

BirdLife Europe and European Environmental Bureau (EEB) Press statement

## Member States Rural Development Programmes

12 December 2014, Brussels

After months of intense negotiations between Member States and the Commission, the first 9 Rural Development Programmes (RDP) for 2014-2020 [1] were adopted this week. BirdLife Europe and the European Environmental Bureau - who have been actively involved in the process, also through their national members – welcome the limited improvements to the approved plans, but stress that the overall direction is still worrying. They highlight that much more work needs to be done both by the Commission and Member States to make the remaining Programmes beneficial to the environment.

After the negotiation process between the Commission and the Member States, there are now some differences in how the RDPs respond to environmental need. Austria will devote more RDP budget to support biodiversity friendly management than was previously the case (despite now having a smaller total budget). On the other hand, countries like Poland, Finland and Portugal have included some well- designed biodiversity schemes in their proposals, but their budgets are far from enough to make a difference for the habitats and species in such dire need of support. Similarly, the adopted German RDPs represent an outdated business as usual approach with by far too little money invested in target-oriented agri-environment measures. Finally, Denmark's plan is now a little friendlier to farmland birds than the original proposal that was submitted to the Commission, but there all eyes are on the planned revision of the whole RDP in 2016.

**Trees Robijns, BirdLife Europe Senior EU Agricultural and Bioenergy Policy Officer** commented *“While the Commission has clearly requested that Member States take the environment into account, not all of their RDPs reflect that equally. Too many Member States have done far from enough to shift money towards the protection of ecosystems, investments which are necessary to ensure the long term future of our farming. This flies in the face of the overall objective of the reform which was to focus on the sustainable management of natural resources.”*

**Faustine Defossez, EEB Senior Policy Officer: Agriculture and Bioenergy**, added *“It is too early to judge how these plans will affect our countryside. But all the indications show that the new generation of Rural Development Programmes will fall short of what is needed to reverse the deepening environmental crisis. After greenwashing of the first pillar, Rural Development looks set to suffer the same fate. With all this, more and more imminent questions arise about what benefits society gets for all the money invested in CAP.”*

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[1] Denmark, Poland, Austria, Finland, Portugal, German Regions of Sachsen and Sachsen Anhalt, German Rural Network, German National Framework Programme