

Greening Europe

BirdLife Europe's priorities for the **Cypriot** EU Presidency

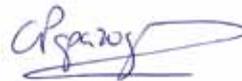
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To be credible in Hyderabad, the EU must act at home

The Cypriot Presidency of the EU is taking over as the economic crisis remains unresolved. Meanwhile, biodiversity is collapsing and carbon emissions hit new records. Cyprus, a country already facing chronic water shortage, should be particularly well placed to grasp the existential threat posed to our societies. In the second half of 2012, the EU will be taking crucial decisions on its budget and main policies, from agriculture to fisheries, which will impact Europe's environment until the end of this decade. A credibility check at the global stage will be the eleventh Conference of the Parties to the Biodiversity Convention in Hyderabad, India. For the first time, stock will be taken on the ambitious 2020 biodiversity targets the EU brokered at the previous meeting, two years ago in Nagoya, Japan. These targets include sustainable reform of land-use policies, reform of harmful subsidies and mobilisation of resources for global biodiversity conservation. As things stand now, the lack of ambition in Brussels will lead to a big embarrassment for Europe in Hyderabad. How should we ever tell poor nations to protect the environment if the EU fails to do its homework? If the EU and its Member States short-sightedly try to hide behind the budget crisis to default on their promises, we might see the global efforts falter and the road started in Nagoya might end in a precipice, piling up much higher public debts and economic losses than we can imagine now.



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BIRDLIFE EUROPE'S KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL CYPRIOT PRESIDENCY:

- ➔ Ensure that the overall LIFE budget is increased to at least 1% of the total Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), of which at least €1 billion per year must be earmarked for nature and biodiversity projects with the aim of covering 20% of Natura 2000 costs;
- ➔ Strengthen the CAP proposal by putting in place a credible package of measures that are paying farmers for the delivery of public goods within "Pillar I", and ensure a well-targeted and well-resourced "Pillar II";
- ➔ Ensure that references to mandatory plans for managing and funding Natura 2000 network are included in every relevant EU Regulation;
- ➔ Ensure that the Common Fisheries Policy regulation includes a strong objective of fish stock recovery beyond levels which can produce the Maximum Sustainable Yield by 2015, and that those who fish in most sustainable way get prioritised access to fisheries resources;
- ➔ Ensure that the sustainability criteria for biofuels include emissions from ILUC, through specific factors for each biofuel feedstock, to differentiate those which displace crops from those that don't, and thus, have lower overall emissions;
- ➔ Ensure strong sustainability criteria for biomass are proposed by the Commission, addressing the myth of carbon neutrality, so that any biomass used for energy is proven to save GHG emissions compared to fossil fuels over a time period relevant to tackling climate change.



Common Blue - Polyommatus icarus © S. Christodoulides »

“LIFE is essential for the EU to achieve its 2020 biodiversity objectives, both at European and global level”

Strengthen the LIFE-line for Europe’s Biodiversity

The Cypriot EU Presidency will take up the baton of the LIFE Regulation dossier from Denmark at an early stage in the co-decision process. LIFE, the EU’s only purely environmental funding programme, is essential for the EU to achieve its 2020 biodiversity objectives, both at European and global level.

The LIFE funding programme has proven to be a highly effective delivery mechanism for biodiversity conservation and environmental protection in the EU, despite its tiny share of the EU budget (0.2%). Since its inception, the programme has co-financed some 3500 projects, contributing approximately €2.5 billion Euro to the protection of the environment.

Under the Cypriot Presidency, negotiations will continue in the Environment Council and the European Parliament on the detailed content of the LIFE Regulation, and under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) on the overall LIFE budget. Issues which have proven controversial in the Council, where discussions on the Regulation are currently more advanced than in the Parliament, relate to the European Commission’s low ambitions for strengthening the programme and a number of “simplification” proposals that would seriously hamper uptake and reduce accessibility to LIFE, in particular for civil society organisations. In addition to a growing number of concerned Member States, these issues are likely to generate further debate in the Parliament, which has previously been a vocal champion for a strong LIFE programme.

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Under the Cypriot Presidency, the Council and the European Parliament must:

- ✎ Ensure that the overall LIFE budget is increased to at least 1% of the total MFF, of which at least €1 billion per year must be earmarked for nature and biodiversity projects with the aim of covering 20% of Natura 2000 costs;
- ✎ Ensure that funding for traditional “bottom-up” LIFE projects is not reduced as the Commission proposes, but raised, and that ring-fencing for biodiversity projects is increased;
- ✎ Increase the co-financing rate from currently 50-75% to at least 75% of all types of LIFE projects, with higher rates in economically less developed regions;
- ✎ Explicitly encourage synergies between climate change mitigation and adaptation, and other environmental objectives funded under LIFE;
- ✎ Ensure LIFE will continue to support essential costs such as VAT and Permanent Staff, in line with other EU funds;
- ✎ Extend eligibility for LIFE funding to the EU’s Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs), which are home to globally unique biodiversity, but which currently cannot access either EU or global funds for biodiversity conservation.



Foinikas village © J. Osborne

“Do not allow a ‘fake greening’ of the CAP to justify the huge public subsidies that agriculture receives in the EU”

Only a “truly green CAP” deserves a substantial budget

The Cypriot Presidency will have a key role to play in the finalisation of the CAP package: balancing out both the budget and the content discussion. Therefore it is important that it focuses on the core of this reform: preserving Europe’s long term sustainable food security and healthy ecosystems. The Presidency must be careful not to allow a ‘fake greening’ of the CAP to justify the huge public subsidies that agriculture receives in the EU. BirdLife Europe hopes that the Cypriot Presidency will strongly defend the environment within both the policy and overall budget negotiations. The key elements of this reform should therefore be: ensuring a strong environmental baseline, enforcing a minimum spending for the environment that can meet the current challenges of biodiversity, water, soil and climate, and setting in place stringent safeguards that avoid harmful spending of taxpayers’ money.

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Under the Cypriot Presidency, the Council and the European Parliament must:

- Strengthen the Commission’s proposals, thereby ensuring that the new CAP increases the environmental baseline, by putting in place a credible package of measures that are paying farmers for the delivery of public goods;
- Ensure a well-targeted and well-resourced “Pillar II”, including specific support for High Nature Value Farming and Natura 2000, with a defined minimum spending for agri-environmental schemes;
- Ensure that the negotiations on the budget and the negotiations on the CAP go hand in hand with a clear focus on better spending for the environment, ensuring that it truly delivers for society;
- Make sure that those who just pursue a “greenwashing” of the CAP to preserve current subsidies do not get the upper hand, but that a true “greening” is achieved, as only this can legitimate a large CAP budget.

Adapting to climate change requires changes in EU policies

Even under the most rosy greenhouse gas emission scenarios, science shows we are already committed to significant climate changes that will put nature, ecosystems and societies under huge pressure in the coming years. Adaptation is imperative, and working with, not against ecosystems, is the only way for us to weather the coming storm. Cyprus is a good example of the challenge at hand. A country already running a chronic water deficit will be faced with a dryer and hotter climate and more unpredictable precipitations. Reducing and rationalising water use is the obvious answer, but requires significant changes to policies, notably in agriculture and land planning. Other threats, such as the spread of invasive species, with huge economic implications, are less obvious, but will become much worse as the climate changes and ecosystems are disrupted.

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Under the Cypriot Presidency, the Council and the European Parliament must:

- Ensure that the principles of ecosystem based adaptation are fully integrated into the new Agriculture (CAP) and Cohesion Policies, both in terms of positive investments (e.g. in wetlands restoration and water saving practices) and in terms of safeguards (e.g. avoiding public subsidies to water hungry developments such as golf courses, or to expansion of irrigation in agriculture);
- Ensure that the EU Water Framework Directive is fully and swiftly implemented and included in cross compliance under the new CAP;
- Support new comprehensive legislation on invasive alien species in order to equip Europe with a biosecurity system able to handle this growing pressure arising from globalisation and climate change.

Masked Shrike - *Lanius nubicus* © D. Nye »





Black-winged Pratincole - *Gareola nordmanni* © D. Nye »

“In times of austerity, the EU has to ensure that every Euro spent will lead to economic prosperity and sustainable public budgets in the future”

Greening the EU Budget

The Cypriot Presidency will be crucial for ensuring that the Multi-annual Financial Framework of the EU for 2014-2020 demonstrates added value for tax-payers, that it supports long-term well-being and prosperity, and backs EU priorities and needs.

Past decisions on the EU Budget have illustrated a fundamental lack of strategy and, as a result, have undermined the credibility of EU action in general.

In times of austerity, the EU has to ensure that every Euro spent will lead to economic prosperity and sustainable public budgets in the future. It is beyond any doubt that this can only be achieved if public money is targeted at public goods. If smartly used, the next EU Budget can also create more jobs in a period of rising unemployment, while at the same time reducing Europe’s ecological footprint. Environmental sustainability and economic prosperity are not in conflict.

The Cypriot Presidency will be fundamental to ensure that biodiversity, climate action, and resource efficiency priorities are financially supported and not jeopardised by the EU, and that financial instruments are coherent in their delivery.

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Cistus salvifolius © A. Loustos

Under the Cypriot Presidency, the Council and the European Parliament must:

- ✦ Ensure that the instrument for the environment (the LIFE programme) receives 1% of the total EU Budget, covering at least 20% of the costs of the Natura 2000 network (see section on LIFE);
- ✦ Ensure that a mandatory reference to Prioritized Action Framework for Natura 2000 is included in every relevant funding regulation (Cohesion Policy, Common Agricultural Policy, and European Maritime Fisheries Fund), as well as in the Common Strategic Framework, to allow a truly integrated and adequate funding of Natura 2000 in the Member States;
- ✦ Ensure under the Cohesion Policy that there is targeted spending for, and thematic concentration on low carbon, biodiversity and resource efficiency objectives, including the Natura 2000 network, the creation of “Green Infrastructure” and large-scale ecosystem restoration;
- ✦ Ensure that the EU budget is “climate and biodiversity proof”, with a set of mechanisms in place to phase out and eliminate environmentally harmful subsidies, such as support for un-tolled road transport within the Cohesion Policy;
- ✦ Ensure that climate and environmental indicators are used to improve the result-oriented approach of the EU budget.

“Managing fish stocks sustainably is an imperative not only from an environmental, but also from an economic and social point of view”

Changes in wasteful EU fisheries Policy badly needed

There is increasing evidence to show that managing fish stocks sustainably is an imperative not only from an environmental, but also from an economic and social point of view. A recent study by the new economics foundation (nef) found out that restoring 43 stocks (out of more than 150) to their Maximum Sustainable Yield could generate €3.2 billion and support more than 100,000 new jobs. In a time of economic crisis, the EU cannot afford ‘throwing this money overboard’ and must put its Fisheries Policy straight. Building on the negotiation during the preceding Presidencies, Cyprus must ensure an ambitious outcome of the first stage of the CFP reform legislative process, and pave the way towards a badly needed reform.

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Under the Cypriot Presidency, the Council and the European Parliament must:

- Ensure that the CFP regulation includes a strong objective of stock recovery beyond levels which can produce the Maximum Sustainable Yield by 2015;
- Include legally-binding and time-limited targets for reducing the EU fishing fleet;
- Ensure that those who fish in a more sustainable way get prioritised access to the fisheries resources;
- Ensure that ecosystem based Multiannual Plans are obligatory for all fisheries and are in place by 2015;
- In the new CFP Regulation, include provisions empowering Member States to regulate fishing in their Natura 2000 sites;
- Ensure that the new European Maritime and Fisheries Fund supports only sustainable fisheries and contributes to the ecologically sustainable management of marine and inland water Natura 2000 sites (including fishponds).

Maritime Spatial Planning must contribute to better protection of our seas

The EU’s Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) features high on the list of priorities for the Cyprus Presidency. The policy is anticipated to get a new boost during a Ministerial event in the presence of President Barroso, and an expected so-called ‘Limassol declaration’. At the same time, following the Commission’s proposal, the Cypriot Presidency will be asked to lead the Council discussions on a future Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) and Integrated Coastal Zone Management Policy, an initiative under the IMP umbrella. In the light of an ever increasing array of maritime activities and their cumulative impact on the marine environment, BirdLife Europe welcomes the Commission’s initiative to enhance Maritime Spatial Planning, which is an important tool for improving the sustainable management of human activities, protecting the marine environment and reducing conflicts between users of the sea.

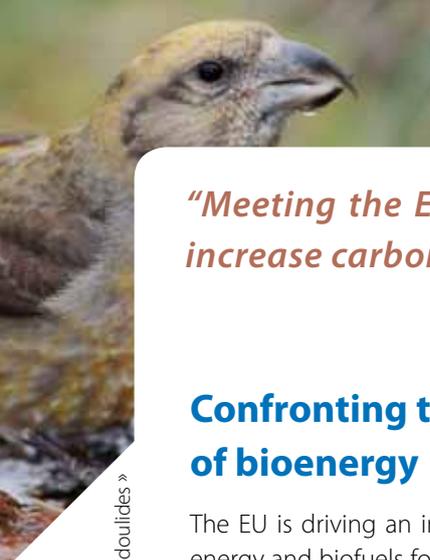
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Under the Cypriot Presidency, the Council and the European Parliament must:

- Ensure that the objective of any future MSP Policy is to contribute to the achievement and maintenance of Good Environmental Status under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive;
- Ensure that the MSP Policy includes an obligation on Member states to finalise their Natura 2000 network without any delay, chosen on the basis of scientific criteria, and supported by effective planning not dictated by the locational preferences of human activities;
- Call for strengthened efforts in data collection in the marine environment, under the new MSP Policy and through the wider IMP agenda.

Greater Sand Plover - Charadrius leschenaultii © S. Christodoulides »





Red Crossbill - *Loxia curvirostra* © S. Christodoulides »

“Meeting the EU renewable energy targets through the use of biomass will increase carbon emissions and exacerbate climate change”

Confronting the true carbon costs of bioenergy

The EU is driving an increase in the use of biomass for energy and biofuels for transport, through targets in the Renewable Energy Directive (RED). While BirdLife Europe supports the RED target for 20% of energy consumption to be renewable by 2020, we are concerned that current projections of meeting over half of this through the use of biomass, will increase carbon emissions and exacerbate climate change. Similarly meeting the 10% renewable transport target through biofuels instead of electric vehicles will create more emissions than it saves.

Burning biomass for energy releases as much greenhouse gases as fossil fuels, and there is no guarantee that this carbon will be reabsorbed by living plants, or that it will happen within a timeframe necessary to maintain global warming below 2 degrees Celsius. It can take decades or centuries before forests can recapture the CO2 released immediately when biomass is burned, while the science points to a need for global emissions to peak and decline by 2016.

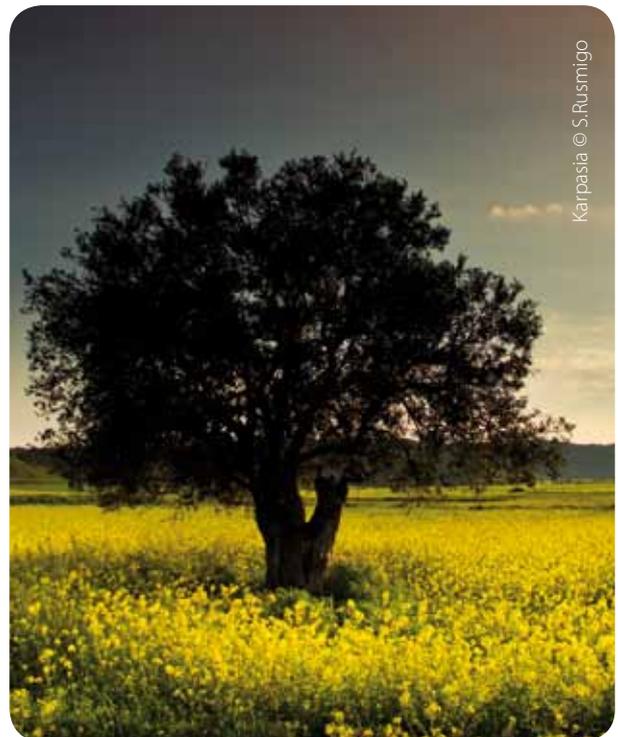
The Scientific Committee of the European Environment Agency says that there is a "serious accounting error" in European Bioenergy Policy, and that assuming biomass used for power generation is carbon neutral with 'zero emissions' is incorrect and will have "immense" negative consequences for the environment.

Biofuels are incentivised by the RED target for 10% of transport to be renewable by 2020, but their true carbon impacts are not recognised. A host of scientific reports agree that the indirect land use change (ILUC), that occurs when biofuel production displaces existing agricultural crops into natural habitats, creates significant emissions which must be accounted for.

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Under the Cypriot Presidency, the Council and the European Parliament must:

- Call for and support strong sustainability criteria to ensure that biomass is not automatically counted as carbon neutral, and that any biomass used for energy is proven to save GHG emissions, compared to fossil fuels, over a short time period;
- Ensure that the sustainability criteria for biofuels include emissions from ILUC, through specific factors for each biofuel feedstock, to differentiate those which displace crops from those that don't, and thus, have lower overall emissions.



Karpasia © S.Rusmigo



Restoring Oroklini Lake, bringing back the biodiversity richness of the site

Between 2012 and 2014, BirdLife Cyprus will be working on the restoration and management of an important Natura 2000 site, Oroklini Lake. This LIFE+ project, co-financed by the EU, involves five partners (BirdLife Cyprus, Game Fund, Environment

Department, Department of Forests and Vorklini Community Council) and aims to bring Oroklini to Favourable Conservation Status. Concrete conservation and awareness raising actions will aim at turning Oroklini into a wetland haven for birds and a unique nature site for people to enjoy.

With the contribution of the LIFE financial instrument of the European Union



Educating people about nature and conservation

BirdLife Cyprus is committed to raising public awareness on the value of birds, biodiversity and the importance of conservation. Every year, BirdLife Cyprus gives talks and presentations to schools, groups and clubs, organises outings in parks and regular birdwatching

excursions and provides teachers and parents with awareness raising material. Last year, BirdLife Cyprus produced and distributed for free to all schools in the country a documentary showcasing Cypriot wildlife and protected sites, and promoting the conservation ethic.



Fighting against illegal bird trapping

BirdLife Cyprus has been working hard for many years to stop illegal trapping of birds in Cyprus. The non-selective nature and large scale of trapping with the use of mist nets and limesticks poses a serious ecological threat. Millions of birds are killed every year for sale in restaurants

or for domestic consumption. Since 2002, BirdLife Cyprus has been collecting data on trapping levels, and has strongly lobbied against trapping, such as during discussions regarding the relaxation of the national hunting law at the Cyprus Parliament, and raised public awareness. In a recent electronic petition, BirdLife Cyprus collected 16,677 signatures, calling for an end to this illegal activity.

CYPRUS IN THE SPOTLIGHT



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BirdLife International Partnership in the EU

The BirdLife International Partnership strives to conserve birds, their habitats, and global biodiversity working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources.

This memorandum on the Cyprus EU Presidency was produced by BirdLife Europe and BirdLife Cyprus, the Partner of BirdLife International in Cyprus.

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For more information on the BirdLife Partnership visit <http://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/national/index.html>



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Credits pictures Greening Europe Cypriot Presidency

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