



Vote for your environment

An environmental call to action for the
2014-2019 European Parliament



A clear and popular role for Europe

The numerous challenges Europe faces appear divergent, but many economic and social problems are closely linked to the environment. Often at their root is the unsustainable way in which we use our finite natural resources – within Europe and the wider world.

A Parliament ensuring environmental leadership

Europe has been a global leader in environmental ambition. Members of the European Parliament –MEPs– have been foremost in turning that ambition into policy. But the EU risks losing this leadership role, through sacrificing long-term environmental sustainability for unsustainable short-term economic gain. The planetary crisis we are experiencing today requires consistent action in all fields of European policy. Evidence shows that Europe's citizens support a strong role for the European Union on the environment, and that they seek leadership and change.

We are using double the planet's available resources. Across the globe millions of livelihoods are threatened by the collapse of ecosystems, the unsustainable use of natural resources, climate change and the loss in diversity of life, or 'biodiversity'. This ecological crisis is increasingly fuelling conflicts over land, water and other resources. The EU is likely to miss its 2020 target to stop this loss and start the restoration of biodiversity if action is not taken now.

MEPs are uniquely placed to lay out a European vision for a green, low carbon economy that safeguards and restores its natural heritage. This will provide society with the services we depend upon and the protection we need in times of climate change.

The current economic storm presents an opportunity to re-orientate Europe towards greater sustainability and resource efficiency. The advantages lie with those who move first.

This manifesto presents BirdLife International's vision for reform.



Protect and restore our ecosystems

The natural environment is the lifeline for human society. The services provided by our ecosystems – such as food, clean water and fertile soils – underpin all economic activity. 'Biodiversity', the web of life on our planet, is essential for these services to function. And beyond biodiversity's benefits to human society, all wild species have their own right to exist alongside us.

The EU has made a commitment to halt the loss of biodiversity and start restoring ecosystem services by 2020. Through world-class legislation, the EU has established Natura 2000, the world's biggest network of protected areas. However, implementation of the legislation underpinning Natura 2000 remains poor. Some sites exist only on paper, while many are already damaged or highly threatened. At the same time, land use and unsustainable energy policies, as well as inadequate spatial planning, are accelerating the damage, while funding for biodiversity remains sorely lacking.

MEPs should

- Ensure that the mid-term review of the EU's 2020 Biodiversity Strategy leads to a step change for its implementation, to put the EU on track to meet its 2020 biodiversity target.
- Oversee correct implementation and enforcement of the EU's Birds and Habitats Directives in all Member States, and ensure the adoption of a rescue package for threatened Natura 2000 sites.
- Champion, through flexibility mechanisms in the EU budget, a significant increase of funding for the highly successful and efficient LIFE Programme, in order to improve financing of Natura 2000.
- Ensure that the adoption and implementation of new EU environmental initiatives will strengthen and complement Natura 2000, while strengthening the resilience of ecosystems in the wider landscape.
- Oversee the implementation of new EU legislation to tackle the impacts of invasive alien species on biodiversity and people across the EU.



Productive and healthy seas

The seas around Europe are among our finest natural assets, home to some of the world's greatest populations of seabirds. Recent reform of the Common Fisheries Policy brings some hope that, after decades of EU fisheries mismanagement, EU fish stocks will recover and fishing could become safer for birds and other biodiversity. However, this will only happen if the EU and Member States chose the path of ambitious and robust implementation supported by the right investments. The new European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) is therefore crucial to support an ecosystem approach to our seas' resources. Seabird bycatch, pollution, uncoordinated offshore development and climate change are also contributing to the degradation of our marine environment. At the same time, too few Natura 2000 sites that would protect and restore marine wildlife have been identified, and even fewer designated and properly managed.

MEPs should

- Demand urgent completion of the Natura 2000 network of protected areas in the marine environment in order to protect key areas for marine wildlife.
- Demand urgent implementation of the EU Seabird Action Plan across all member states.
- Ensure that the EU financial mechanisms are accessible and ready to support environmental management measures.
- Ensure that Multiannual plans for fisheries under the reformed CFP adopt an ecosystem-based approach and aim to reach MSY by 2015 (or at the latest by 2020).
- Ensure the new Data Collection Multi-Annual Programme is amended to require monitoring of the wider marine environment in compliance with the EU's Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), the Birds and Habitats Directives and the EU Seabird Plan of Action in order to have scientific evidence to support decision making and implementation of the legislation.
- Ensure that the revision of the Technical Conservation Measures framework is fully integrated with the objectives of the MSFD, the Birds and Habitats Directives and the EU Seabird Plan of Action in order to ensure that fisheries are carried out in an environmentally sustainable way.



Healthy food and healthy rural environment

Over the 2014 – 2019 period MEPs will have a crucial role to play in overseeing implementation of the CAP, and ensuring that agriculture delivers public goods in return for public money. “Smart regulation” through the Nitrates Directive, Water Framework Directive, EIA Directive, Birds Directive, Habitats Directive and CAP payments for High Nature Value Farming (HNV) will be vital to ensuring that agriculture does not compromise the achievement of other EU policy objectives in the fields of environmental quality and nature protection. Throughout this period the CAP needs to show it actually delivers public goods for the billions of taxpayer’s Euros that are committed to this policy. If the result is negative, this will heavily influence the tone of the discussion on the next CAP reform post 2020.

MEPs should

- Oversee implementation of the new CAP and ensure that agriculture delivers public goods for public money.
- Support “smarter regulation” to ensure protection of the environment and ecosystem services.
- Ensure the EU’s local and global footprint stays within sustainable and healthy limits.
- Make the price of farm products and farm inputs reflect both environmental harm and environmental benefits.
- Make sure that the agriculture sector is part of the new green economy which helps to mitigate and adapt to climate change and contribute to all the environmental goals in society.



Preventing dangerous climate change

The world is currently on course for a dangerous 3.5 or 4 degree increase in temperature above pre-industrial levels this century. Although the EU has been a leader on climate change in international talks and at home, recently our climate ambition has faltered. Our emission reduction targets for 2020 are too low to help solve the climate problem, the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), needs radical restructuring, and EU policies on bioenergy are driving habitat destruction. The new Parliament should help to ensure that the EU again leads on tackling climate change by deciding on strong climate change targets. The Parliament should also make sure that Europe is transitioning to a clean, sustainable renewables-based energy system that works in harmony with nature.

MEPs should

- Press for an ambitious global climate change agreement at the 2015 Paris Climate Summit, and support a target to reduce Europe's greenhouse emissions by at least 55% by 2030 from 1990 levels, and an increase in the 2020 target to 40%.
- Champion a strong and comprehensive carbon financing regime in the UN Climate Convention to stop the destruction of tropical forests.
- Adopt an ambitious renewable energy target of at least 45% in terms of final energy demand and an energy efficiency target of at least 40% of primary energy use in 2030.
- Ensure EU policies affecting energy supply deliver genuine emissions reductions, taking into account aspects such as indirect land use change and carbon debt, support a transition to a clean, sustainable energy system, and do not drive further biodiversity loss.
- Ensure that bad biofuels can no longer be subsidized by taxpayers' money or get counted in the renewables target.
- Develop a coherent climate change adaptation strategy, for biodiversity and ecosystems as well as for people, using ecosystem based approaches wherever possible and with widespread uptake in other sectors of adaptation measures that benefit, or do not adversely affect, the natural environment.



BirdLife Europe

BirdLife Europe is a Partnership of 49 national conservation organisations and a leader in bird conservation. Our unique local to global approach enables us to deliver high impact and long term conservation for the benefit of nature and people.

BirdLife Europe is one of the six regional Secretariats that compose BirdLife International. Based in Brussels, it supports the European and Central Asian Partnership and is present in 48 countries including all EU Member States.

With more than 4.100 staff in Europe, 2 million members and tens of thousands of skilled volunteers, BirdLife Europe, together with its national Partners owns or manages more than 6,000 nature sites totaling 320 000 hectares.

Avenue de la Toison d'Or 67 (2nd floor) · B-1060 Brussels, BELGIUM

Tel. +32 (0)2 280 08 30 · Fax +32 (0)2 230 38 02

E-mail: europe@birdlife.org · www.birdlife.org/europe-and-central-asia

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