

# Greening Europe

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

VOLUME 4 · ISSUE 1 · JANUARY-JUNE 2012

## Learning from the crisis

The Danish Presidency is taking over at a moment of deep economic, financial and political crisis in the EU. **The crisis should have taught us that sustainability really matters.** Politicians may sometimes win reelection by inflating consumption and construction, but such debt fuelled "economic miracles" are short-lived. And when reality catches up, the results can be frightening. This is true, at a much larger scale, with our ecological debt. Our lifestyles and economic choices are creating the biggest bubble of all time – that of humanity living beyond our planetary means. We must shift gear. We must begin making radically different choices. Our first concrete opportunity is to finalize a deal on the EU budget from 2014-2020, and to close the reforms of all the main EU sectoral policies, from agriculture to fisheries and from biodiversity conservation to regional cohesion. Sadly, the EU Commission proposals released last autumn are underwhelming. Good intentions have been watered down, in some cases to the point of irrelevance, by the fear of upsetting powerful vested interests.

**The first reactions from the Member States and the European Parliament have often been directly dictated by the same lobbies that oppose change. 2012 will be a crucial year.** As with the financial crisis, bold decisions are necessary to exit our current ecological crisis. Transformative decisions may be painful, particularly to sectors and individuals that have been benefiting from the current system. But unwillingness to confront our challenge will lead to an even deeper crisis, and to much bigger pain. Ultimately, the collapse of an ecosystem is like the collapse of an economy – nobody remains safe, no politician and no industry are unaffected. Therefore, leadership is needed. Denmark has recently announced some inspiring and ground breaking domestic targets and policies, aspiring for independence from fossil fuels, and a strengthened climate target. Now the question arises: can and will Denmark inspire its fellow EU governments to see the bigger picture and to take action?



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## BIRDLIFE EUROPE'S KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL DANISH PRESIDENCY

- Ensure that the total amount allocated to **LIFE will be significantly increased** under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), **to at least 1% of the total EU Budget.**
- Ensure that references to **mandatory national plans for managing and funding the Natura 2000 network** are included in every relevant EU Regulation.
- **Ensure that the Environment Council is fully engaged in the debate on CAP** and that **all voices in society are being reflected** in the negotiations.
- Ensure strong Council conclusions endorsing the Commission's EU **Action plan for reducing incidental catch of seabirds** in fishing gear.
- **Introduce a mechanism to account for ILUC emissions** in the biofuel sustainability criteria and bring forward **sustainability safeguards for biomass.**



Grey Partridge - Perdix perdix © Soren Garder Blask »

**“1% would mean a very small rebalancing of the budget, but a big step for Europe’s biodiversity”**

## Strengthen Europe’s LIFE Support System

**As the only EU fund earmarked specifically for the environment, the LIFE funding programme has proven to be a vital and extremely cost-efficient source of support for biodiversity conservation,** enabling action and experience exchange of local actors across Europe. In the light of pressing funding needs for Natura 2000 and ecosystem protection, a budget increase for LIFE should be adopted as part of the negotiations for the EU's next Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020. So far the European Commission has suggested allocating only 0.3% of its budget to LIFE. **Increasing this share to 1% would mean a very small rebalancing of the budget, but a big step for Europe's biodiversity.** With annually one billion EUR of LIFE biodiversity support, Member States could go a long way in meeting their obligation to implement Natura 2000. In parallel, following the Commission’s proposal from December 2011, the Danish Presidency will have to steer the reform of the new LIFE Regulation through co-decision with European Parliament and Environment Council, ensuring that the programme can deliver even better than in the past.

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## Ensure adequate financing for Natura 2000

In the discussions on the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020 **the EU must demonstrate to taxpayers that its next budget delivers added value and supports long-term well-being, prosperity, and EU needs and priorities. One such priority is the protection of biodiversity,** with Natura 2000 being the key EU nature protection tool. **The ecological, social and cultural value of Natura 2000 sites is huge and exceeds its costs significantly.** For example, it was calculated that the societal benefits of the Natura 2000 network in the Netherlands amount to approximately 4.5 billion EUR/year, over ten times more than its estimated costs (315 million EUR/year). The Danish Presidency will have to ensure that biodiversity and the Natura 2000 network are adequately reflected within the debate on the next EU budget, ensuring that the EU makes the necessary investment in its world class network of protected areas – and thus in its future. Out of the total estimate costs of Natura 2000 (5.8 billion EUR annually), 75% should be funded from the EU budget.

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### Under the Danish Presidency the EU Institutions must:

- Ensure that the total amount allocated to LIFE will be increased under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), to at least 1% of the total EU Budget.
- Increase ring-fencing for LIFE nature and biodiversity projects from 50% to 75%, and ensure that sufficient funds are available for bottom-up projects managed by local actors.
- Ensure that LIFE funding for climate change mitigation and adaptation projects will avoid any adverse impacts on ecosystems.
- Propose that LIFE funding is also made available in EU Overseas Countries and Territories, whose association with the EU excludes them from receiving financial support from international sources.

### Under the Danish Presidency the EU Institutions must:

- Ensure that references to mandatory national plans for managing and funding the Natura 2000 network are included in every relevant EU Regulation.
- Ensure that the LIFE programme mobilises at least 1 billion EUR/year for the Natura 2000 network.
- Introduce adequate ring-fencing of funds for Natura 2000 and “green infrastructure” under the Cohesion Policy.
- Improve the CAP proposals by ensuring that sufficient co-funding is made available for Natura 2000 payments and agri-environmental measures.
- Ensure that biodiversity is safeguarded against harmful investments from the EU budget and that environmental indicators are used.

**“At times of budgetary crisis, it’s even more important that scarce public resources make genuine investments in our long term food and environmental security”**

## Invest in our long term food and environmental security through the CAP

On 12 October 2011, the European Commission presented a package of legislative proposals on the reform of the Common Agricultural policy (CAP). BirdLife Europe is deeply disappointed with the proposals, as they fail to address the challenges facing Europe’s natural resources of water, soil, biodiversity and the climate. Specifically, **BirdLife Europe is concerned by the proposals of reverse modulation** (moving money from targeted Pillar II spending to untargeted Pillar I income support), coupled support (return to production subsidies for some types of productions like cereals and oilseeds) **and higher support rates for non-environmental measures** in the rural development pillar.

The proposal includes some welcome improvements such as the requirement for farmers receiving income support to manage 7% of their land for biodiversity and ecosystem services (**environmental focus areas**), **stricter grassland protection** and the **commitment to introducing the Water Framework Directive and Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive into cross compliance**. These measures, if properly implemented, have a potential of increasing the environmental baseline of the CAP.

The Danish Presidency will be confronted with many asks for a watering down of the current baseline and the proposals. However, BirdLife Europe hopes Denmark will steer the debate toward a real greening of the CAP – with real benefits for citizens, farmers and the environment. **At times of budgetary crisis, it’s even more important that scarce public resources make genuine investments in our long term food and environmental security.**

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### Under the Danish Presidency the EU Institutions 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.
  - includes a well-targeted and well-resourced Pillar II, including specific support for High Nature Value Farming and Natura 2000, and with a minimum spending for agri-environmental schemes.
- Ensure that the Environment Council is fully engaged in the debate on CAP and that all voices in society are being reflected in the negotiations.

European Kingfisher - Alcedo atthis © Henrik F. Nielsen »



Northern Lapwing - Vanellus vanellus © Henrik Bringsøe



Blue Tit - *Parus caeruleus* ©Ulrik Bruun »

**“If the current policy continues, 91% of fish stocks are predicted to be endangered with collapse by 2020”**

## Be ambitious about the new Common Fisheries Policy

Following the publication of the Commission proposal in July 2011 and initial discussions under the Polish Presidency, **Denmark will chair the negotiations on the new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).**

**If the current policy continues, 91% of fish stocks are predicted to be endangered with collapse by 2020.** As a result, the EU does not have a choice but to be serious about saving and restoring its marine life; this is also the only way to secure the survival and long-term profitability of the fisheries sector. **The new CFP must also regulate fishing so that environmental impacts on marine ecosystems are limited,** in order to comply with environmental legislation. By the same token the new European Fisheries and Maritime Fund should only support activities which provide a shift to sustainability and protection of marine ecosystems.

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### Under the Danish Presidency the EU Institutions must:

- ▶ Support an ambitious CFP reform including:
  - A strong objective of stock recovery beyond levels which can produce the Maximum Sustainable Yield.
  - Legally binding and time-limited targets for reducing the EU fishing fleet.
  - Ambitious provisions for making an ecosystem-based approach operational through Multiannual Plans obligatory for all fisheries and with an ambitious deadline for their finalization.
  - Safeguards for marine Natura 2000 sites.
  - Provisions ensuring that official scientific advice is strictly followed when catch quotas are set.
- ▶ Ensure that the new European Fisheries Fund supports only sustainable fisheries and contributes to the ecologically sustainable management of marine and inland water Natura 2000 sites.

## No more delays with EU Action plan on seabird bycatch

Following the long-awaited publication of the EU Action Plan for reduction of incidental catches of seabird in fishing gear by the European Commission at the beginning of 2012, the Danish Presidency must ensure that Member States send a strong collective signal that the EU is serious about **tackling the needless slaughter of at least 200,000 seabirds in EU fisheries each year.**

**This is not only a necessary step for putting EU fisheries on a path to sustainability,** but also an obligation under the Birds Directive which protects all birds on EU's territory.

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### Under the Danish Presidency the EU Institutions must:

- ▶ Ensure endorsement of the Action plan, stressing the ultimate objective of minimizing and where possible eliminating seabird bycatch.
- ▶ Ensure significant improvements in the collection of seabird bycatch data.
- ▶ Support emergency action for the most threatened species.
- ▶ Commit to translating actions of the Action plan into relevant fisheries legislation, namely basic CFP Regulation, Technical measures framework and Data collection framework.



Common Cranes - Grus grus © Christian A. Jensen »

*“The European Union will generate more than 10% of its total energy from biomass by 2020, yet there are currently no EU-wide sustainability standards”*

## Address indirect impact of biofuels

The EU is stimulating the production and use of renewable energy in order to drive down its emissions and tackle climate change. Unfortunately, the opposite outcome is being achieved by the EU’s pursuit of biofuels. Most current biofuels have been widely shown to be harmful for the climate, biodiversity and vulnerable human communities. Although the EU has adopted some sustainability criteria on biofuels, these only capture direct impacts.

However, the indirect land use change (ILUC) that occurs when biofuel production displaces existing agricultural crops into natural habitats or community land, is not taken into consideration, nor its climatic and environmental impact, even though in most cases it can undermine any emission reductions from biofuels or lead to increased overall emissions.

The European Commission should fix this policy, giving a strong signal to citizens and industry that **only bioenergy that fulfills strong sustainability criteria and results in genuine greenhouse gas savings will have a place in the European market.**

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## Adopt sustainability criteria for biomass

The European Union will generate more than 10% of its total energy from biomass by 2020, yet there are currently no EU-wide sustainability standards. Unlike sun and wind, woody biomass is not a carbon neutral source of energy, and standards are vital to protect the overall carbon sink in forests, and to safeguard biodiversity and ecosystem services.

The impact of **such a large scale use of woody biomass could cause dramatic degradation of forests** both in Europe and around the world, as a significant amount of the biomass will be imported from outside the EU. **It could also lead to an increase in greenhouse gas emissions** if carbon in the wood is not properly accounted for.

Only a handful of Member States have adopted sustainability criteria for biomass as recommended in the 2010 ‘biomass report’. **The Commission was due to assess if this is adequate by the end of 2011 and propose legally binding EU wide criteria.**

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### Under the Danish Presidency the EU Institutions must:

- Without any delay, propose a mechanism including both direct and indirect impacts of transport renewables. For different types of biofuels there should be specific ILUC factors to allow fair accounting of GHG emissions.
- Ensure that the dossier is moved quickly through the negotiation process and end the current investment uncertainty.

### Under the Danish Presidency the EU Institutions must:

- Without any delay introduce robust EU wide sustainability criteria for biomass that address the issue of carbon debt and ensure that any biomass used presents a genuine reduction in carbon emissions.
- Ensure that any use of biomass in the EU does not result in releasing more carbon into the atmosphere and reducing biodiversity in the name of renewable energy.





Hawfinch - Coccothraustes coccothraustes © Albert Steen-Hansen »

*“BirdLife Europe has been taking the lead in showing how Europe’s energy and conservation commitments do not need to be in conflict”*

## Prioritise energy efficiency and allow only sustainable infrastructure

**Meeting Europe’s climate and energy ‘20-20-20’ targets by 2020 is essential. But how we achieve these targets, matters too. We must also prepare to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 80-95% by 2050.**

Once made, investments in buildings and energy infrastructures lock in future emissions for decades to come. Therefore, **we need to make existing buildings as efficient as possible and switch to zero-carbon buildings and renewable energy now.**

In particular, **we need a huge surge in renewable electricity generation**, and this requires developing Europe’s power grids. However both renewables and power lines can harm birds and other wildlife if they are not sensitively developed with the right technologies in the right locations.

**BirdLife Europe has been taking the lead in showing how Europe’s energy and conservation commitments do not need to be in conflict. Our report ‘Meeting Europe’s renewable Energy Targets in Harmony with Nature’** explains what EU Institutions and Member States need to do to make renewables truly ‘green’. We have also led on developing an agreement between grid operators and leading environmental NGOs. The **‘European Grid Declaration’** will help improve the public acceptability of new power lines for renewables while protecting Europe’s wildlife and most precious nature sites.

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Common Cranes - *Grus grus* © Poul Reib

### Under the Danish Presidency the EU Institutions must:

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 Promote energy efficiency and renewable energy as the foundations for a sustainable, low-carbon Europe by proposing targets beyond 2020 within the framework of the Energy Roadmap 2050. The EU must NOT allow inertia or new investments to lock us into a high consumption and emissions energy system.
- 
 Ensure the Energy Efficiency Directive (EED) achieves the 2020 savings target, for example by requiring suppliers to help households and companies save energy, and Member States to achieve sufficient annual savings. Buildings must be systematically renovated, with the public sector leading.
- 
 Ensure the EU Budget does not promote infrastructure that would increase greenhouse gas emissions. New funds earmarked for roads and gas pipelines in the Connecting Europe Facility should be reallocated to the power lines and storage technologies/capacities needed for renewable energy and to low impact transport solutions.
- 
 Ensure that implementing the Commission’s “energy infrastructure package” does not result in unacceptable impacts on nature, or any compromise on environmental safeguards. More needs to be done to make power generation and power lines safe for birds. Strategic planning is needed so that the right technologies go in the right places and impacts on wildlife are avoided.



### Volunteers monitoring Danish IBAs

In 2003, DOF established a Caretaker Network to protect 128 Important Bird Areas (IBA's) in Denmark. The caretaker project, which today involves more than 900 volunteers, is not only focused on IBA's but also on potential IBA's as well as places of educational and recreational value,

which have also been included together with DOF's 20 nature reserves. The caretakers constitute 6% of all DOF's members. Most of them live nearby the site, but some travel as far as 100 km to reach the site. Each group has their own website which they update on a regular basis. Caretakers are expected to engage in monitoring, advocacy and educational tasks around the sites.



### Protecting the Montagu's Harrier

This elegant and agile raptor nests on the ground in crops. The population was estimated to 23-25 pairs in 2009 and is declining. DOF is the leading partner in "Projekt Hedeheg", a conservation project in collaboration with the University of Groningen, The Netherlands, which protects the raptors' nests from

harvesting and from fox predation. Through this project, the Montagu's Harrier migratory movements and Sub-Saharan wintering sites have been tracked using satellite transmitters, wing tags and colour rings. A lot of completely new and valuable information has been collected this way. This project has received much good public attention, which will be further stimulated by putting up a webcam by a nest in 2012.



### Regional Management Plans for SPA's

The Danish Government has for several years promised to launch a National Management Plan for Special Protected Areas (SPA's). DOF has pushed for this process very carefully and delivered all the scientific data that has been provided by our monitoring volunteer in order to produce

quality plans. In autumn 2011, the Danish Government presented a proposal of implementing 98 Regional Management Plans. These will be studied and commented thoroughly by DOF using the local experience of the caretaker groups. DOF expects to influence the final plans by strengthening both targets and actions.

# DENMARK 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 Danish EU Presidency was produced by BirdLife Europe and DOF (BirdLife in Denmark), the Partner of BirdLife International in Denmark.

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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 Danish Presidency**

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This publication is supported by the RSPB, NABU, Vogelbescherming Nederland and part-financed by the European Union. Sole responsibility lies with the author and the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.