The EU continues to fail in financing successful and effective LIFE programmes

Title

On Monday 12 December, the European Commission proposed the renewal after 2013 of the LIFE programme, a key tool for financing biodiversity and the Natura 2000 network. The LIFE programme has been an effective and successful fund for the last 20 years, especially in achieving nature and biodiversity conservation goals. Despite having proved its efficacy in achieving nature and biodiversity conservation goals through phenomenal successes within the last 20 years, such as bringing back from the brink of extinction species including the Spanish Imperial Eagle and the Azores Bullfinch, the fund is allocated a negligible share of the overall EU Budget (less than 0.1% for LIFE nature and biodiversity from the overall budget).

BirdLife Europe believes that the level of funding proposed by the Commission is completely insufficient to achieve the Europe 2020 target of reversing biodiversity loss. **The EU Budget needs to provide at least €10 billion for the next 7 years for the LIFE programme to cover all environmental needs (including biodiversity and the Natura 2000 network) and climate action.**

To put that into perspective, that is as little as 1% of the EU Budget or each EU citizen spending 5 cents per week. *"LIFE is one of Europe's big success stories delivering huge public benefits to nature and our wellbeing for a tiny bit of investment"* said Ariel Brunner, Head of EU Policy at BirdLife Europe " *We would have expected the EU to significantly increase its investment in the environment while saving money on some of the many wasteful streams still present in the EU Budget.* The Commission calculated that only the Natura 2000 network (the cornerstone of biodiversity conservation in the EU) will need about €6 billion per year. LIFE is needed to finance conservation measures that are very specific and cannot be financed from other funds. This includes management activities that are not agriculture, fisheries, or regional development relevant and where other funds have not set up proper schemes to allow for financing of these activities. "*Biodiversity loss is one of the biggest societal challenges we are facing and it is ludicrous to expect that it could be effectively tackled with what is little more than a rounding mistake in the EU Budget."* continued Ariel Brunner. BirdLife Europe now calls on Member States and the European Parliament to seriously support nature and biodiversity and the health of our ecosystems, including the Natura 2000 network.