

Brussels – 13 April 2016

EU nature laws need implementation, not overhaul: NGO report

'From Nature Alert to Action' by BirdLife Europe and its partners show EU nature legislation will have greatest impact if implemented, enforced and resourced without delay.

BirdLife Europe partners in the 28 Member States have published [From Nature Alert to Action](#), a report anticipating the European Commission “fitness check” of the EU’s Nature Directives, which is expected in the coming weeks. The BirdLife report says the Directives – the EU nature conservation legislation – have been successful, but in order to realise their full potential they need to be implemented, enforced and funded in full.

In October 2013, the European Commission announced it would be carrying out a “fitness check” of the Nature Directives as part of its Regulatory Fitness and Performance (REFIT) Programme. In 2015, in response to concern that this may result in a weakening of the legislation, stakeholders from across the EU submitted evidence that the laws were fit for purpose. Additionally, over 520,000 EU citizens responded to the Commission’s related public consultation.

This was echoed by EU environment ministers meeting in Council in December 2015, and by a European Parliament vote in February this year. Both bodies identified full implementation of the Nature Directives as key to achieving the targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020.

The BirdLife report *From Nature Alert to Action*, published today in the Netherlands, where BirdLife Partners have gathered to participate in the public symposium ‘Biodiversity in the Netherlands, one step beyond’, presents the evidence submitted by stakeholders and governments consulted during the “fitness check”.

Ariel Brunner, BirdLife Europe Senior Head of Policy, said: *“Today’s report makes clear that the Nature Directives are “fit for purpose” but that problems with implementation, investment, and policy integration are hindering realising their objectives and full benefits. Where the legislation is implemented properly, nature flourishes.”*

The report finds that in addition to inadequate implementation of the Directives, intensive agriculture has led to a decline in biodiversity, including the loss of species that depend on farmland. The EU has committed to arresting this decline by 2020. Without full implementation of the Nature Directives, a further loss of biodiversity cannot be prevented.

Furthermore Ariel Brunner stated: *“The intensification of farming is the main contributor to loss of biodiversity. More than two thirds of Europe’s land is used for agriculture. Forty percent*

of the EU budget goes into agriculture, but only a fraction contributes to a better environment or the preservation of biodiversity.”

The Commission is scheduled to publish its final conclusions on the “fitness check” in a 'Staff Working Document' expected in the coming weeks. This will be followed by a communication to Council and the Parliament later in the year. **ENDS**

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Notes:

- To access the report “From Nature Alert to Action”, click here:
http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/from_nature_alert_to_action.pdf
- More information on the Mid-term review report is available here:
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&mode=XML&reference=A8-2016-0003&language=EN>
- For more information on the “fitness check” click here:
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/fitness_check/index_en.htm
- For more information on the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy click here:
<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/info/pubs/docs/brochures/2020%20Biod%20brochure%20final%20lowres.pdf>
- 520,000 citizens and 120 environmental NGOs participated in the public consultation on the “fitness check”:
http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/bl_eeb_foe_wwf_media_release_nature_alert_consultation_final_240715.pdf
- The Nature Directives comprise the Birds and Habitats Directives. They establish a common legal framework for the protection of rare or threatened species and habitats within the EU via the designation of a network of protected sites and the establishment of a system of species protection measures.
- The European Union Biodiversity Strategy runs until 2020, by which time the EU has to halt biodiversity loss and achieve six targets. These targets cover EU legislation on nature, agriculture, fisheries, and invasive alien species, and also initiatives for restoring and connecting nature areas and action for biodiversity outside the EU.
- 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.