JOINT STATEMENT

On Improved Protection for European Protected Species at Mining Sites

HeidelbergCement AG and BirdLife International have been working in partnership since 2011 to achieve better protection of biodiversity at mining sites. Both organisations recognise the crucial importance of EU Birds and Habitats Directives in achieving the targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy, including maintaining or restoring to Favourable Conservation Status the European protected species.

Quarries host important populations of many protected species as the extensive usage and open soil situation offer appropriate living conditions and refuge. Quarry operators, such as HeidelbergCement, recognize their role in maintaining the habitats and conserving protected species and as part of their operations adhere to strict legal requirements for species protection. However, inadequate implementation and enforcement of species protection provisions by EU Member States and local/regional governments may cause increased costs, delays and uncertainty for quarry managers that risks to jeopardise the acceptance of nature conservation (as referenced in the EU Fitness Check study).

Therefore, both organisations propose to the European Commission to consider the following actions in its future efforts to improve implementation of the Directives:

1. Provide better guidance on the relevant provisions of the Birds and Habitats Directives and related case law, as well as practical guidelines and standards for permitting authorities, developers, planners and conservationists.
2. Facilitate information sharing among Member States and stakeholders' lessons learned (best practices) regarding the implementation of species protection provisions with a view to ensure legally and scientifically sound approaches across the EU.
3. Increase significantly the enforcement capacities to ensure the Directives' species protection provisions are followed by Member States.
4. Ensure adequate financing, staffing and training of environmental permitting authorities.
5. Develop a common methodology for setting favourable reference values and facilitate their swift setting in the Member States.
6. Promote development of tools such as sector and/or species specific "codes of conduct", "species action plans" (or similar instruments) to ensure uniform, efficient and effective implementation.
7. Ensure a high technical quality Standard of project impact assessments across the Member States in order to guarantee independent high quality assessments.

We are convinced that species protection rules as set out in the Birds and Habitats Directives are sufficiently flexible, where properly transposed and implemented, to allow environmentally sustainable economic development while ensuring high quality species protection in accordance with the EU Biodiversity Strategy targets. HeidelbergCement and BirdLife hope that the Commission will take our proposals into consideration for their future work on improving species protection in the EU. Both organisations are willing to support the Commission in this process.