

Solar, wind and ocean energy ?greenest? for Europe - but governments must do more for wildlife and climate

Title

Better policies and planning will protect birds, reduce conflicts and cut carbon faster

Energy from the sun, wind and oceans can be harnessed without harm to Europe's birds and other wildlife, but European and national governments must step up to the challenge, according to a report released on Tuesday 22 November, in Brussels. Leading conservation body BirdLife Europe has added its voice to call for a renewables revolution to combat climate change. Most renewable energy technologies do not harm birds, provided the most sensitive locations are avoided. The report finds that over four fifths of investment to 2020 will go into technologies with low or manageable conservation risks, such as solar and wind power. While biofuels used in cars, and new dams for hydro or tidal power are highly risky for Europe's wildlife, their contribution can be scaled back and carbon emissions can be cut more quickly if governments do more to make the renewable revolution truly 'green'. While the risks to birds are usually avoidable or manageable, they can be serious. Without safeguards, the scale and pace of investment needed could make renewable expansion a significant additional threat to Europe's already-declining biodiversity. This is why it is so important for governments to know what the risks are, understand that these are not inevitable in most cases, and put policies in place to make sure harm to wildlife is avoided. There is much the EU can do to steer Europe to a low-carbon, high-renewables future in harmony with nature. It must ensure national governments save energy, in the same way that they are required to increase use of renewables. And more needs to be done to give investors confidence in the sector's future, in particular by setting ambitious binding targets to 2030. More needs to be done to ensure Europe's legislation protecting wildlife sites is implemented properly in every EU country. Last but not least, European funds for technology research and development need a massive increase and better targeting at technologies that are not just 'low-carbon' but also safe for nature. While there is much the EU can do, it cannot pull the two most vital policy levers. It is left to national governments to determine their 'energy mixes' and to ensure competing demands for land-use are managed effectively. The report examines how well European countries are doing to ensure enough investment goes into the right technologies and in the right places. While some, such as Scotland and Germany, have strong policies to stimulate investment and for strategic planning, other governments are failing to prevent uncontrolled

and damaging development. Avoiding risks to Europe's cherished wildlife, and to the public acceptability of the massive investments in renewable needed, will depend on getting these policies right. Ariel Brunner, Head of EU Policy in BirdLife Europe says: "Climate change is a grave threat to both wildlife and people. Biofuels have proven a disaster, but wind, wave and ocean power are essential and effective ways to cut carbon emissions, and do not need to put birds, bats or other wildlife in danger. Our report is essential reading for policy-makers across Europe as renewable energy moves to centre stage in the fight against dangerous climate change." Please click [here](#) to read "[Meeting Europe's Renewable Energy Targets in Harmony with Nature -Main report-](#)" and [here](#) to see the summary report
