



Title In early February, 100 ornithologists and stakeholders from 40 countries defied the harsh winter weather and met in the southern Czech town of Mikulov, to launch the exciting three-year project 'Birds in Europe 3'. The overall goal is to collate the best available data on the distribution, trends and abundance of all European bird species, and produce the third assessment of their population status. The results of the two previous editions of 'Birds in Europe' published by BirdLife in 1994 and 2004, both had massive impacts on conservation, research and policy. The first revealed widespread declines in farmland birds across Europe, and helped ensure that agri-environment measures became mandatory under the EU Common Agricultural Policy. The second highlighted the plight of many long-distance migrants, but also showed that the EU Birds Directive has had a significant, positive impact on the rare and threatened species that it aims to conserve, mainly via the Natura 2000 protected area network. The European Commission is funding the new project, as part of its wider commitment to support European Red List assessments for various groups of animals and plants. Since 2005, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has produced European Red Lists for all terrestrial vertebrates, except birds. This gap will now be filled. By collating the latest data on the size and trend of bird populations and ranges in each country, it will be possible to reassess their status and produce Red Lists at both European and EU scales, to help set conservation priorities for the coming years. The new project will be implemented by a strong and experienced consortium, led by BirdLife International. It includes the European Bird Census Council, Wetlands International, SOVON (Dutch Centre for Field Ornithology), British Trust for Ornithology, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds/BirdLife in the UK, Czech Society for Ornithology/ BirdLife in the Czech Republic, IUCN and BirdLife Europe. These organisations have a long history of successful cooperation on relevant initiatives, such as the global Red List, Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme, International Waterbird Census, Waterbird Population Estimates, Important Bird Areas, European Breeding Bird Atlas, and of course the two earlier editions of 'Birds in Europe'. Crucially, the project will draw heavily on the overall expertise and data holdings of national bird monitoring schemes and organisations across Europe, including BirdLife Partners and many others. The data required from each country are similar to those that EU Member States have agreed to report to the European Commission every six years, under the Birds Directive. Real efforts have been made to harmonise these two processes, so that the consortium can provide technical support to Member States and help ensure that one common, agreed data set emerges in 2014, serving various purposes. The consortium will also support the European Commission in combining and analysing the data at EU level, to help measure progress towards the targets agreed in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2020. The agenda, list of participants and all of the presentations delivered in Mikulov are available [here](#). Information about the format and guidance for reporting under the Birds Directive is available [here](#). Factsheets for all the species already covered by the European Red List are available to search [here](#). For more information, please contact the project coordinator, [Ian Burfield](#).