

*Brussels – 27 October 2015*

## **Major EU countries block Juncker's attempt to change nature laws**

**European nature laws have been given a massive boost as a number of major EU countries, led by Germany, call for them to be protected.**

The Birds and Habitats Directives, also known as the Nature Directives, are currently under review as part of a 'Fitness Check' being carried out by the European Commission. The review is happening within the worrying context of President Juncker's declared intentions to "merge and overhaul" the Directives to make them more "business friendly".

But now a letter led by the German environment minister<sup>[1]</sup> has been signed and formally handed over to EU Environment Commissioner, Karmenu Vella, calling for these important nature laws not to be re-opened and asking the Commission to focus on their implementation.

This key alliance, made public today, includes eight other European Governments (France, Spain, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, Romania, Croatia and Luxembourg) whose countries together represent 63% of the EU's total population.

Ariel Brunner, Senior Head of Policy for BirdLife Europe, stated: "This is a loud and clear message that adds up to what is by now a deafening cry: hands off the Birds and Habitats Directives! EU laws to protect nature must be better implemented, not tampered with. What else do Vice President Timmermans and Commissioner Vella need?"

As a result of the Nature Alert campaign being led by BirdLife Europe, WWF, Friends of the Earth and the European Environmental Bureau, more than half a million people, the overwhelming majority of responses, called on the Commission to maintain and fully implement the Directives<sup>[2]</sup>.

The overwhelming weight of scientific evidence has also demonstrated the effectiveness of these laws and their importance in protecting nature and biodiversity in Europe<sup>[3]</sup>.

**ENDS**

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**Notes:**

[1] - The letter from the environment ministers of Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, Romania, Croatia and Luxembourg is available on our website:

[http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/fitness\\_check-letter\\_nine\\_ministers\\_to\\_vella\\_26.10.2015.pdf](http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/fitness_check-letter_nine_ministers_to_vella_26.10.2015.pdf)

[2] – Details of the Nature Alert campaign are available here:

<http://www.birdlife.org/naturealert>

[3] - More information on BirdLife's submission to the European Commission on the Fitness Check of the Nature Directives is available here:

<http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Evidence%20Fitness%20Check%20Stichting%20BirdLife%20Europe.pdf>

BirdLife Europe is a Partnership of nature conservation organisations in 47 countries, including all EU Member States, and a leader in bird conservation. Through its unique local to global approach BirdLife Europe delivers high impact and long term conservation for the benefit of nature and people.