

The Birds and Habitats Directives

Title



The **Birds Directive** provides a legal framework, binding for all Member States, for the protection of all wild birds in the EU, including their eggs, nests and habitats.

- **Designation of protected areas:** the most important areas for the birds on Annex I of the Birds Directive and for regularly occurring migratory birds should be designated as Special Protection Areas (SPAs). These form part of the Natura 2000 network, regulated by the Habitats Directive.
- **Habitats for wild birds:** EU Member States need to ensure that a sufficient area and diversity of habitats is available for all wild bird species, including those that live on farmland and in urban environments.
- **Species protection:** all naturally occurring wild bird species, their eggs, nests and habitats are strictly protected under the Birds Directive from killing, capturing and taking.

- **Hunting:** the Birds Directive regulates the hunting of birds in the EU, restricting the hunting seasons and methods, as well as the species that can be hunted (listed in Annex II).

The **Habitats Directive** protects habitats and other species of animals and plants.

- **Designation of protected areas:** the most important areas for the habitat types (e.g. specific types of wetlands, meadows, marine habitats) on Annex I and the species on Annex II of the Habitats Directive should be designated as Special Areas of Conservation.
- **Natura 2000 network:** the Special Protection Areas under the Birds Directive and the protected areas under the Habitats Directives together form the Natura 2000 network, which should be an ecologically coherent network.
- **Site protection:** the Habitats Directive protects the Special Protection Areas under the Birds Directive and the Special Areas of Conservation under the Habitats Directive from degradation and damaging activities through a hierarchical system of impact assessment, checking for alternatives and where necessary compensatory measures.
- **Species protection:** all animal and plant species on Annex IV, such as the wolf, are protected from killing, capturing and taking.

EU Nature and Biodiversity section

- [Fitness Check of the Birds and Habitats Directives](#)
- [Designation of Natura 2000 sites](#)
- [Protection of Natura 2000 sites](#)
- [Management of Natura 2000 sites](#)
- [EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020](#)
- [Back to EU Nature & Biodiversity](#)

The Birds and Habitats Directives

The Birds and Habitats Directives: The Habitats Directive (together with the [Birds Directive](#)) forms the **cornerstone of Europe's nature conservation policy**. It is built around two pillars: the [Natura 2000 Network](#) of protected sites and the strict system of species protection. All in all the Directive protects over 1.000 animals and plant species and over 200 so called "habitat types" (e.g. special types of forests, meadows, wetlands, etc.), which are of European importance.



Natura 2000 Network

Natura 2000 is the centerpiece of EU nature policy. It is an EU wide network of Natura 2000 sites, established under the Birds and Habitats Directives. The aim of the network is to ensure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. Over 25 000 sites have already been designated, covering more than one million km².



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