

National renewable energy Action Plan in Bulgaria ensures biodiversity conservation

Title

Bulgaria has started implementing the regulations of the National Renewable Energy Action Plan 2011 – 2020. The ecological assessment statement on the National Plan places clear restrictions on the implementation of renewable energy projects in Natura 2000 sites and in areas important for the conservation of endangered species. The construction of windfarms and solar parks in all Natura 2000 sites is prohibited. The Plan also prohibits the construction of wind turbines in the whole geographical areas of Dobrudzha and Eastern Rhodopes (key regions for migratory, breeding and wintering birds), as well as within a six kilometre radius of 26 Natura 2000 sites important to birds of prey and within a radius of two kilometres of 25 sites important for the conservation of waterbirds.

The construction of hydropower plants in Natura 2000 sites important for the conservation of endangered fish species is also prohibited. This applies to all new projects. The ecological assessment statement on the National Renewable Energy Action Plan is already being successfully applied. A recent example is the decision of the Director of the Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water in Bourgas, who on the 18 October terminated the environmental impact assessment (EIA) procedure for the construction of a wind farm with 10 turbines within a prohibited area along the migratory flyway near the Black Sea. There have been serious problems in the development of the renewable energy sector in Bulgaria. BSPB/BirdLife Bulgaria has alerted the European Commission to damage to Natura 2000 sites by the construction of wind farms. As a result, the European Commission has launched infringement proceedings for damage caused to the Kaliakra Natura 2000 site and for lack of comprehensive preventive protection of sites in the Natura 2000 network more generally. With the implementation of the National Renewable Energy Action Plan, the Bulgarian government is making a serious step towards planning the development of the sector in a manner not threatening to biodiversity.
