

Loss of farmland birds provokes action from BirdLife Partners

Title

We are currently in the midst of an EU wide crisis that is causing birds to disappear across European farmlands. Biodiversity rich grasslands are being converted on a massive scale to maize fields for the production of biofuels and fodder. Heavy subsidies for biogas production add pressure on top of the ever growing intensification of livestock production. If we continue with business-as-usual regarding grassland protection, whole groups of bird species and unique ecosystems will head towards extinction.

Slovenia and Germany are being hit particularly hard with biodiversity rich grasslands vanishing fast from their country landscapes. In Germany, evidence collected by BirdLife Partner [NABU](#) shows the widespread loss of grasslands and grassland birds such as Lapwing and Common Snipe, even in protected areas such as Natura 2000 sites. In Slovenia, birds such as Corncrake and Whinchat are in steep decline, again due to the wanton destruction and deterioration of grasslands and loss of centuries old ecosystems.

In April, NABU and [DOPPS \(BirdLife in Slovenia\)](#) took the issue to the European Commission and submitted three formal complaints asking for legal action against their respective governments.

Under EU law and more precisely the Birds Directive, Member States have the obligation to maintain bird populations at an adequate level in their territory and preserve their habitats and the Commission has the mission to ensure that necessary measures are taken at national level to comply with this obligation.

Slovenia and Germany both have a range of options to get back in compliance with EU law. These could include a ban on the ploughing up of environmentally sensitive grasslands accompanied with agri-environmental measures to compensate the farmers for delayed mowing dates. Several EU funds, such as the LIFE Fund and the Rural Development Fund are there to help Member States and farmers implement these measures.

Sadly, many other farmland birds are facing similar threats in other EU Member States. In Bulgaria the Common Agricultural Policy has had disastrous impacts, causing the BirdLife Partner **BSPB** to submit a complaint to the Commission last year. Several other BirdLife Partners may also need to file similar complaints in the coming months.
