

To: Ms. Dana Reizniece-Ozola  
Minister of Economy  
Brīvības iela 55  
Rīga  
LV- 1519, Latvia

To: Mr Kaspars Gerhards  
Minister of Environmental Protection  
and Regional Development  
Peldu iela 25  
Rīga  
LV- 1494, Latvia

Brussels, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2014

**Ref: AC 14/131**

Dear Ms Reizniece-Ozola, dear Mr Gerhards,

BirdLife Europe, representing over 2 million EU citizens and its Latvian Partner LOB (Latvijas Ornitoģijas biedrība), nature conservation organisations are writing you to share our priorities for the upcoming Latvian EU Council Presidency.

Latvia has chosen to strive for a Competitive, Digital and Engaged Europe during your mandate. We strongly believe that the EU can be competitive and prosperous only if environmental protection is at the heart of its economic model. According to recent Eurobarometer polls, 95% of citizens want to see Europe engaged on environmental protection, and think that more should be done. We sincerely hope that Latvia, as a country that values the natural environment, will help fulfill the wishes of EU citizens during its Presidency.

We therefore welcome the decision of your Presidency to organise a dedicated conference on nature conservation, which will be an excellent opportunity to create momentum for stepping up our efforts towards achieving the EU's 2020 biodiversity target. With the European Commission undertaking a Fitness check of the EU Nature Directives and the publication of a State of Nature in the EU report, preceding the mid-term report on the EU Biodiversity Strategy, we would like to offer the Presidency our expertise, contacts and EU wide experience in this area.

The Latvian government is also taking over the Presidency in a crucial phase in the development of the EU's climate and energy policies, including high profile initiatives such as the Energy Union and implementation of the EU climate and energy package to 2030. How the EU responds to its climate and energy challenges will have enormously important environmental consequences - both in terms of our chances of preventing dangerous global climate change and also impacts on natural environment associated with energy-related land use and infrastructure development. We welcome your decision to devote the April Informal Environmental Council to the topic of renewable energy development and biodiversity. BirdLife Europe holds strong expertise in this area and we would welcome an opportunity to share with Ministers findings from our recent research in this area.

In implementing its climate and energy commitments to 2030, the EU must:

1. Increase its commitment on greenhouse gas mitigation to 2030.
2. Develop ambitious targets and require effective national policies and action for energy efficiency and saving.
3. Ensure development of policies for ambitious deployment of renewable energy in harmony with the natural environment.
4. Ensure European bioenergy dependency is within sustainable limits, and that all bioenergy use delivers genuine emissions reductions.
5. Ensure that major energy infrastructures are developed without harming wildlife and important habitats.

Your Presidency is an opportunity to make the EU a world leader in demonstrating the feasibility and benefits of ambitious and ecologically-sensitive climate action. You can rely on BirdLife and LOB expertise and support to assist you in the challenging work ahead.

Yours faithfully



Angelo Caserta  
Regional Director  
BirdLife Europe and Central Asia



Viesturs Kerus  
Chairman of the Board  
Latvijas Ornitoloģijas biedrība