ask the European Commission to take firm action against Malta on the issue of spring hunting, and general hunting law implementation and enforcement. Thousands of people across Europe are concerned about the hunting situation in Malta and the European Commission, as Guardian of the Treaty, has a significant role to play in terms of ensuring the implementation of the Birds Directive in Malta.

Taking these actions and the others described in this document forward will contribute to greening Europe.



Dr. Tom Conzemius  
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## Financing the EU's protected areas: the Natura 2000 Network

The Luxembourg Presidency will chair the discussions on how to finance Natura 2000, the EU's protected area network. This will be a key test for the Presidency and the EU's ability to integrate a top environmental priority into the major EU funding instruments.

Joint action will help deliver the EU's target of halting biodiversity decline by 2010.

BirdLife International welcomes the Commission's initiative to integrate Natura 2000 financing provisions into the proposals for Regulations on Rural Development and Structural Funds. However, a model of 'enhanced integration' will be needed to provide the minimum necessary funds. Important weaknesses exist in the draft Regulations for Rural Development and cohesion policy, while the proposal to axe the EU's only biodiversity fund under the LIFE+ regulation is very regrettable.

The Luxembourg Presidency will have to work within all the relevant Council formations to ensure that provisions for financing Natura 2000 are maintained and enhanced in the Rural Development and Structural Fund regulations. As regards the LIFE+ proposal, the Luxembourg Presidency will have to work towards ensuring that dedicated funds for biodiversity are ringfenced under the regulation, in order to fill the gaps that the Rural Development and Structural Funds will leave, and finance the protection of threatened species, habitats and management actions.

We look to the Luxembourg Presidency to stimulate communication and agreement between different Council formations on the need to provide sufficient financing for Natura 2000.



by Pavel Prochazka

### The Luxembourg Presidency should:

- Ensure that the adopted regulations on Rural Development, Structural and Fisheries funds earmark financing for Natura 2000
- Work to secure a dedicated biodiversity fund (ringfencing) under the LIFE+ regulation in order to provide EU funding for important sites, habitats, species and management actions in Natura 2000
- Ensure that the release of structural funds is made conditional upon approval of adequate national Natura 2000 financing plans, as outlined in the Financial Perspectives



by Juan Varela

## Rural Development policy

BirdLife International is urging EU governments to support rural Europe, so that communities can live and work sustainably, conserving traditional European landscapes, producing healthy and safe food, and maintaining an abundant and diverse range of habitats and wildlife in return for public support.



by Jos Zwarts

EU citizens are increasingly scrutinising how tax-payers' money is spent in rural areas. In the last few decades the rural environment has suffered from depopulation and lack of employment opportunities while taxpayers and consumers have been left to deal with the large number of environmental problems caused by the intensive agriculture promoted in the past by the CAP: the degradation of habitats, soil, water and traditional landscapes and the dramatic and persistent decline in biodiversity.

If correctly funded and structured to support a balanced number of development measures, the Rural Development Regulation could be the main mechanism to revitalise rural communities and economies.

The Luxembourg Presidency will play a leading role in driving forward discussions on the new Rural Development Regulation. This should involve influencing the final legal text to improve its environmental content.

### The Luxembourg Presidency should:

- Ensure the rejection of any imposed minimum spending for Axis I and III that would inevitably restrict spending on the land management Axis II, to the detriment of agri environment programmes and support decisions that improve the financial and environmental relevance of agri-environmental schemes within the rural development in Europe
- Press other Member States to use NATURA 2000 payments to help farmers comply with the Birds and Habitats Directives, therefore contributing to the protection of the best natural farmed sites in the EU
- Support the re-designation of Less Favoured Areas to benefit areas of high natural value that without continued farming are in danger of losing already threatened wildlife
- Ensure schemes under the Rural Development Regulation enable effective Natura 2000 management, with a compulsory payment offered to Natura 2000 site managers

## Regional Policy post 2006

The Commission proposals for the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund Regulations were published in July 2004. These Regulations, once adopted, will come into force in January 2007. The Commission's proposals take into account the Gothenburg agenda for EU sustainable development and offer opportunities for co-financing the Natura 2000 network.

BirdLife International's direct experience of Natura 2000 has taught us that Member States' uptake of measures for Natura 2000 is not sufficient to ensure the ambitious

support envisaged by the Commission. The new Regulations must ensure that Member States finance Natura 2000. The Regulations must also contain safeguards to prevent damage to Natura 2000 sites and the species that they support and habitats of endemic and globally threatened species in the outermost regions of the EU.

BirdLife is addressing the wider sustainable development issues as part of a coalition of European environmental NGOs. For further details please visit [www.coalition-on-eufunds.org](http://www.coalition-on-eufunds.org)



by Ren Hathaway

### The Luxembourg Presidency should:

- Ensure that the requirement in the new regulations that the ERDF, the ESF and the Cohesion Fund support the proper management of Natura 2000 network is maintained
- Ensure that the Commission does not approve Member States' National Strategic Reference Frameworks or Operational Programmes or release funds until it is confident that adequate provision for Natura 2000 financing has been put in place
- Support the suspension of payments to projects which damage fauna and flora protected under EC nature legislation

## The EU Financial Perspectives 2007-2013

In February, the Commission published a Communication on the future Financial Perspectives for the European Union. The Communication entitled "*Building our Common Future: Policy Challenges and budgetary means of the Enlarged Union 2007-2013*", outlines the Commission's views for the budgetary needs of the Union for the period 2007-2013. This was followed by a further Communication in July and two packages of legislative proposals, including the Rural Development, Structural Funds and 'LIFE+' proposals for 2007-2013.



by Tomasz Cofa

### The Luxembourg Presidency should:

- Increase EU funds for biodiversity conservation via the LIFE+ programme and ensure that existing funds, particularly Structural and Rural Development funds, contribute substantially to financing Natura 2000 and to the EU's commitment to halt the decline in biodiversity by 2010

Once finalised, these legislative proposals will form the Union's budgetary super-structure for 2007 – 2013, and set the agenda for EU spending over this period. A large part of this expenditure is already 'committed' under the CAP budget. However, funding for the environment, the Natura 2000 network of protected areas and rural development still needs to be agreed.

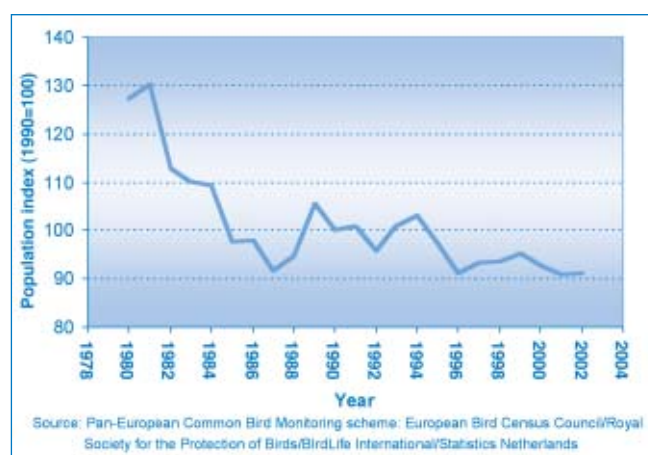
The Luxembourg Presidency will take forward work in Council on the financial perspectives.

## Common Birds as a Biodiversity Headline Indicator for the Spring Summit

The EU Sustainable Development Strategy, agreed at the Gothenburg European Summit in 2001, sets the target of halting biodiversity decline by 2010. Four years on, there is still no way of charting progress towards meeting this crucial target. In order to do this, support should be given for a Headline Structural Indicator for biodiversity on the shortlist of indicators in the European Commission's next Synthesis report, which will be presented at the Spring Summit under the Luxembourg Presidency.

BirdLife International and the European Bird Census Council (EBCC) have developed an indicator based on common birds that is statistically robust, representative of diverse environments, and ready to use immediately. This is the Pan European Indicator of Common Birds. The Commission used this indicator in its 2003 Environment Policy Review and in various other documents. It has now been endorsed by the Commission for the 'long list' of Structural Indicators that measure the progress of the Lisbon strategy.

Birds are not only excellent indicators of biodiversity, but they also give a good indication of the general state of the environment because they occur in the majority of habitats and in substantial numbers. Birds are the only species group for which data is available in order to assess progress towards meeting the 2010 target of halting biodiversity decline.



### The Luxembourg Presidency should ensure that:

- The 2005 Synthesis report, to be presented at the Spring Summit, includes a Biodiversity Headline Indicator on the shortlist of indicators
- The BirdLife International/EBCC 'Common Bird Index' is included as the Biodiversity Headline Indicator for the Synthesis report for spring 2005 (see graph)
- The review of the Sustainable Development Strategy is completed by the Commission and Council, including a full assessment of progress towards meeting the target of halting biodiversity decline by 2010



by Petr Rob

## EC Biodiversity Strategy Review

The European Community Biodiversity Strategy was adopted in 1998 as the Community's framework for the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The review of the Strategy and its thematic Action Plans (on natural resources, agriculture, fisheries and overseas development) started in 2003 with the objective of developing a Delivery Plan to reach the EU target of halting biodiversity decline by 2010.

The review has taken place with the involvement of various stakeholders, culminating in the conference

*"Biodiversity and the EU - sustaining life, sustaining livelihoods"* during the Irish Presidency. The *"Malahide Message"*, which was the outcome of this conference, was endorsed by the Environment Council in June 2004.

BirdLife International believes that, to date, the process has been lacking in vision, urgency, political support and stakeholder involvement. With less than five years left to reach the target of halting biodiversity decline, the prompt adoption and implementation of the Delivery Plan is essential.

### The Luxembourg Presidency should ensure that:

- The EC Biodiversity Strategy Delivery Plan is finalised by the Commission in a form that is clear, concise, precise and ambitious, building on the objectives and targets agreed by stakeholders in the *"Malahide Message"*
- The implementation of the Delivery Plan is made a high political priority for all Member States and EU institutions with support from all the relevant stakeholders



by Maris Strazds



by Jens Overgaard Christensen

## European Marine Strategy

The Commission is due to present a proposal for a 'European Marine Strategy' (the 'Marine Thematic Strategy' under the Sixth Environmental Action Programme) before May 2005, to protect and conserve the marine environment.

In October 2002, the Commission published the communication "*Towards a strategy to protect and conserve the marine environment*" (COM (2002) 539) which established the foundation upon which a thematic strategy should build and has as the overall objective:

*"The Marine Strategy should constitute a contribution to the Community Strategy for Sustainable Development. Therefore, and as indicated in the 6<sup>th</sup> EAP, it should promote the sustainable*

*use of the seas and conservation of marine ecosystems, including sea beds, estuarine and coastal areas, paying special attention to sites holding a high biodiversity value."*

In 2003, the Council of Ministers requested that the marine strategy should be based on an integrated approach with a set of ambitious, clear and coherent objectives, quantitative and qualitative targets and timetables to be used as benchmarks to measure and evaluate progress. Moreover, it requested the development of a guideline for the implementation of an ecosystem approach and underlined that the policy should fully recognise the regional differences with the EU's seas, while taking account of all human activities that are having or could have an impact on the marine environment.

### The Luxembourg Presidency should:

- Ensure that the Commission presents its proposals for a European Marine Thematic Strategy before May 2005. This strategy should outline a proper planning system and ensure that management of human activities is based on the sea's ability to function (i.e. an 'ecosystem approach')
- Ensure that the European Marine Strategy is based on a legally binding framework requiring specific actions at the regional level to deliver objectives that protect and conserve the marine environment
- Encourage the full and swift implementation of the Natura 2000 network in the marine environment

## Hunting in Malta

The Maltese hunting law as it currently stands allows hunting and trapping of Turtle Dove and Quail during spring, specifically between 25 March and 22 May. This is clearly in breach of the provisions of the Birds Directive and should be modified. According to earlier declarations of the Maltese authorities, Malta intends to use the derogation article of the Directive to allow this spring hunting.

At a time when overall the hunting seasons are quite well regulated across the Union, the Maltese situation causes

great concern and is potentially an example that others could seek to follow. For this reason, strong and decisive action is needed by the European Commission as Guardian of the Treaty, and the first opportunity for this action will come during the Luxembourg Presidency.

Apart from stopping the spring hunting, the European Commission should also ensure that Malta is meeting all its obligations under the Accession agreement, including the timetable agreed for the transition period for trapping of finches.

### During the Luxembourg Presidency, the European Commission should:

- Take all possible measures to prohibit Malta from opening a hunting season for Turtle Dove and Quail in spring
- Give a strong message to Malta so that this practice is terminated once and for all
- Ensure that Malta meets all its obligations under the Birds Directive and the Accession agreement, including the timetable agreed for the trapping of finches, regulation of the hunting seasons and law enforcement.

## BirdLife International Partnership

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 to the Luxembourg Presidency was produced by the European Community Office of BirdLife International and Lëtzebuenger Natur- a Vulleschutzliga, the Luxembourg Partner of BirdLife International. For further information please contact either:

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