



ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY?

BIRDLIFE ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS
ON THE EU 2020 BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

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NOTE All case studies referred to in the report are available online at: www.birdlife.org/eubiodiversityreport2012



INTRODUCTION





In 2010 the European Union missed its target to halt biodiversity decline because of weak implementation of legislation, lack of funding and a systemic failure to reform sectoral policies, such as agriculture and fisheries.

Recognising the urgency and importance of safeguarding our ecosystems, the EU has adopted a new 2020 headline target, raising the level of ambition and formulating a streamlined and focused strategy.

The 2020 headline target is accompanied by a 2050 vision; both do not only refer to halting biodiversity loss, but also to the role of ecosystems and the need to restore them.

The strategy's six targets reflect the main drivers of biodiversity loss that can be linked to EU policy.

The EU's 2020 headline target was endorsed by the European Heads of States in March 2010.¹ The EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy,² with its six targets, has been supported by the Environment Council and the European Parliament in 2011 and 2012 respectively.³

EU 2020 HEADLINE TARGET

Halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.

2050 VISION

By 2050, European Union biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides – its natural capital – are protected, valued and appropriately restores for biodiversity's intrinsic value and for their essential contribution to human wellbeing and economic prosperity, and so that catastrophic changes caused by the loss of biodiversity are avoided.



European rollers. The loss of suitable breeding habitat due to changing agricultural practices, conversion to monoculture, loss of nest sites, and use of pesticides (reducing food availability) are considered to be the main threats to the European roller.

© Tomaz Wilk

- 1 European Commission (3 March 2010): EUROPE 2020 – a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. COM(2010) 2020 final;
- 2 European Commission (2011): Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020. COM(2011) 244 final. (<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/2020.htm>)
- 3 EU Environment Council (23 June 2011): EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020. Council conclusions (11978/11); EU Environment Council (19 December 2011): EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020: towards implementation. Council Conclusions (18862/11); European Parliament (03.04.2012): Report on our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020 (2011/2307(INI))
- 4 EU Environment Council (19 December 2011): EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020: towards implementation. Council Conclusions (18862/11);

The EU was instrumental in the adoption of an ambitious Strategic Plan of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at the 10th Conference of the Parties in Nagoya, Japan in October 2010. Since then the European Commission has started several promising initiatives for implementation of its strategy, e.g. a Common Implementation Framework that aims to ensure the ownership of all relevant sectors and EU Member States in the process. This approach however needs to be reproduced at national level in order to achieve a full consistency in the implementation of the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy. Targets and strategies are only as good as the action actually taken.

In this report, two years after the Nagoya summit, the European BirdLife Partnership undertakes a first stocktaking exercise of progress made on the road to the 2020 target and intends to repeat this assessment at regular intervals until 2020.

The first milestone in the progress towards 2020 is to achieve adequate investment in biodiversity. Consequently we also assessed whether or not the current negotiations on the 2014-2020 EU budget are promising enough to finally reform environmentally harmful subsidies and channel the needed investments in biodiversity conservation.

Each one of the EU Member States has also been looked at individually to detect areas where they are showing leadership or lagging behind.

This and future assessments, together with expected new data on the state of EU biodiversity, should feed into the planned review of the strategy in 2014. If significant gaps are then identified, the Strategy should be ambitiously re-oriented, for instance by including additional actions,⁴ in order to put the EU back on track towards its 2020 target.



Table 1: OVERVIEW OF THE EU'S DISTANCE TO TARGETS AND POLICY PROGRESS⁵

The six EU 2020 targets in summary	Related CBD Aichi Targets ⁶	Key EU policy instruments	Status/distance to target in 2012	Policy progress 2010-2012
1 Fully implement the establishment of the Natura 2000 network and ensure good management	1, 11, 12	Implementation of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives		
2 Maintain and restore ecosystems and their services	5, 14, 15	Ecosystem mapping; establishment of a "No Net Loss" policy for ecosystems; coordination and support to development of "Green Infrastructure" and other restoration initiatives, reform of the Cohesion Policy		
3 Increase the contribution of agriculture and forestry to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity	7 8	Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy Sustainable Forest Management principles, development of the EU forest strategy and Action Plan	 	
4 Ensure the sustainable use of fisheries resources	6, 10	Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy		
5 Combat Invasive Alien Species	9	Development of legislation on Invasive Alien Species		
6 Help avert global biodiversity loss	Support to developing countries on all targets; special importance of targets 2, 3, 4, 10, 16, 20.	Resource Efficiency Policy, Bio-energy Policy, Development Policy, Trade Policy, Mobilisation of Resources for biodiversity;		

LEGEND

Distance to target: egg chick adult

Policy progress in this area: counterproductive no/poor progress some progress good progress



IN RELATION TO EACH OF THE SIX TARGETS OF THE BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY, SIX BROAD MESSAGES EMERGED FROM THIS FIRST PROGRESS ASSESSMENT

- 5 Assessing effective and measurable progress on reaching these targets will only be possible once new data is available, e.g. through Member State's reporting obligations on the status of habitats and species protected under the Birds and Habitats Directives, due in 2014. CBD (2010); COP 10
- 6 Decision X/2 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020. (www.cbd.int/decision/cop/?id=12268). The Aichi Biodiversity targets are included in the 2011–2020 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity of the Convention on Biological Diversity. This plan and its targets forms the overarching framework on biodiversity, not only for the biodiversity-related international conventions, but for the entire United Nations system.
- 7 This is not a scientific assessment; it is based on the perception of the national BirdLife Partners. See Overview of EU progress on the implementation of Natura 2000.
- 8 Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive).
- 9 Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a framework for the Community action in the field of water policy (EU Water Framework Directive).

1. Just do it: full implementation of the EU Nature legislation

The establishment of the Natura 2000 network on almost 20% of EU's terrestrial territory is a major achievement. However the sites now need conservation objectives, active management, monitoring and financing. BirdLife Europe assessed⁷ that only three EU Member States have set-up an adequate national framework for the management of their Natura 2000 network, while none of the EU Member States are sufficiently on track regarding the mobilisation of financial resources for Natura 2000. Equally vital are an increased *enforcement* to protect sites against damage and to prevent unsustainable and illegal exploitation of species and an improved *monitoring* of the status of sites and to assess the effect of management activities.



The Doñana National Park and a wider network of Natura 2000 sites protect some of Europe's most important wildlife habitats, ranging from sand dunes and wetlands to agricultural areas.

© Pierre Commenville

2. Tackle wider ecosystem conservation and restoration

The EU has adopted progressive pieces of 'framework' legislation on marine⁸ (2008) and freshwater⁹ (2000) ecosystem protection. However implementation of these directives is slow and a major gap remains- the lack of an EU Soil Framework Directive. By 2020, the EU has committed to increase knowledge of ecosystems and their services and to protect and restore them also outside of protected areas. Achieving this goal will only be possible through additional strong legal frameworks, appropriate financial incentives and more coordinated spatial planning. The new initiatives need to act as complements to the full implementation of EU nature conservation legislation. Unfortunately, the laudable EU initiatives on "Green Infrastructure" and "No Net Loss", which are still under development, are not feeding into the main sectoral reforms currently underway, e.g. the Cohesion Policy. This means that the 2014–2020 EU Budget risks failing to deliver the support that is essential for the achievement of Target 2 of the EU Biodiversity Strategy.





3a. Realign Agriculture with its resource base

The conversion of semi-natural habitats and the continuing agricultural intensification are significant drivers of global and European biodiversity loss. The current reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is essential to reach the EU's 2020 biodiversity target. The EU must reorient policy and spending towards supporting the delivery of public goods, including biodiversity conservation, and help restore the ecological base that underpins our food production. The European Commission's modest proposals for greening the CAP are under attack by Member State Agricultural Ministers, who are yielding to private lobby pressures and do not seem to take public needs into account. Reform is needed to bring back wildlife and reduce pollution in intensive farming systems, while helping High Nature Value (HNV) farmers maintain their sustainable farming practices. Greening the CAP now is the last chance to legitimise Europe's farm subsidies in times of budget crisis and make sure they deliver for the greater good of society.



Intensive agriculture has transformed large stretches of Europe into biodiversity wastelands and current policies are still failing to reverse the decline of farmland birds and other wildlife.

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3b. Realign Forestry with its resource base

Across the EU, even in legally designated Natura 2000 areas, unsustainable forestry management prevails over biodiversity friendly solutions. The fundamental cause for this lies in the continuing predominance of wood production as the main management objective, while other key forest functions are not sufficiently valued. Forests undisturbed by humans are estimated to amount to a mere 4% of forest areas in Europe. The EU should develop guidelines on criteria and indicators of Sustainable Forest Management as an instrument for an improved and harmonised interpretation and application of this concept through national legislation and sectoral programmes.



European forests have been mostly recovering in recent decades from historical over exploitation but the new rush to increase biomass extraction risks worsening their situation in coming years.

© Amanda Rogers



4. Put an end to overfishing and by-catch

The EU's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) is the other great driver of biodiversity collapse under the responsibility of the EU. 75% of assessed European fish stocks are overfished and fishing activities inflict widespread collateral damage on marine ecosystems, including seabirds and other marine wildlife. Excessive EU fleet capacity, built and modernised with EU subsidies, is one of the key problems with devastating effects also outside the EU. The reform of the CFP is an opportunity to rebuild fish stock, match fishing capacity to the resources available and promote and reward sustainable fishing practices, while eliminating the most damaging ones. Unfortunately, the relatively progressive proposals by the EU's Fisheries Commissioner are meeting fierce resistance of lobbies and most EU Member States who ignore that the future of their sector depends on healthy seas.



The European fishing fleet has excessive overcapacity of activities. Too many boats chasing few fish are driving wholesale destruction of European seas.

© U. Elsner

5. Create a biosecurity framework for Europe

The damage caused by Invasive Alien Species (IAS) in the EU currently is estimated to cost at least 12 billion EUR per year and is expected to increase further. The EU institutions have recognised this problem. Supported by the European Council and European Parliament and following a stakeholder consultation process, the European Commission is now expected to publish legislative proposals before the end of 2012.

6. Reduce the EU's negative footprint and stand up to our global responsibilities

The EU drives global biodiversity loss through some of its common policies, harmful subsidies, and the unsustainable production and consumption patterns in its 27 EU Member States. Despite first steps, notably the launch of its "Resource Efficiency Initiative", the EU's progress in reducing its global ecological footprint is far from sufficient. The risk of once again dramatically failing with the reform of environmentally harmful subsidies (e.g. CAP direct payments) could undermine the credibility the EU has built up as respected pioneer in biodiversity conservation.

Independently of this, the EU must mobilise additional financial resources to support developing countries in preserving biodiversity, through bilateral and multilateral mechanisms, as well as through the EU budget itself. The latter includes the need to finance biodiversity action on the EU's own Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs). The EU's budget crisis cannot be used as an excuse to ignore this global environmental challenge that is greatly decisive for the well-being of Europeans. However, it is clear that public money cannot solve the problems alone: innovative and effective ways have to be found to mobilise resources from those who benefit from ecosystem services, and make the private sector pay where public goods are harmed or polluted.



CHAPTER
ONE

**BAILING-OUT BIODIVERSITY:
THE EU BUDGET MUST DELIVER**





The imminent and most important test for the EU's credibility on its global and European biodiversity commitments is the ongoing reform of its budget and sectoral policies, now negotiated for the period 2014-2020. This chapter as well as other parts of the report demonstrate that, at the moment of publication, the EU governments are already on the brink of breaking their "Nagoya promises" made at the 10th Conference of the Parties to the global CBD in 2010. It is very unlikely that wrong decisions taken now on basic principles and rules for EU subsidies, or on agriculture or fisheries policies, can be corrected in a meaningful way before 2020. Therefore it is of utmost importance that the last months of negotiations in Brussels will lead to results that live up to the EU's objective of developing a smart and sustainable economy by 2020, one that safeguards biodiversity and restores ecosystem services.



A strawberry poison dart frog. In Costa Rica, the establishment of a comprehensive system of protected areas and payments for ecosystem services, have reversed deforestation and secured conservation of threatened species. Funding for such measures remains significantly insufficient.

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¹⁰ European Commission (29 June 2011): A budget for Europe 2020. COM(2011) 500 final;

EU RISKS FAILING ON HARMFUL SUBSIDIES REFORM

In times of a severe public budget crisis, as currently befalling the EU, it should be a top-priority measure to reform those areas of government spending that jeopardize agreed policy objectives and that are proven to create massive future costs to public and private budgets, as is the case with environmentally harmful subsidies. However, despite countless pledges to do so, the EU Member States of the EU are reluctant to take decisive action in this direction, as the following examples show.

- > The EU's seven year Multi-annual Financial Framework (i.e. EU budget) is a 1 trillion EUR investment that spends about 88% of its resources on direct agriculture payments and cohesion policy alone, many of which are clearly harmful to the environment. The European Commission proposals to address this in the next MFF are far from sufficient. For example, the suggestion to dedicate 20% of EU budget to climate action is not reflected in most individual budget line proposals. At the same time there are no systematic measures proposed for biodiversity mainstreaming and proofing in the budget.
- > Each year the EU supports intensive, and largely ecologically harmful, farming practices with over 40 billion EUR in direct payments.¹⁰ First attempts of the European Commission to address this by linking direct payments, at least partly to some environmental conditions (such as the creation of 7% environmental infrastructure on each farm), are heavily criticised by many Member State governments and parts of the European Parliament – under heavy pressure from the agricultural industry lobby (see also *EU Biodiversity Target 3 in Chapter 2 of this report*).



- Currently, the EU spends over 50 billion EUR¹¹ per year on regional development subsidies across its territory. A great part of these subsidies is directed to road infrastructure, airports and other traditional high-carbon “grey infrastructure” development, that often also poses grave threats to biodiversity. The currently discussed Cohesion Policy proposals for 2014-2020 lack the mechanisms and safeguards for ensuring that EU investments will not harm biodiversity. Furthermore, there is very limited incentive in the proposals to invest on biodiversity and “Green Infrastructure”. The fact that future economic prosperity has to be environmentally sustainable, lead to the well-being of society, and achieve huge potential for “green jobs” is hardly reflected in the proposals. It is estimated that currently 78% of the EU-budget sustains around one million jobs whereas an ecological reform of only 14% of the total budget alone would already support more than half a million jobs.¹²
- The EU’s Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) has failed on all fronts with 72% of European fish stocks overfished and fishing activities inflicting widespread collateral damage on marine ecosystems, including seabirds and other marine wildlife in Europe and beyond. Due to ongoing subsidised overfishing it is one of the most prominent examples of an unsustainable policy that can in a not-too-distant future, lead to the collapse of a whole industry and millions of jobs. The European Commission proposals for the CFP reform package are an encouraging signal in the right direction and the European Parliament has been showing an ambition to support and strengthen the proposal. However Fisheries Ministers seem to be deaf to alarm bells from scientists and in their decisions tend to prioritise short term interests of the small fraction of the sector over the long term future of fish and fishermen in Europe (see also *EU Biodiversity Target 4 in Chapter 2 of this report*).

EU 2014–2020 BUDGET PROPOSALS RISK MASSIVE UNDERFINANCING OF BIODIVERSITY

Many studies have shown that investing now in safeguarding and restoring functioning ecosystems and biodiversity provides high returns, whereas, the costs of inaction on biodiversity loss are by far bigger. A study from the European Commission estimates the cost of the EU not halting the loss of biodiversity to be 1 trillion Euro annually by 2050.¹³ At the same time robust scientific evidence exists about the significant direct and indirect socio-economic benefits of biodiversity and, for example, protected nature areas. Several case studies estimated that the EU’s Natura 2000 network generates economic benefits about seven times higher than its costs.¹⁴ In addition, Natura 2000 has the potential to create employment even if this is not its primary aim. With an investment of 1 billion EUR of EU subsidies, investing in the Natura 2000 network can create five to nine times more jobs than current spending policy of agriculture subsidies (29,000 jobs compared to 3,000 – 6,000 jobs). Investment in the Natura 2000 network would lead to diverse types of employment including increasing jobs in the agricultural sector.¹⁵



Strawberry production in greenhouses around the Donana National Park in southern Spain. Perverse agriculture subsidies often support damaging practices such as increased water use or conversion of valuable habitats.

© Ariel Brunner

- 11 European Commission (29 June 2011): A budget for Europe 2020. COM(2011) 500 final;
- 12 Daly E., Pieterse M., Medhurst J. (2011): Evaluating the potential for Green Jobs in the next Multi-annual Financial Framework. London, GHK. Download www.birdlife.org/eu/pdfs/Green_Jobs.pdf
- 13 L. Braat & P. ten Brink (eds) (2008): The Cost of Policy Inaction : The case of not meeting the 2010 biodiversity target. Study for the European Commission, DG Environment. http://ec.europa.eu/environment/enveco/economic_policy/pdf/report_sep_t2011.pdf
- 14 Gantioler S., Rayment M., Bassi S., Kettunen M., McConville A., Landgrebe R., Gerdes H., ten Brink P. (2010): Costs and Socio-Economic Benefits associated with the Natura 2000 Network. Final report to the European Commission. Institute for European Environmental Policy / GHK / Ecologic, Brussels. www.ieep.eu/topics/biodiversity/financing-biodiversity/2010/10/costs-and-socio-economic-benefits-associated-with-the-natura-2000-network
- 15 Daly E., Pieterse M., Medhurst J. (2011): Evaluating the potential for Green Jobs in the next Multi-annual Financial Framework. London, GHK. Download www.birdlife.org/eu/pdfs/Green_Jobs.pdf



Despite this evidence the mobilisation of financial resources in the EU is very slow and insufficient to meet agreed biodiversity targets.

- While estimates have been made of the EU's current spending on biodiversity or of certain aspects of it (e.g. global biodiversity, or Natura 2000),¹⁶ there is no systematic tracking of existing biodiversity spending. Given such information about the "baseline" is fundamental for assessing remaining financing gaps and formulating future targets, the EU must urgently act here, in the same way as it asks developing countries to deliver this data.
- The costs of a fully operational Natura 2000 network are estimated to be less than 6 billion EUR annually for the whole EU and around 4% of the EU budget. Environmental NGOs suggest that the EU budget should cover 75% of these costs, while the remainder should be financed by EU Member States. However, studies show that so far less than one fifth of Natura 2000 costs are met by EU funds,¹⁷ with the Member State share likely to be even lower. The current proposals for the EU's 2014-2020 budget and the state of negotiations to date are worryingly indicating that this funding gap will not be closed, and thus the EU will be unable to meet its CBD obligations for protected areas (see Aichi Target 11).

The European Commission has proposed a promising new way how to improve mainstreaming of financing Natura 2000 into sectoral funds through the Prioritised Action Frameworks (PAFs). These frameworks act as national financial plans for Natura 2000, identifying management priorities and potential financial resources. They now need to be fully integrated into EU and Member State funding practice, but are not sufficiently reflected in EU budget regulations so far (see *EU Biodiversity Target 1/Natura 2000 Financing in Chapter 2 of this report*).

¹⁶ e.g. see Executive Summary of the Fourth National Report of the European Community to the Convention on Biological Diversity (May 2009) www.cbd.int/doc/world/eur/eur-nr-04-en.pdf;

¹⁷ European Commission (2011): Commission Staff Working Paper - Financing Natura 2000 - Investing in Natura 2000: Delivering benefits for nature and people. http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/financing/docs/financing_natura2000.pdf

¹⁸ European Commission (29 June 2011): A budget for Europe 2020. COM(2011) 500 final;

¹⁹ E.g. see resolution of the Environment Committee of the Federal Parliament of Germany of 27th June 2012 asking for an increase of LIFE to cover 10% of Natura 2000 costs (www.gruene-bundestag.de/fileadmin/media/gruenebundestag_de/themen_az/biologische_viefalt/17_16_535.pdf), and press release of the Federal Ministry of Environment asking for additional 2 billion EUR for LIFE (www.bmu.de/pressemitteilungen/aktuelle_pressemitteilungen/pm/48856.php)

- The EU's only direct environmental funding programme LIFE currently makes up 0.2 % of the EU budget (2007-2013 annual average: 306 million EUR). The European Commission has proposed to increase this share to 0.3% (517 million EUR annually)¹⁸ while at the same time to significantly widen the thematic scope to include climate mitigation and adaptation activities. This means there is no significant increase for spending on direct biodiversity measures. Environmental organisations are asking for LIFE to receive at least 1 billion EUR annually for biodiversity action, leveraging 20% of Natura 2000 costs and in total, about 1% of the EU budget. The call for a significant increase of LIFE is increasingly being echoed by EU governments, the European Parliament and national parliaments.¹⁹
- With agricultural land covering almost half of the EU territory and taking up almost 30% of the Natura 2000 network, the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has a very important influence on biodiversity. Rural Development funding (i.e. pillar II of the CAP, including so called agro-environmental measures) is essential for supporting and enabling farmers to take care of rural nature and to allow them to deliver environmental goods and services to society. Despite the fact that this type of funding is the most targeted, cost-effective and justifiable type of EU farm subsidies, it forms just a relatively small part of the overall agricultural budget (approximately 25%). For 2014-2020 the European Commission's proposals foresee an 8% reduction of funding compared to the current period. Furthermore, it remains unclear how much of the Rural Development budget will be ring fenced for targeted environmental spending.





- The EU's Cohesion Policy, with its more than 50 billion EUR spent annually, has tremendous impact on habitat fragmentation in Europe, mainly through the financing of heavy infrastructure projects. The main funding streams, European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund lack effective safeguards for biodiversity and are failing to invest in "Green Infrastructure" and large scale land based restoration. Unfortunately, the European Commission has done very little to ensure that this will change in 2014-2020. The proposals do not ensure that funding priorities will be consistent with the defined financing needs of Natura 2000. Also, the proposed Regulations are lacking specific earmarking for investments for biodiversity.
- While EU Nature legislation is implemented throughout the whole of the EU, including the Portuguese (Azores and Madeira) and Spanish Outermost Regions (Canary Islands), the network does not extend to the five French Outermost Regions. In recent years, some support has been delivered through the scheme for Preparatory Action for the Voluntary scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories (BEST). BEST provides a systematic approach to assess ecosystems and ensure coherence of funding such as agriculture, fisheries, regional, and cohesion subsidies with environmental objectives. In the proposal for the future EU budget the European Commission has failed to identify funds for the future of BEST, however (*see also EU Biodiversity Target 6 in Chapter 2 of this report*).
- The main funding source from the EU Budget for tackling biodiversity loss outside the European Union is development aid, mainly through a "thematic programme for the environment" under the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI). Environmental mainstreaming has seen some improvement under the DCI, as well as the European Development Fund, the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument and the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA).

In its proposals for the 2014-2020 development aid budget the European Commission has foreseen increased funding for the environment: 50% of the new "Global Public Goods" programme should be ring-fenced for the environment and climate action). However the European Commission is not sufficiently ensuring that there will be an efficient tracking system of spending towards international commitments. More disappointingly, the financing for biodiversity in the EU's Outermost Regions and the Overseas Countries and Territories has largely been ignored in the current EU budget proposal (*see also EU Biodiversity Target 6 in Chapter 2 of this report*).
- Referring to the crisis of public budgets many EU decision makers are reluctant to allocate even a small fraction of the EU budget to biodiversity, while they point out the need to explore innovative financial mechanisms. The debate on the latter, however, is kept vague and general, while it would be very timely to now discuss effective and binding payment schemes, including taxation, for the use of ecosystem services, as well as "polluter-pays"-approaches.



BIRDLIFE'S KEY ASKS FOR THE EU BUDGET REFORM 2014–2020

- > Introduce robust biodiversity proofing mechanisms into all relevant funds, with a view to eliminate harmful EU subsidies;
- > Introduce a 10% biodiversity mainstreaming target into the EU budget combined with a biodiversity tracking mechanism;
- > Ensure sufficient binding minimum spending requirements for biodiversity and Natura 2000 in all relevant funds;
- > Allocate 1% of the EU budget to LIFE, ensuring that 1 billion EUR is available annually to biodiversity measures through this fund and 20% of Natura 2000 costs are covered
- > Increase the funding for Rural Development to 50% of total agricultural spending;
- > Ensure that the EU does not subsidise an increase of capacity of the European fishing fleet, and instead shifts subsidies towards enhancing marine ecosystems.
- > Ensure sufficient funding is available to implement BEST, including opening LIFE to OCTs
- > Track financing of international commitments, especially CBD commitments





CHAPTER
TWO

**PROGRESS ASSESSMENT OF THE EU 2020
BIODIVERSITY TARGETS**



TARGET 1: FULLY IMPLEMENT THE BIRDS AND HABITATS DIRECTIVES



1

TARGET ONE

EU target To halt the deterioration in the status of all species and habitats covered by EU nature legislation and achieve a significant and measurable improvement in their status [...]

Relevant CBD Aichi Targets

Targets 1, 11 and 12

NOTE All case studies referred to in the report are available online at:
www.birdlife.org/eubiodiversityreport2012

Progress assessment summary

Significant progress has been made in targeted species protection and in establishing Natura 2000, the largest protected area network in the world. Also, legislation in EU Member States is now mostly in line with the EU Birds and Habitats Directives, providing a flexible and yet effective framework for nature conservation.

However, biodiversity is still declining, and restoration is too slow. Key reasons are gaps in the Natura 2000 network at sea, lack of active management and financing of sites, as well as insufficient enforcement of the EU Nature Directives on the ground. Destruction of sites and illegal killing of species is still widespread. The 2013 reporting round under the Nature Directives will yield vital data for assessing whether the EU is on track to meet Target 1. The European Commission must continue to apply pressure on all EU Member States to ensure they report in a timely and comprehensive fashion, to facilitate the European Commission's mid-term assessment.

BirdLife progress assessment

Progress made:

- > There has been progress on certain species' recovery through targeted management and protection measures, in particular through EU LIFE funding (see case study: *Species Conservation works*).
- > Natura 2000 designation on land has progressed significantly (see case study: *Overview of EU progress on designation*).

- > EU Member States, the Commission and stakeholders have recognised the need to step-up their efforts against the illegal killing of birds and have started to develop measures to improve enforcement on the ground (see case study: *Illegal killing of Birds*).
- > Significant progress has been made with stakeholder acceptance for EU nature legislation, e.g. through cooperation with hunters, ports, electricity grid operators (see case study: *Renewables Grid Initiative*).
- > New models for an integrated approach to financing Natura 2000 have been developed by the European Commission: National or regional Natura 2000 Financing plans (PAF), and LIFE Integrated Projects (see case study: *Overview of EU progress on financing; Innovative conservation funding*).

Delays and missed opportunities:

- > Many EU Member States are still lagging behind in implementing simple measures to address specific threats to species (see case study: *Lead shot ban and enforcement; Reducing powerline impact on birds in Hungary*).
- > Despite EU funded research, several countries have yet to declare their national marine SPA networks. There is an urgent need for both protection of nature and planning security for investors e.g. in off-shore wind energy.
- > EU Member States have been very slow at developing systematic approaches in management planning and conservation objective setting (see case study: *Natura 2000 management; Overview of EU progress on management*).



- > EU Member States have not yet set site specific management prescriptions for farmers, foresters and other land managers in Natura 2000 sites thereby impeding the good maintenance and improvement of status of these sites.
- > The insufficient designation of marine Natura 2000 is delaying the development of management plans for critical habitats and species. This is of vital importance especially in areas currently under threat of development.
- > EU Member States have significant compliance problems with the EU Nature Directives on the ground; there is too little capacity within the European Commission to ensure compliance (see case study: *Enforcement of site protection*).

Counter-productive developments:

- > The European Commission's budget proposal 2014-2020 is insufficient with regard to financing biodiversity measures and has not ensured coherence with the EU biodiversity targets especially in phasing out subsidies harmful to biodiversity (see *chapter 1*).
- > Although LIFE, the EU fund dedicated to the environment, has proved to be cost-effective in achieving the EU's biodiversity objectives, the European Commission has not proposed to increase it significantly (see case study: *Cost-effectiveness of LIFE*).
- > The reform and development of important EU sectoral policies supporting agriculture (CAP) and infrastructure development (Cohesion Policy) have not integrated the necessary safeguards to avoid harm to species and habitats (see *Target 2* and *Target 3*).

Milestones - what needs to be achieved by 2014

- > All relevant EU Member States completed designation of their marine Natura 2000 network.
- > All EU Member States developed adequate plans with priority measures for the Natura 2000 network, including an integrated funding strategy combining EU-, national and private funding sources (see case study: *Innovative conservation funding*).
- > EU budget proposals are significantly improved to ensure sufficient financing of Natura 2000 through EU funds. The share of LIFE is increased to 1% of the EU budget (see *chapter 1*).
- > The EU budget provides sufficient opportunities to EU Member States to finance 75% of Natura 2000 costs, including 15% through LIFE funds (see *chapter 1*).
- > All EU Member States developed adequate management plans for all Natura 2000 sites (see case study: *BirdLife position on management plans for SPAs*).
- > The European Commission and EU Member States are significantly improving the enforcement of the EU Nature Directives on the ground, for example through the development of harmonised and independent inspections, a training initiative for judges, public prosecutors and administrations.



SPECIES PROTECTION: NATURE CONSERVATION CAN WORK

The full implementation of the EU Birds Directive implies the set-up of a *general system of protection* for all wild bird species naturally occurring in Europe and the application of *requisite measures* to effectively provide this protection. A study published in 2007²⁰ showed that species or populations especially protected by the EU Birds Directive fared better than others – or the same species outside the EU.

The recovery of species populations is a complex and lengthy process that can only be measured over several generations. It is linked to the alleviation of the main pressures driving a species decline, such as the use of certain pesticides or the destruction of suitable habitats, as well as to additional active protection measures, for instance the reduction of disturbance of the species to increase its breeding success.

In recent years, measures tailored for the protection of some bird species and mammals have shown impressive successes. White-tailed eagle, Common crane, Beaver, or Wolf expanding its range again, are examples of spectacular successes thanks to a combination of protective measures for nests and colonies, hunting bans, a decrease of pollution and others. Natura 2000, Species Action Plans and the EU-LIFE programme were instrumental in achieving this.

Simple and cost-effective measures have been shown to deliver significant conservation benefits. This has for instance been the case with the protection of nesting sites of the Lesser Kestrel that are at risk of destruction (e.g. through restoration of buildings) and the creation of artificial breeding opportunities in France and Spain. (see case study: *Species Conservation works*). On the other hand, species that require a more complex conservation approach, like farmland species and long-distant migrants remain among the most threatened groups of birds.

- ²⁰ Donald et al., International conservation policy delivers benefits for birds in Europe, *Science* 10 August 2007: Vol. 317 no. 5839 pp. 810-813
- ²¹ Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA); Agreement Text And Action Plan, UNEP/ AEWA Secretariat 2008, Germany, p.32
- ²² Phasing out the use of Lead Shot for Hunting in Wetlands: Experiences made and lessons learned by AEWA range states, UNEP/AEWA, 2009; data questionnaires from 2007

LEAD-SHOT BAN IN WETLANDS: LONG-TIME DUE

In many cases, well-known and easily implemented measures that would contribute significantly to the recovery of threatened species have not yet been taken-up on national territories, although they had been endorsed at international level. Direct and indirect lead poisoning remains a potentially significant source of mortality for waterfowl and predators. Recognising this, the EU and its Member States have committed to “endeavour to phase out the use of lead shot for hunting in wetlands as soon as possible in accordance with self-imposed and published timetables” under the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA).²¹ Yet in 2011 at least seven EU Member States still failed to legally ban lead shot in wetlands and many more do not properly enforce and control such a ban on the ground²² (see case study: *Lead shot ban and enforcement*).

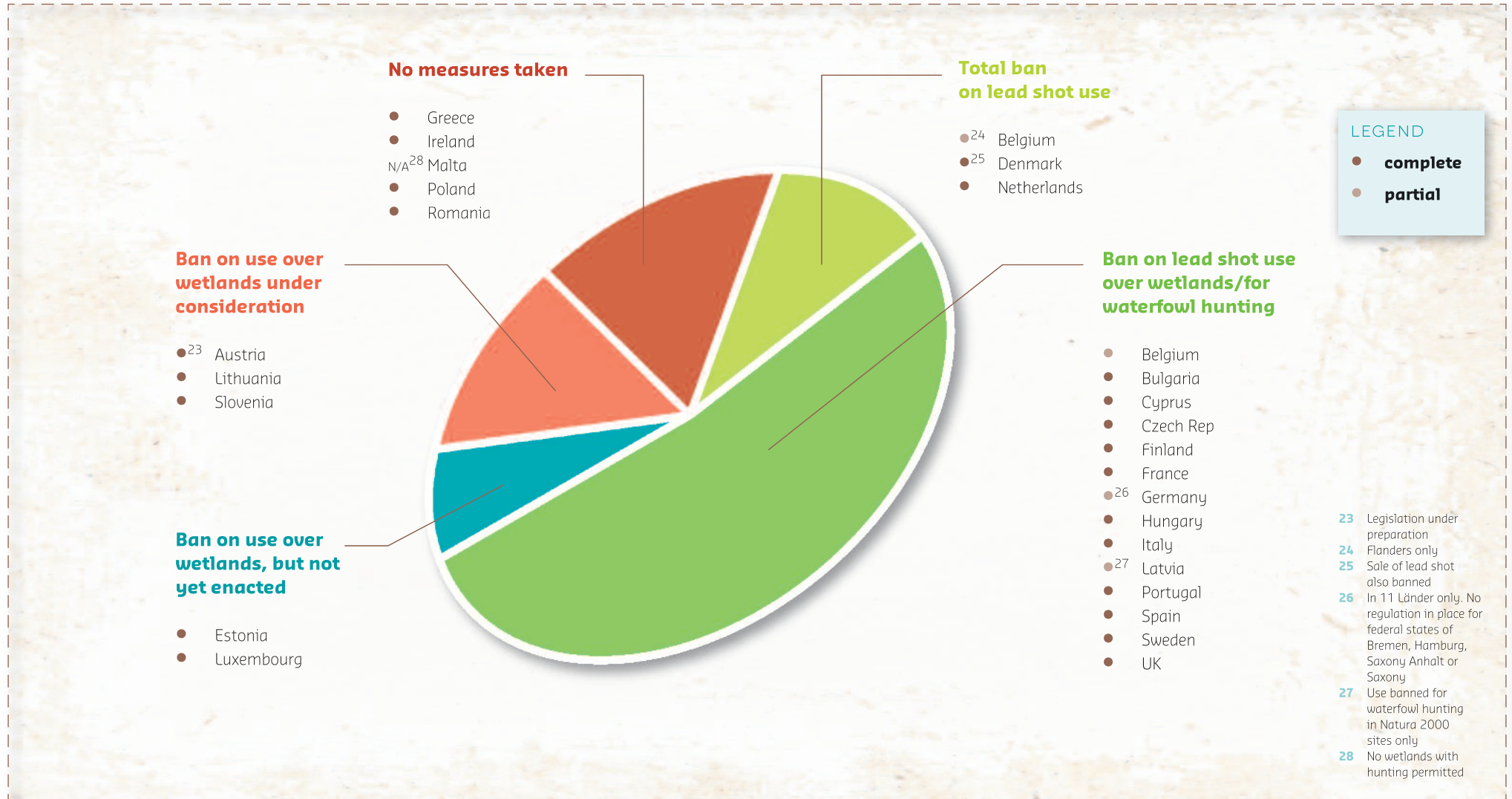


The Lesser kestrel is a species that has benefitted from intensive conservation work and has seen remarkable population recovery. It has recently been down listed on the BirdLife/IUCN red list.

© Spasov-NatureImage



Figure 1: LEAD SHOT BAN AND ENFORCEMENT





POWERLINES: SOME EU MEMBER STATES STEPPING-UP TO THE CHALLENGE

A recent review by AEWA²⁹ shows that within the European region millions of birds; including storks, cranes, waterfowl and raptors; are killed annually as a result of electrocution and collision with electricity transmission and distribution facilities. The number of birds killed can be substantially reduced if mitigation measures are applied during the planning and construction of power lines. The EU committed to take appropriate cost-effective measures to reduce bird mortality from electric transmission facilities in 2004³⁰ and several EU Member States have taken action namely through national legislation on planning, technical prescriptions for design, anti-collision measures and facilitating cooperation between companies and nature protection NGOs (see case study: *Reducing powerline impact on birds in Hungary*). However, in most countries there is still a long way to go.

- 29** Review of the Conflict between Migratory Birds and Electricity Power Grids in the African-Eurasian Region, AEWA/CMS, 7th Meeting of the AEWA standing Committee, 26 – 27 November 2011, Bergen, Norway
- 30** Recommendation n° 110 of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention on minimising adverse effects of above-ground electricity transmission facilities (power lines) on birds, Council of Europe, Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (2004)
- 31** Directive 2008/99/EC on the protection of the environment through criminal law
- 32** BirdLife Partners in the EU have provided their expert, but subjective, assessment of the occurrence and impact of various illegal killing activities within their Member State. See Review of the illegal killing and trapping of Birds in Europe. A report by the BirdLife Partnership, July 2011
- 33** Larnaca Declaration and Recommendation n° 155 of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention on the illegal killing, trapping and trade of wild birds (2011)



An electrocuted Kestrel. Electrocution on powerlines is a major threat to many bird species, particularly raptors.

© MME/ BirdLife Hungary

BIRD CRIME: THE EU PICKS UP THE FIGHT

All killing of birds occurring outside of the legal framework set by the Birds Directive should be treated and sentenced under national criminal law, according to the EU's Environmental Crime Directive.³¹ A BirdLife Europe survey shows that illegal killing and acquisition of birds is still a widespread phenomenon across the EU and is not restricted to the Mediterranean countries.³² Poisoning, illegal trade and the violation of hunting legislation were found to be the most worrying activities in terms of their conservation impact and occurrence (see case study: *Illegal killing of birds*). In 2011 the EU made a commitment to a “zero-tolerance” approach on the illegal killing of birds and to a strengthening of enforcement.³³ Targeted, firm and coordinated action on this basis should be initiated by 2014 in order to prove that EU Member States are willing to implement and enforce their international commitments.



Birds of prey, such as this Common buzzard, are still widely persecuted across Europe, despite strict legal protection.

© Hans Peeters



SITE PROTECTION: NATURA 2000 NETWORK READY FOR TAKE OFF

The Natura 2000 network in the EU is the largest network of protected areas in the world, covering 17.5% of EU territory (in 2011). In a great but slow effort, often enforced by the European Court of Justice, sites have been designated by EU Member States to protect particular natural habitat types and species of community interest³⁴ under the EU Birds and Habitats Directive. Despite evidence that the network is effective,³⁵ and is the main EU tool for nature protection, the Natura 2000 network and its objectives are not well known by Europeans.³⁶ Increasing pressure on land and abandonment of biodiversity friendly land use, are destroying and deteriorating many designated sites before adequate action is taken to protect and manage them. Natura 2000 is still far from being a coherent network: the high degree of landscape fragmentation and the existence of many small isolated sites hampers the genetic exchange and adaptation to climate change that is crucial to threatened biodiversity (see *Target 2*). Only 17% of the species and habitats that the network sets out to protect under the Habitats Directive are in favourable conservation status³⁷ and the management, monitoring and protection of these sites suffers from a chronic lack of investment.

DESIGNATION: ALMOST COMPLETE ON LAND, BUT LARGE PARTS OF OUR SEAS REMAIN UNPROTECTED

In 2012, 20 years after the birth of Natura 2000 EU Member States are finally approaching a sufficient level of designation of terrestrial sites.³⁸ While some gaps in the network still exist (see case study: *Overview of EU progress on designation*), it is high time for EU Member States to recognise that after a long delay (of more than three decades, in some cases) in merely setting up the network, they should now urgently be starting to focus on the actual implementation of management, conservation and monitoring of their national sites.

However, as far as marine sites are concerned, the situation is alarming. Since a first BirdLife assessment in 2010³⁹ only some EU Member States made progress in designating Important Bird Areas as Natura 2000 sites e.g. France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Denmark. Germany has designated more than 30% of its Exclusive Economic Zone as Natura 2000. In others, huge gaps remain, e.g. Portugal, Italy, UK, Ireland, Finland and Sweden.



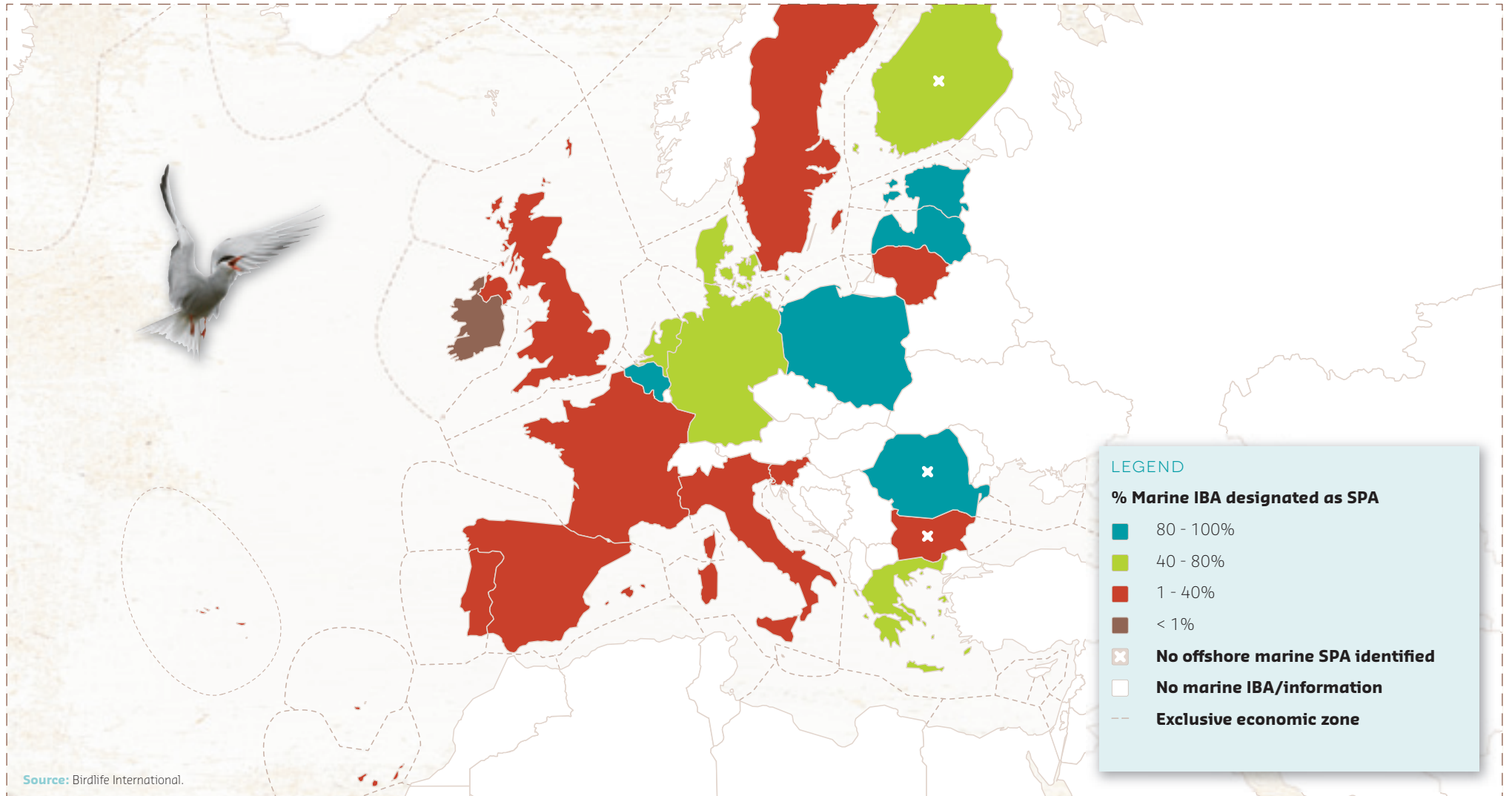
Natura 2000 sites protect often neglected habitats, such as these limestone pavements in southern France that host a tremendous diversity of orchids, butterflies and bird species such as the Rock thrush and Black eared wheatear.

© Pierre Commenville

- ³⁴ In danger of disappearance in their natural range, or that have a small natural range or presenting outstanding examples of typical characteristics of the biogeographical regions. Article 1 (c) Habitats Directive.
- ³⁵ Donald et al., International conservation policy delivers benefits for birds in Europe, *Science* 10 August 2007: Vol. 317 no. 5839 pp. 810-813
- ³⁶ Attitudes of Europeans towards the issue of biodiversity, Flash Eurobarometer No 219, December 2007
- ³⁷ Report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: Composite Report on the Conservation Status of Habitat Types and Species as required under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive, Brussels, 13 July 2009.
- ³⁸ Natura 2000 barometer, Number 30, June 2011: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/barometer/docs/n2000.pdf>
- ³⁹ BirdLife International (2010). Marine IBAs in the European Union. BirdLife International, Brussels, Belgium. Version 1.1: June 2010, www.birdlife.org/eu/pdfs/MarinepublicationEU.pdf



Map 1: STATUS OF DESIGNATION OF MARINE SPECIAL PROTECTION AREAS (SPAS):
OVERLAP BETWEEN MARINE IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS (IBAS) AND SPECIAL PROTECTION AREAS (SPAS) 2012





MANAGEMENT OF SITES: THE HEART OF THE MATTER

The EU's biodiversity can only be conserved and restored through adequate management of the Natura 2000 sites. Well designed and detailed management plans with clear responsibilities for implementation are the best tools for this. They should define clear and specific conservation objectives and priorities (at site level and linked to regional or national objectives), identify and involve all stakeholders and land users, map out the current pressures on the site and how these can be remediated, and present sustainable financing sources to match the identified costs. (see case study: *BirdLife position on management plans for SPAs*)

A combination of existing studies⁴⁰ with expert assessments from the BirdLife network provides a picture of patchy and mostly slow progress across EU Member States (see case study: *Overview of EU progress on management*). The assessment was made along various criteria, in particular the proportion of Natura 2000 sites covered with management plans, the content and quality of the management plans, the approach taken for the development of the plans (e.g. participatory process or not) and whether the plans are legally binding.

Also for marine Natura 2000 sites management plans need to be set-up in order to integrate demands for economic development and environmental protection. (see case study: *Marine Natura 2000 management*). A key problem in this context is the fact that decisions on the management of fisheries within Natura 2000 sites cannot be taken by governments alone but only by the EU Institutions. This process has delayed decisions on the management of marine protected areas in the past and even served as an obstacle for designating new sites (see case study: *Management challenges on Dogger Bank SPA*).



OTOP/BirdLife Poland has been developing innovative machinery and business models to help revive wet grassland mowing in the Bierbza marshes in Poland. The survival of the Globally threatened Aquatic warbler depends on the maintenance of an open habitat that tends to be invaded by shrubs and trees, unless it is regularly mowed.

© Dariusz Gatkowski

⁴⁰ EEB (2011): Where there is a will there is a way. Snapshot report of Natura 2000 management. www.eeb.org/EEB/?LinkServID=5CC039F5-5056-B741-DBFACCB777CA4E16



Table 2: OVERVIEW OF EU PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NATURA 2000 IN 2012

Member State	Natura 2000 Designation	Natura 2000 protection and management	Funding of Natura 2000 and progress on Prioritised Action Frameworks	Member State <i>continued</i>	Natura 2000 Designation	Natura 2000 protection and management	Funding of Natura 2000 and progress on Prioritised Action Frameworks
Austria			↓	Latvia		↓	
Belgium - Flanders			↓	Luxembourg	↑		
Bulgaria			↑	Malta			
Cyprus			↑	Netherlands		↑	↓
Czech Rep				Poland		↑	↑
Denmark		↑		Portugal			
Estonia	↑	↑	↑	Romania		↑	
Finland				Slovakia			↓
France		↓	↓	Slovenia			↓
Germany			↑	Spain			
Greece		↑	↓	Sweden			
Hungary		↑		UK			
Ireland							
Italy			↑				

LEGEND
Status: egg chick adult
Trend: ↑ up ↓ down

Source: Birdlife Europe partnership, 2012.
 This is not a scientific assessment; it is based on the perception of the national BirdLife Partners.



FINANCING THE NETWORK: CONSERVATION WITHOUT MONEY IS ONLY CONVERSATION

The costs of the Natura 2000 network have been estimated to amount to 5.8 billion EUR annually for the whole EU. Funds are lacking for the development of management plans, the work of site managers, surveillance and monitoring activities and effective participation of land-owners through compensation for income foregone or payments for additional conservation efforts. Although there is overwhelming evidence about the positive cost-benefit ratio⁴¹ and the future costs that would encumber on public budgets in case of inaction, EU Member States are so far reluctant to allocate sufficient resources to Natura 2000 through EU and domestic funds. The majority of EU Member States call upon EU funds for the financing of the Natura 2000 network, mainly the structural and rural development funds. The European Commission estimates that only a maximum of 9-19% of Natura 2000 costs are currently met through EU funds.

The EU and its Member States have taken a conscious decision to finance the Natura 2000 network through an integrated approach, using various sources of funding, instead of one large environmental fund (see case study: *Innovative conservation funding*). However experience has now shown that there are huge problems with mobilising funds from other sectors, in particular from agricultural and regional development budgets. This can partly be attributed to missing political will, partly to lacking awareness and information of the non-environmental sectors. To address this, EU Member States have now agreed to develop national or regional PAFs which outline key management measures together with their envisaged source of funding. The European Commission will ensure consistency of these plans with all relevant EU spending across Europe (see case study: *Overview of EU progress on financing*). The LIFE Fund also plays a

significant role in financing Natura 2000 compared to its modest size. It has proven to be an extremely cost-effective tool for biodiversity protection, especially where quick and targeted measures are required at a local and regional scale (see case study: *Cost-effectiveness of LIFE*).⁴² As it is clear that the chances to meet the 2020 biodiversity objective will largely be decided by the choices made within the next EU budget (2014-2020) environmental NGOs and an increasing number of EU Member States agree that the LIFE fund should be able to contribute 10-20% of investments in Natura 2000 (currently 2-3%⁴³) (see *Chapter 1*).



The Azores bullfinch has been brought back from the brink of extinction through many years of targeted conservation work led by SPEA/ BirdLife Portugal.

© Pedro Monteiro

- ⁴¹ Gantioler S., Rayment M., Bassi S., Kettunen M., McConville A., Landgrebe R., Gerdes H., ten Brink P. (2010): Costs and Socio-Economic Benefits associated with the Natura 2000 Network. Institute for European Environmental Policy / GHK / Ecologic. Brussels.
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ Kettunen, M., et al. 2011. Assessment of the Natura 2000 co-financing arrangements of the EU financing instrument. A project for the European Commission – final report. Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP), Brussels, Belgium. 138 pp + Annexes.



IMPLEMENTATION AND COMPLIANCE: ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

According to the European Commission, the EU could save 50 billion EUR per year by improving implementation of its environmental legislation, including on nature protection.⁴⁴ Despite a good level of transposition in legislation, a key problem is that there are no systematic inspection systems to ensure compliance. In many countries there is no mechanism to control the protection of species and habitats on the ground, or resources to ensure that land management practices are not degrading Natura 2000 sites. Although Member State regulators may comply with the stringent Article 6 impact assessments of the Habitats Directive when giving consent to potentially damaging development, they often do not have the procedures or resources in place to ensure that projects are developed according to the consent given. This includes the proper and timely implementation of mitigation or compensation measures that may be required in order to avoid impacts on the Natura 2000 network (see case study: *Lack of compensation*).

Implementation and enforcement of the sites and species safeguards in the Nature Directives are also hampered by poor understanding by member state regulators, judiciary or law enforcement services of the necessary processes and requirements. Regulators may not have training in application of the directives, or have expertise in ecology or environmental assessment. It is welcome that the EU's Biodiversity Strategy now contains a training initiative to address this although there is not yet much evidence that EU Member States are acting upon this.

⁴⁴ European Commission (7 March 2012): Improving the delivery of benefits from EU environment measures: building confidence through better knowledge and responsiveness. COM (2012) 95 final.

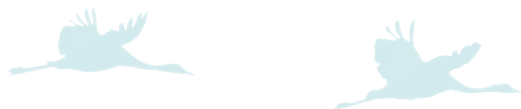
⁴⁵ Ibid.

Added to this, the European Commission has very limited capability to do its own inspections to ensure that the Nature Directives are being implemented properly on the ground in EU Member States. First of all, it normally relies heavily on information from civil society about specific breaches of EU law. Secondly the Commission largely has to base its infringement procedures against governments on written information provided by the government itself, and has neither competence nor capacities to gather first hand data on the ground. In this context, there is a huge potential of modern IT and remote sensing technology that the European Commission is not exploiting so far.

The European Commission's 2012 Communication *'Improving the delivery of benefits from EU environment measures: building confidence through better knowledge and responsiveness'*⁴⁵ gives a promising new momentum to this issue. The European Environment Commissioner announced that implementation will be a key focus of the upcoming 7th Environmental Action Programme of the EU.



Habitat destruction in the Natura 2000 site between Topola and Bozhurez, on Bulgaria's black sea coast. Construction of the Thracian Cliffs golf course.



TARGET 2: MAINTAIN AND RESTORE ECOSYSTEMS AND THEIR SERVICES



EU target By 2020, ecosystems and their services are maintained and enhanced by establishing green infrastructure and restoring at least 15 % of degraded ecosystems.

Relevant CBD Aichi Targets Targets 5, 14 and 15

NOTE All case studies referred to in the report are available online at: www.birdlife.org/eubiodiversityreport2012

Progress assessment summary

The EU has significantly contributed to putting on the agenda the need to understand the value of ecosystem services, to halt the destruction of habitats and to restore destroyed and degraded ecosystems. The TEEB study, championed by the EU, has provided a key contribution to the knowledge base in this area.⁴⁶ The EU is currently developing approaches in this context, in particular to halt the net loss of ecosystems outside of protected areas and to create Green Infrastructure. However, progress is slow, compared to the rapid deterioration of the environment across the continent. Experience shows that only strong legal frameworks, underpinned with financial incentives will be effective, as a complement to the full implementation of EU Nature legislation. A more holistic approach to spatial planning is also urgently needed at EU Member States and EU level. The integration of these concepts in EU and national sectoral policies and funds will be a must. Unfortunately, the EU initiatives on Green Infrastructure and No Net Loss, which are still under development, are currently not feeding into the main sectoral reforms, e.g. Cohesion Policy, which means that the new EU Budget running to 2020 risks failing to support the achievement of Target 2 (see *chapter 1*).

BirdLife progress assessment

Progress made:

- > The European Commission and EU Member States are developing initiatives to build up the knowledge base on ecosystems services, including their economic importance, to map ecosystem services and to prioritise restoration needs.

- > The scope of an EU 'No Net Loss of ecosystems' initiative and its operating principles is being explored.
- > Existing legal frameworks for compensation of damage to biodiversity have incentivised businesses to move beyond their obligations and to lead by example (see case study: *Cement Industry voluntary commitments; Wallasea Island restoration in England*).
- > The EU has adopted and started to implement important Framework Directives on water and marine ecosystems.

Delays and missed opportunities:

- > The European Commission has failed to include its Green Infrastructure initiative in its budget reform proposals for 2014-2020 (in particular linked to Cohesion Policy), thus large scale ecosystem restoration projects risk lacking funds.
- > Current policy reform proposals, especially on EU Cohesion Policy, do not include sufficient safeguards to avoid damage to biodiversity.
- > Restoration initiatives are rare and insufficient. EU Member States are making very slow progress in tapping the potential of Green Infrastructure and ecosystem based approaches to address issues such as flood defence and mitigation, climate adaptation, coastal protection, urban renewal etc. (see case study: *Ooijpolder climate buffer project; Futurescapes projects; Danube Delta restoration*).

⁴⁶ TEEB (2010): The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity. www.teebweb.org



- > Despite attempts of the European Commission, a minority of EU Member States are blocking the adoption of the urgently needed Soil Framework Directive, resulting in a lack of progress regarding soil sealing and soil degradation.

Counter-productive developments:

- > Destruction and deterioration of valuable ecosystems continues, leading to a clear net-loss of nature in the EU (see case study: *Habitat loss across the EU*).
- > While there is no progress in coordination of spatial planning at EU-level, some EU Member States are even deregulating land planning, with the likely consequences of increasing habitat destruction and fragmentation (see case study: *Renewable energy and nature conservation*).
- > The financial crisis has driven many governments to present environmental and nature protection schemes as a break on economic development.

Milestones - what needs to be achieved by 2014

- > The European Commission is finalising an EU-level approach on “no-net-loss”, presenting a proposal for a robust legal framework for this, that would operate outside, of and complementing Natura 2000.
- > The European Commission is developing with EU Member States and stakeholders a coordinated approach to the improvement of national level spatial planning so that it can deliver on the “No-net-loss” and ecosystem restoration/Green Infrastructure commitments (see case study: *Birdlife principles on Good Spatial Planning for biodiversity*).
- > EU Cohesion Policy and CAP 2014-2020 ensure significant funding to Green Infrastructure and ecosystem based approaches and include effective safeguards to avoid harm to biodiversity from traditional “grey infrastructures.”⁴⁷

- > Renewed efforts by EU Member States to fully implement their obligations under the Birds and Habitats Directives, both inside and outside Natura 2000, are the baseline for any new policy development (see case study: *Lack of compensation*).
- > EU policies driving the expansion of renewable energy and energy infrastructures (post-2020 policy framework for renewables; Energy Infrastructure Regulation; Connecting Europe Facility, etc.) include appropriate safeguards to ensure biodiversity conservation.



⁴⁷ Such as transport infrastructure, drainage systems, dams and dykes, storm water basins, water purification systems and other utilities



HALTING LOSS OF BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEMS

Currently, ecosystems continue to be lost and degraded at a great pace in the EU (see case study: *Habitat loss across the EU*). The degradation, destruction and fragmentation of landscapes and habitats have direct effects on the services that biodiversity and nature provides, also outside of protected areas. Climate change will further increase the need for resilient ecosystems. The erosion of the functionality of our ecosystems is imposing ever growing economic costs, as well as harming our wellbeing in ways that go beyond monetary values.

To deal with these urgent matters, the European Commission, together with Member State governments, has started to develop a two-pronged approach, in line with global commitments: 1) halt the net ecosystem degradation and land sealing and 2) restore parts of nature that have already been lost. Although these initiatives are welcomed, it is still unclear how they will be translated into effective action – and if they will be sufficient. One key to success will be the integration and uptake of these approaches by the sectors that are applying most pressure on biodiversity. A second key will be securing sufficient financial means for their implementation.



Destruction of dry grasslands in the Murgia SPA of southern Italy. Such rock grinding operations, aimed at conversion of natural habitats to agricultural use, cause irreversible damage nearing a total loss of biodiversity.

© Luigi Boccaccio

IMPLEMENTING EXISTING EU NATURE LEGISLATION: ESSENTIAL FOR ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION

Meeting the ambitions of Target 2 also requires, as a prerequisite, a proper implementation of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. This is firstly, because functioning of ecosystems across the landscape needs a coherent network of protected areas (Natura 2000) as “backbone”, where species can recover and develop resilience to external pressures, and from where they can disperse. In some cases, large protected areas are needed to safeguard whole, especially vulnerable, ecosystems (see case study: *Danube Delta restoration*). Such areas are also most efficient in providing ecosystem services to society.⁴⁸ Second, the Nature Directives also already offer a great range of measures for species and habitat protection outside of Natura 2000 sites. Many of these provisions have so far not been treated with sufficient priority by EU Member States, e.g. Art.10 of the Habitats Directive calls for preservation and creation of landscape features, linear habitats and stepping stones, ensuring the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species.



Water filtered through large scale reedbed in the Danube delta flowing back into the main channel. Note the colour of the purified water in the back. The Danube Delta is one of the last remaining large scale functional ecosystems in Europe.

© Irina Mateeva

⁴⁸ Green Infrastructure Implementation and Efficiency, Institute for European Environmental Policy, March 2012.



NO NET LOSS OF BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEMS: STRONG TOOLS ARE NEEDED

In times during which even legally protected habitats are still allowed to be destroyed and not compensated for (see case study: *Grassland destruction across the EU*), only strong legal frameworks will be able to achieve 'No Net Loss' of ecosystems in the EU. The mere set-up at EU level of a flexible framework for voluntary biodiversity offsets, as is being proposed by some, could result in the legitimisation of a 'licence to trash' without being able to enforce actual compensation. A serious and effective 'No Net Loss' approach should adopt a wide reaching scope including a strategy to restore a sound ecological baseline across Europe (see case study: *Lack of restoration of peatlands in Ireland*); the recognition of irreplaceable habitats and ecosystems; the drastic improvement of enforcement of the compensation schemes for damage done within Natura 2000 (see case study: *Lack of compensation*) and a biodiversity offset scheme for damage outside of protected areas that is based on robust principles and underpinned by legal control and enforcement frameworks. (see case study: *BirdLife position on biodiversity offsets*) On the latter, some private actors have in various ways already shown leadership and value by going beyond their legal obligations in taking responsibility for their impact on biodiversity (see case study: *Cement Industry voluntary commitments, Wallasea Island restoration in England*).

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE: FROM COMPENSATION TO CONSERVATION AND STRATEGIC RESTORATION

Mitigation of impacts should not only be applied at project level. In the context of a No Net Loss approach, the large scale, cumulative and gradual impacts of encroachment, land sealing and urban sprawl should be accounted for. The EU's Green Infrastructure Strategy would appear to be the adequate policy instrument to promote a systematic and integrated mechanism of large scale and planned mitigation, through the creation and restoration of Green Infrastructure elements. It would aim to "soften" our landscapes and ensure functional connectivity for various species. Businesses and land users should incorporate this way of thinking to their business model because ecosystem based solutions often are very cost-effective (see case study: *Futurescapes projects*). Whereas biodiversity protection is currently being portrayed as a break on economic development by an increasing number of EU governments, EU Member States are failing to support sustainable, efficient and multifunctional development solutions (see case study: *Ooijpolder climate buffer project*). Similarly, a voluntary approach to an 'EU Green Infrastructure' will not be sufficient; it needs to be resolutely integrated in the EU's CAP (e.g. by introducing farm level Ecological Focus Areas, see *Target 3*) and Cohesion Policy (e.g. by channelling EU funds to large scale restoration projects) and a major awareness shift needs to be achieved with all economic sectors that use and impact on land (see *Target 3*).

Voluntary business schemes, contractual agreements and minimum legal requirements for land users should all be part of the mix of policy tools that could make No Net Loss a reality. The current proposals for sectoral policy reform (mainly for agriculture and Cohesion Policy) presented by the European Commission do not reflect this priority.



SPATIAL PLANNING: THE BIG GAP

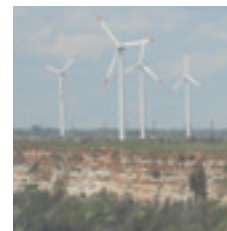
Ecosystems and their services are degraded and habitats are fragmented through poorly planned and implemented development, and more indirectly through the cumulative impact of uncontrolled land use change and land sealing (e.g. urban sprawl). A systematic and integrated approach to spatial planning lies at the core of a more sustainable use of the space and land that is at our disposal in Europe. Especially in times of financial crisis, priorities need to be set straight: direct benefits for nature and human well-being can be drawn from this as well as a reduction of potential future public costs through a better regulation of short term private benefits. The recent example of the combined effects, of harmful coastal development and sea-level rise on Portugal's coastline and its local communities shows the dramatic social consequences and enormous costs that bad planning practices can have. The severe erosion on 30% of the coastline may force a relocation of the local population.⁴⁹

ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE: REACHING CLIMATE TARGETS IN HARMONY WITH NATURE

The current EU push for the development of cross-border power lines, with the aim to achieve 'energy security' but also in order to enable greater use of renewable energy sources, needs to be planned well to avoid unnecessary impacts on the natural environment. Experience with the development of renewable energy capacity shows both good and poor practices in EU Member States. The key to success, for nature, for investor certainty and for public acceptance, is inevitably good and integrated spatial planning. Some technologies are inherently high risk for biodiversity, such as new hydro dams or tidal power barrages, and others are very low risk, such as roof-mounted solar panels. With most renewable energy technologies however, such as onshore and offshore wind, large-scale solar, wave, tidal

stream and bioenergy for heat and power, biodiversity impacts will depend on where and how development takes place. BirdLife Europe's analysis of National Renewable Energy Action Plans⁵⁰ found that these 'medium risk' technologies account for 80% of additional renewable energy consumption expected in Europe to 2020. Promoting the right technologies for the right locations is central to avoiding harm, and can be achieved through strategic spatial planning and through early and constructive dialogue between policy makers, developers and conservation NGOs. Differences in approaches to onshore wind power development across Europe illustrate clearly the benefits of avoiding harm in these ways (see case study: *Renewable energy and nature conservation*).

Increasingly, renewable energy developers and grid operators recognise the importance of avoiding unnecessary harm to biodiversity in planning new developments. The Renewables Grid Initiative is an innovative coalition of grid operators and environmental NGOs, exploring ways to improve the public acceptability of new power lines that the EU needs to accommodate for a high share of renewable energy. The European Grid Declaration⁵¹ on nature conservation, and other RGI initiatives to build dialogue and trust, show how much can be achieved where NGO and industry stakeholders come together to find common ground (see case study: *Renewables Grid Initiative*).



Poorly sighted wind farms, such as this complex in Kaliakra on the Bulgarian black sea coast, can cause negative impacts on biodiversity, both through habitat destruction and collision risk for birds and bats.

© RSPB-Images.com

- 49** ENDS Europe, Tuesday 3 April 2012, Portugal unable to pay for coastal protection.
- 50** BirdLife Europe (2011) Meeting Europe's Renewable Energy Targets in Harmony with Nature – Summary Report (eds. Scrase I. and Gove B.). The RSPB, Sandy, UK. http://www.rspb.org.uk/images/Renewable_energy_report_tcm9-297887.pdf
- 51** European Grid Declaration; <http://renewables-grid.eu/documents/eu-grid-declaration.html>

TARGET 3A: INCREASE THE CONTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY TO MAINTAINING AND ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY – AGRICULTURE

3a

TARGET THREE

EU target By 2020, maximise areas under agriculture across grasslands, arable land and permanent crops that are covered by biodiversity-related measures under the CAP so as to ensure the conservation of biodiversity and to bring about a measurable improvement (*⁵²) in the conservation status of species and habitats that depend on or are affected by agriculture and in the provision of ecosystem services as compared to the EU2010 Baseline, thus contributing to enhance sustainable management.

Relevant CBD Aichi Targets

Targets 7 and 8

Progress assessment summary

The conversion of semi-natural and natural habitats into agricultural land, agricultural intensification and the loss of High Nature Value (HNV) farmland due to abandonment are some of the main drivers of biodiversity loss in Europe. The current reform should reorient the common agricultural policy (CAP) and spending towards supporting the agricultural ecosystems that underpin production. Reform is needed to ensure that the most polluting practices are stopped and the High Nature Value farmers are incentivised to maintain the practices that sustain farmland biodiversity.

BirdLife progress assessment

Progress made:

- Several agri-environment schemes have proven that targeted policy making can make a difference for biodiversity (see case study: *Successful agri-environment schemes*).

Delays and missed opportunities:

- The European Commission has recognised in its legislative proposal that the delivery of public goods should be one of the three major purposes of the CAP. However the proposal does not go far enough in terms of minimum spending to the protection of natural resources and the delivery of environmental benefits, and a large amount of the budget is still handed out without environmental conditions attached to it.

Counter-productive developments:

- The EU budget proposal 2014-2020 does not direct sufficient funds towards the delivery of public goods in the CAP. Instead, it introduces flexibility for some EU Member States to shift money away from farmers delivering environmental public goods towards blunt income support (see *Chapter 1*).
- Currently grasslands have a weak protection because EU Member States only need to avoid the destruction of a national percentage of grassland cover. This does not prevent the conversion of some of our most biodiverse grasslands at farm level (see case study: *Grassland destruction across the EU and Scottish Machair project*).
- Common farmland birds continue to decline with no sign of recovery (see case study: *EU Farmland Bird Index*).
- Abandonment of High Nature Value farming is on-going throughout the EU. We are therefore losing rural livelihoods and some of our most valuable biodiversity in Europe (see case study: *Land abandonment*).
- Industrial agriculture remains one of the most problematic sectors for biodiversity and the wider environment through water pollution and over-abstraction, soil erosion, the loss of our genetic diversity etc. (see case study: *Impacts of agriculture on water and soil*).

NOTE All case studies referred to in the report are available online at: www.birdlife.org/eubiodiversityreport2012

⁵² (*) For both targets, improvement is to be measured against the quantified enhancement targets for the conservation status of species and habitats of EU interest in Target 1 and the restoration of degraded ecosystems under Target 2.



Milestones - what needs to be achieved by 2014

- > The CAP budget is reoriented towards the delivery of public goods (see case study: *Hope Farm project and BirdLife position on CAP reform*).
- > All CAP payments are underpinned by strong cross compliance and include key aspects such as the Water Framework Directive, the Birds and Habitats Directive and the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive (see case study: *Bird trapping on farmland in Cyprus*).
- > A package of greening measures at farm level is in place for direct payments to farmers. This includes crop rotation, soil cover, 10% of Ecological Focus Areas (EFA) and permanent pasture protection.
- > The rural development component of the CAP now includes
 - 1) sufficient spending for targeted environmental measures and support to farmers managing Natura 2000;
 - 2) recognition of High Nature Value farming;
 - 3) “biodiversity proof” rural development spending and not income support through insurance schemes (see case study: *The value of HNV farming*).

THE CAP AND AGRICULTURE: AN ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS DRIVEN BY BAD POLICY

The CAP has over the last 50 years played a hugely damaging role by handing out subsidies to farmers and artificially boosting their production to the detriment of the environment and developing countries. Despite subsequent rounds of reform, which have removed many perverse subsidies, the CAP still fails to address the challenges agriculture and land management face in the 21st century: continuing biodiversity decline, water pollution and unsustainable abstraction, soil degradation, accelerating climate change and unsustainable demand for food and energy (see case study: *Impacts of agriculture on water and soil*). Unless the CAP is reformed, the challenges will intensify and spread across the EU.

Currently intensive use of land reduces biodiversity richness, and almost one third of Europe’s Important Bird Areas (IBA) are threatened by agricultural intensification and expansion.⁵³ Populations of farmland birds in Europe, which are also an indicator of the health of the ecosystem as a whole, have declined by more than 50% in the past 30 years.⁵⁴ This totals to around 300 million farmland birds that have been lost since 1980.⁵⁵ If we don’t halt the continuing loss of habitats and intensification of farming practices, challenges facing biodiversity will continue to increase (see case study: *EU Farmland Bird Index*).



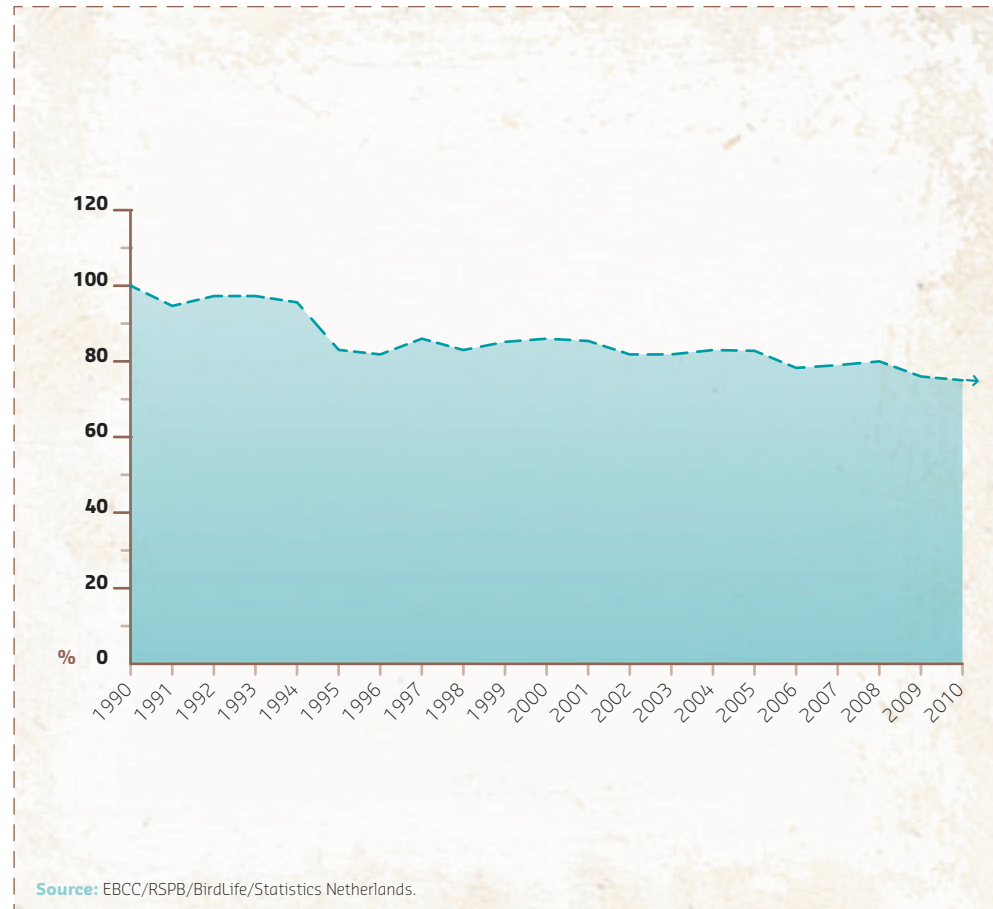
The Corn bunting is still a very common bird in High Nature Value farming areas, but its populations have collapsed in intensively farmed parts of Europe such as Ireland, Belgium or Northern Italy.

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- ⁵³ BirdLife International (2004) Agricultural intensification threatens Important Bird Areas in Europe. Presented as part of the BirdLife State of the world’s birds website. Available from: www.birdlife.org/datazone/sowb/casestudy/140. Checked: 31 July 2012
- ⁵⁴ Population Trends of Common European Breeding Birds 2012, Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme, June 2012. Available from: www.ebcc.info/index.php?ID=494
- ⁵⁵ Birdlife International Press Release, 17 July 2012, www.birdlife.org/community/2012/07/300-million-farmland-birds-lost-since-1980-how-many-more-must-we-lose-before-changing-course-on-the-cap/



Figure 2: FARMLAND BIRD INDICATOR, EU, 1990–2010
(37 SPECIES)



GREENING OF INCOME SUPPORT TO FARMERS: IMPROVING BASIC PRACTICE ACROSS THE LANDSCAPE

In order to truly make the CAP deliver for the environment, green conditions for direct income support to farmers should be put in place ('greening' of Pillar I of the CAP). This would ensure a minimum level of environmental delivery across the farmed landscape and provide a solid basis on which rural development measures can build up (Pillar II of the CAP). Linking 30% of direct income support with environmentally meaningful farming practices is key to incentivising farmers to adopt best practices (see case study: *BirdLife position on CAP reform*).

Such practices include the protection and/or set-up of Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs) (a minimum percentage at farm level of natural areas and landscape elements), crop rotation, soil cover and grassland protection. These measures all need to be mandatory and need to be considered as a package of 'greening measures' as opposed to a pick and choose menu of measures.

Ecological Focus Areas provide habitat and ensure connectivity for a variety of farmland species, and provide basic services that benefit agricultural production (e.g. support pollinators, erosion control) and the environment. The mandatory maintenance of EFA at farm level as a condition for direct income support for farmers has significant potential both to recognise and reward farmers who have kept these useful features on their farm and to drive others to incorporate them. All landscape elements that are part of the farm, including those currently not eligible for subsidies (because they are not considered as productive areas), should be eligible to count as Ecological Focus Areas. A minimum of 10% at farm level of EFA is necessary in order to achieve significant ecological effects throughout the landscape. Positive management of these landscape features must also be encouraged through agri-environment schemes.



Crop rotation and soil cover are fundamental agronomic practices in farming. They play important roles in the protection of soil; a major resource for our agricultural production system. However our soils are in a grim state. Long-term land use scenarios indicate that unless intensive agricultural production undertakes corrective action, soil biodiversity and soil functions may not be economically profitable after 2050⁵⁶ (see case study: *Impacts of agriculture on water and soil*). In order to maintain soil quality and preserve biodiversity, decision makers must support effective measures such as crop rotation and soil cover. The European Commission has proposed to use an obligation of ‘crop diversity’ to deal with the issue of increasing landscape homogeneity. Although this measure may provide some protection against the negative effects of large monocultures (i.e. maize), it cannot deliver the same benefits as a ‘crop rotation measure’. The latter provides positive benefits in terms of soil quality and productivity by conserving soil organic matter and soil biodiversity. Moreover, a ‘soil cover measure’ was also left out of the European Commission’s proposal for reform, whereas it should be a comprehensive part of the greening because of its benefits for soil protection, mainly against erosion.



The conservation of biodiversity and the provision of vital ecosystem services, such as pollination and pest control, require the maintenance of a farm level Green Infrastructure (Environmental Focus Areas). Hedgerows and pockets of natural vegetation, like here in Sardinia, Italy, can greatly improve the ecological quality of farmed landscapes.

© Ariel Brunner

Grassland protection is vital for the conservation of many species and for European biodiversity. Central European grasslands have even been found to be, with South America’s tropical rainforests, the richest in plant species in the world.⁵⁷ Yet grasslands are threatened by a variety of changes in land use including conversion to arable farming (e.g. for energy crops), intensification of management, overgrazing, land abandonment, urban development and afforestation (see case study: *Grassland destruction across the EU; Scottish Machair project*). One of the largest contributing factors to the loss of grasslands is that farmers are not incentivised to preserve them. Land managers should be rewarded through the CAP for continuing the extensive management of semi-natural grasslands and decision makers should ensure that our most high biodiverse grasslands are not destroyed.



Olive grove maintained on completely bare soil, La Mancha, Spain. This type of management is common even though it causes soil erosion, loss of soil organic matter, water pollution and negative impacts on native biodiversity.

© Trees Robijns



Dry grasslands, such as this one in southern France need to be protected from conversion to arable or permanent crops. They also need to be maintained through active grazing, which on marginal land can often only continue with appropriate public support.

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56 Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions; The implementation of the Soil Thematic Strategy and ongoing activities, Brussels (02/13/2012) COM(2012) 46 Final

57 “The maximum richnesses found at smaller grains ($_{50}$ m²) proved to be in semi-natural, oligo- to mesotrophic, temperate grasslands, managed by chronic mowing, grazing or fire” see pp. 797-798 (Table 1, Fig. 1a). Wilson, J. B., Peet, R. K., Dengler, J., Pärtel, M. (2012). Plant species richness: the world records. *Journal of Vegetation Science*.



RURAL DEVELOPMENT: A LIFELINE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE RURAL COUNTRYSIDE

Well-designed and adequately funded rural development measures deliver clear benefits to society and represent a genuine return for the public's investment in agriculture. Such measures do not only provide the most effective means of conserving biodiversity in farmland habitats that are under threat, they also contribute to wider economic and social goals, including support to maintain viable farming and rural communities.

Agri-environment schemes are the green backbone of the CAP; they include voluntary management schemes at farm level that provide environmental benefits. Good farming practices that deliver public goods do not have to come at the expense of production; on the contrary they can even boost production (see case study: *Hope Farm project*). The schemes are intended to target money at farming practices and measures, which allow wildlife to thrive, maintain clean air and water, and protect cultural landscapes. Targeted agri-environment schemes, containing options designed to reverse the causes of biodiversity loss, can be very efficient in increasing wildlife numbers. The key to successful agri-environment schemes lies in their design, their targeting, science based prescriptions, appropriate funding and the possibility to adjust the scheme to specific contexts (see case study: *Successful agri-environment schemes*).

A stronger support is also needed for **High Nature Value (HNV) farming**. HNV farming is normally of low intensity (low number of grazing animals, fewer artificial inputs, greater mix of natural features), this means that landscapes dominated by HNV farming systems retain the highest levels of farmland biodiversity (see case study: *The value of HNV farming*). These systems are under threat due to intensification pressure in fertile areas and abandonment because

of the low socio-economic viability of these systems (see case study: *Land abandonment across the EU*). Both abandonment and intensification of land inevitably diminish the quality of grasslands, lead to loss of habitats, pollinators and pose threats to many species and ecosystem services.

The Natura 2000 network is designed to protect key European species and their habitats, it is the EU's most consistent effort to halt biodiversity decline yet (see *Target 1*). Up to 30% of Natura 2000 sites are on agricultural land and depend on appropriate farming practices. Targeting **Rural Development spending** to farmers who are actively managing Natura 2000 is therefore a very effective use of EU funds in view of reaching environmental objectives (see case study: *Natura 2000 management through rural development*) should prioritise this type of spending.



High Nature Value systems, such as this grazed woodland in Spain's Sierra de Gredos, are often threatened by land abandonment and receive very little support from the current CAP.

© Pierre Commenville



However as many EU Member States have not yet set out concrete management prescriptions for farmers in Natura 2000 (e.g. through the development of site management plans as required by EU Nature legislation - see *Target 1*) this type of targeted spending is almost non-existent. Even though clearer management prescriptions would improve farmers' awareness of their role and responsibility within Natura 2000 and would serve the EU Member States by ensuring a better national compliance with the objectives of the Birds and Habitats Directives.

If the CAP is to play its part in creating a more sustainable future, it must substantially increase funding for Rural Development measures, including funding for targeted and well implemented environmental schemes. Despite clear benefits for the environment and wider society, Rural Development Policy currently only receives 25% of the CAP budget. Well targeted environmental schemes (such as agri-environment and Natura 2000 schemes) should receive a minimum of 50% of each Member State's Rural Development expenditure, to underline their value and importance. These measures have proven their value, not only for biodiversity but also for resource protection, climate change and farm business viability. Such schemes are the embodiment of a 'public money for public goods' approach and it is vital that they play a stronger role within the CAP.



The Collared Pratincole is a ground nesting bird that is highly vulnerable to nest destruction through farming operations. Targeted agri-environmental measures have shown good results in the conservation of this species.

© David Dillon

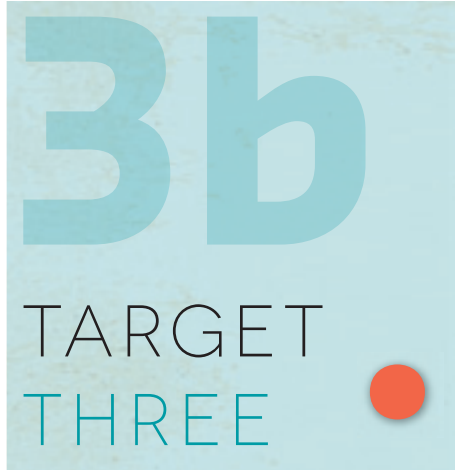


Highly effective agri-environmental schemes and good involvement of local farmers have led to an outstanding increase in Great bustard numbers in the Villafafila SPA in Spain.

© Stefan Benko



TARGET 3B: INCREASE THE CONTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY TO MAINTAINING AND ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY – FORESTRY



EU target By 2020, Forest Management Plans or equivalent instruments, in line with Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), are in place for all forests that are publicly owned and for forest holdings above a certain size that receive funding under the EU Rural Development Policy so as to bring about a measurable improvement in the conservation status of species and habitats that depend on or are affected by forestry and in the provision of related ecosystem services as compared to the EU 2010 Baseline.

Relevant CBD Aichi Target Target 7

Progress assessment summary

Across the EU, even in legally designated Natura 2000 areas, unsustainable forestry management prevails over biodiversity friendly solutions. The fundamental cause for this lies in the continuing predominance of wood production as the main management objective, while other key forest functions are not sufficiently valued. Forests undisturbed by humans are estimated to amount to a mere 4% of forest areas in Europe. The EU should develop guidelines on criteria and indicators of Sustainable Forest Management as an instrument for an improved and harmonised interpretation and application of this concept through national legislation and sectoral programmes.

BirdLife progress assessment

Progress made:

- > Data on status of EU forest habitats has improved thanks to the Habitats Directives reporting, however basic forest data is still lacking for most Member States and data harmonisation at EU level is very partial.
- > The on-going development of the EU 2020 Forest Strategy is a step in the right direction, but worries exist over its final quality, in particular as regards the balance between biodiversity and climate adaptation concerns versus timber and biomass production.
- > An EU proposal is being developed on mandatory accounting rules and action plans on greenhouse gas emissions and removals resulting from activities related to land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) in the EU.

Delays and missed opportunities:

- > Clear and detailed guidelines, criteria and indicators for Sustainable Forest Management are lacking, which hampers the proper implementation through national legislation and sectoral programmes.
- > In most EU Member States sufficient progress has not been made in developing conservation objectives and management plans for forest Natura 2000 sites.
- > The crucial role of forests undisturbed by humans (wilderness areas) in halting the loss of biodiversity by 2020,⁵⁸ is not considered enough; the remaining dispersal of these forests is very limited across the EU.

Counter-productive developments:

- > In many European countries state forests have been increasingly privatised or public forest management bodies forced to become more commercial, with a consequent shift of focus from a broader multifunctional approach to a narrower focus on timber extraction (see case study: *Exploitation of high biodiversity forest*).
- > The EU Renewable Energy Directive and other policies have been pushing a rapid expansion in the use of wood for energy without sustainability criteria.

NOTE All case studies referred to in the report are available online at: www.birdlife.org/eubiodiversityreport2012

⁵⁸ European Parliament resolution of 3 February 2009 on Wilderness in Europe (P6_TA(2009)0034)



Milestones - what needs to be achieved by 2014

- > The EU 2020 Forest Strategy and Action Plan truly balance economic and social functions with biodiversity and other ecosystem functions and provide incentives for maintaining forest ecosystem services.
- > EU Member States are aiming to expand old growth (>120 years old) forests (both distribution and cover area); EU Member States commit to increase the share of strictly protected forest to 10% by 2020 (see case study: *Exploitation of high biodiversity forest*).
- > EU Member States developed 'real' management plans for forest Natura 2000 Areas in which productive interests are secondary to the conservation objectives of the site. EU funding is granted only to forests that have a Forest Management Plan (or equivalent) which includes biodiversity measures (see case study: *Exploitation of high biodiversity forest*).
- > The EU is developing a reliable long term forest information system.
- > The EU championed a binding pan- European forest framework, based on the need for multi-functionality and long-term sustainability of forests.
- > The EU ensured that its Renewable Energy Policy (including bioenergy) does not pose new threats to forests inside and outside the EU (see *Target 6*).
- > The EU improved its biomass sustainability criteria and adopted new legally binding sustainability criteria for woody biomass that ensure biodiversity protection and efficiency of consumption.

EUROPEAN FORESTS: QUANTITY WITHOUT QUALITY

The conservation status of many forest species of European concern⁵⁹ continues to be very poor; a characteristic example is the old-growth boreal forests in which about 1.000 species are at serious extinction risk in the long term (see case study: *Exploitation of high biodiversity forest*). The persistent poor conservation status of many forest species of European concern is directly related to the small numbers of remaining old growth forests:⁶⁰ 18% of European forests⁶¹ are older than 80 years, and there is no reliable data for forests of more than 120 years. Forests undisturbed by humans (wilderness areas) are estimated to amount to a mere 4% of forest areas in Europe; in the EU these are mainly located in Bulgaria and Romania.⁶² A goal of 10% of strictly protected areas in Europe could be a good starting point for ensuring good conservation status for forest species and habitats.



Logging in Finland. Industrial logging has wiped out most of the old growth forest in Sweden and Finland. Only tiny amounts of "productive forest" have been protected and logging keeps consuming the last pockets of biologically valuable boreal forest in some of EU's most economically advanced Member States.

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⁵⁹ EEA, 2010. *The European environment — state and outlook 2010: synthesis*. European Environment Agency, Copenhagen

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ FOREST EUROPE Liaison Unit Oslo, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, UNECE/ FAO. *State of Europe's Forests 2011: Status & Trends in Sustainable Forest Management in Europe*

⁶² Veen, P.; Fanta, J.; Raev, I.; Biris, L.-A.; de Smidt, J.; Maes, B., 2010. 'Virgin forests in Romania and Bulgaria: results of two national inventory projects and their implications for protection.' *Biodiversity and Conservation*. Volume 19, Number 6 (2010), 1805-1819, DOI: 10.1007/s10531-010-9804-2



The EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020 proposes the sustainable management of forests as the only method to enhance the contribution of forestry in the protection of forest biodiversity, while not putting sufficient emphasis on the crucial role of strictly protected core areas for improving in the conservation status of forest species and habitats. According to the EEA,⁶³ although most European forests are heavily exploited, the current total wood harvest remains well below the annual re-growth. In some EU Member States forest management techniques have also improved over the years (e.g. Germany, Belgium, Sweden or Finland). Here attention is now also being given to soil protection, water storage or reduced use of pesticides. However, in most cases the core objectives of management, i.e. wood production, mainly remain the same, even within Natura 2000 sites. In most cases the obligation to develop specific Natura 2000 management plans as a tool for reaching conservation objectives, is not fulfilled, and conservation management remains secondary to other targets (see case study: *Exploitation of high biodiversity forest*). Some EU Member States have invested in preventive protection measures (e.g. Cyprus and France against forest fires), but in other cases protection measures are also used to justify intensive logging and harvesting (e.g. Latvia or Slovakia).

It is important for the new EU 2020 Forest Strategy and Action Plan to include agreed EU definitions and guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management, combined with an evaluation framework. This policy should also explore options for payments for ecosystem services in order to reward ecosystem conservation.

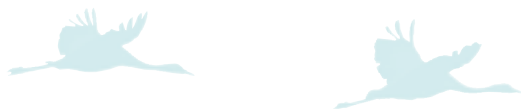
Finally, questions on the sustainable management of EU forests and its effects on biodiversity, will remain unanswered as long as a reliable and long-term common forest information scheme is not developed and adopted by all EU Member States.



A clear cut in the Tatra mountains in Slovakia. Large scale and unsustainable logging is devastating forests even inside Natura 2000 sites.

© Milan Barlog

⁶³ EEA, 2010. *The European environment — state and outlook 2010: synthesis*. European Environment Agency, Copenhagen.



TARGET 4: ENSURE THE SUSTAINABLE USE OF FISHERIES RESOURCES



EU target Achieve Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) by 2015. Achieve a population age and size distribution indicative of a healthy stock, through fisheries management with no significant adverse impacts on other stocks, species and ecosystems, in support of achieving Good Environmental Status by 2020, as required under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

Relevant CBD Aichi Targets

Targets 6 and 10

Progress assessment summary

75% of assessed European fish stocks are overfished and fishing activities inflict widespread collateral damage on marine ecosystems, including seabirds and other marine wildlife.⁶⁴ Excessive EU fleet capacity built and modernised with EU subsidies is one of the key problems. The reform of the Common Fisheries Policy is an opportunity to rebuild EU fish stock, match EU fishing capacity to the resources available and promote and reward sustainable fishing practices, while eliminating the most damaging ones.

BirdLife progress assessment

Progress made:

- > The Commission proposal for the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) includes a strong commitment to reach MSY by 2015.
- > Some EU fish stocks are already being exploited at MSY rates: in 2011, 13 out of the 35 Atlantic stocks, 2 out of the 11 Baltic stocks and 11 out of the 61 Mediterranean stocks for which the MSY rate has been determined were assessed to be exploited at the MSY rate.
- > The Commission is in the process of adopting an EU Plan of Action for reducing incidental catches of seabirds in fishing gears (see case study: *Sea-birds by-catch*).

NOTE All case studies referred to in the report are available online at: www.birdlife.org/eubiodiversityreport2012

- > The Commission's proposal for the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, provides opportunities for funding measures to support sustainable fisheries and aims to eliminate negative impacts on marine ecosystems and marine protected areas (see *Chapter 1*).
- > Ecological Quality Objectives (EcoQOs) for e.g. seabird distribution and abundance are being adopted through OSPAR and core indicators for biodiversity, including seabirds, are being adopted through HELCOM CORESET and used for Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) assessments.

Delays and missed opportunities:

- > The Commission, in its proposal on the CFP reform, failed to include ambitious objectives and mechanism to stop by-catch of unwanted organisms and to promote low impact fishing and failed to present a credible policy for reducing the EU's fleet capacity.
- > In June 2012, EU Fisheries Ministers agreed less ambitious deadlines on aspects of CFP reform than proposed by the Commission, in particular on the issues of MSY and phasing out discards.
- > The adoption of EU fisheries management plans is blocked due to the post-Lisbon interpretation of competences between the European Council and the European Parliament.
- > EU Member States progress slowly in designating marine Natura 2000 sites. The process for regulating fisheries in those areas is complicated (see case study: *Management challenges on Dogger Bank SPA*; see *Target 1*).

⁶⁴ European Commission explanatory document in the context of CFP reform on Maximum Sustainable Yield (http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/reform/docs/msy_en.pdf)



- > EU Member States fail to provide adequate and reliable data on fish stocks and other parts of marine ecosystems.

Counter-productive developments:

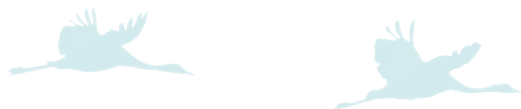
- > Due to insufficient designation of Marine Natura 2000 sites, the proposal for a Maritime Spatial Planning Directive (due in the second half of 2012) risks increasing pressure on sensitive areas not yet protected.
- > Most of the EU Member States supported an extremely weak Danish Presidency compromise text on the CFP regulation, which confirmed that within the European Council there is no appetite for an ambitious reform.
- > In the context of MSFD implementation, EU Member States' definition of Good Environmental Status (GES) and associated targets and indicators show very low levels of ambition and coordination (see case study: *Target setting under the MSFD*).

Milestones - what needs to be achieved by 2014

- > EU Member States and the European Parliament supported an ambitious CFP reform to restore fish stocks and ensure minimisation of fisheries impact on marine ecosystems.
- > The European Commission and EU Member States approved the framework for developing ecosystem based Multiannual Plans and are in the process of developing them for each fishery by 2015.
- > EU Member States designated their marine Natura 2000 network, and are finalising the development of management plans (see case study: *Marine Natura 2000 management*).

- > EU Member States and the European Commission are implementing the EU Action plan for reducing incidental catches of seabirds, collecting data on seabird by-catch and implementing proven mitigation measures in fisheries (see case study: *BirdLife priorities for implementation of the Seabird by-catch Action plan*).
- > EU Member States, in their programming documents for the EMFF, included support for marine protected areas and sustainable fishing methods.
- > A new EU framework for data collection includes a strong system of penalties for non-compliance with a view to significantly step up data collection in fisheries including wider ecosystem data (such as for example on seabird by-catch).
- > EU Member States set clear and ambitious targets for delivering Good Environmental Status under the MSFD and are finalising integrated transboundary monitoring programme of monitoring to deliver these at the regional and sub-regional level.





EU COMMON FISHERIES POLICY: MANAGING COLLAPSE

Today, around 75% of fish stocks in the EU are overfished – a result of an extremely poor fisheries management in the EU including setting the fishing quotas too high and not allowing fish to grow and reproduce at natural levels; discarding fish overboard and using taxpayer’s money to invest in vessels leading to overcapacity.



EU trawlers with subsidies in Bornholm island southern Baltic Proper, Denmark.
© Oceana/LX

In July 2011 the European Commission published its proposal for the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) Reform, which will be the key instrument for delivering on the target 4 of the EU Biodiversity Strategy. On the positive side, the proposal includes a strong objective of stock recovery beyond the MSY levels, but overall it lacks the ambition, the urgency and concrete means needed to tackle the dire situation of European fish stocks and marine ecosystems. The proposal lacks a credible plan for reducing over-capacity and does not include sufficient incentives (for example in the form of preferential access to fisheries resources) to promote low impact and sustainable fisheries.

The ball is now in the hands of the European Parliament and the European Council and early indications show that the European Parliament will seek to support and strengthen the European Commission proposal. In June 2012, however, EU Fisheries Ministers at the Council agreed a less ambitious compromise position, allowing deadlines for reaching MSY levels and phasing out discards to be extended beyond 2015, continuing the trend of most EU Member States to defend the short-term interests of a handful of businesses at the expense of the long-term future of fish and fisheries in Europe.

It can though be appreciated that the European Parliament seeks to strengthen the links between the CFP and environmental legislation, namely the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and the Birds and Habitats Directives. It is concerning, therefore, that early consultations from EU Member States on the MSFD are not setting ambitious targets for fisheries (see case study: *Target setting under the MSFD*).



Puffins depend on a healthy supply of sandeels, a species being hammered by both climate change and industrial fishing.
© Chris Gomersall

Next to the CFP regulation, the new European Commission proposal for European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) published in December 2011 will be a key instrument to support the Marine biodiversity target. The proposal includes opportunities for supporting sustainable fisheries,



including the participation of fishermen in the protection and restoration of marine biodiversity and ecosystems, such as collection of marine litter, management, restoration and monitoring of Natura 2000 sites and of other Marine Protected Areas as well as measures aiming to reduce the impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems, such as by-catch. However, these opportunities will become good news for marine ecosystems only if EU Member States include them in their operational programmes and back them up with adequate funding.

ECOSYSTEM-BASED APPROACH: THERE'S NO CATCH...

With the introduction of an ecosystem approach to fisheries management in the 2002 CFP reform, the EU committed to conduct its fisheries in a way that minimises damage to the marine environment. This need has been reiterated in the EU Biodiversity Strategy which calls for a fisheries management that would not significantly impact on other species and ecosystems, in support of achieving Good Environment Status under the MSFD. The current European Commission's CFP reform proposal aims to strengthen the ecosystem based approach in fisheries through technical measures and multiannual plans, but it fails short of providing tools and incentives for a genuine shift towards an ecosystem approach.

Seabirds, which account for 12% of birds in the EU, are one of the most visible and best studied groups of species. Unfortunately, they are currently a good indicator of how far from reality an ecosystem-based approach still is (see case study: *Sea-birds by-catch*). It has taken the European Commission more than a decade to adopt the *EU Action Plan for reducing incidental catches of seabirds in fisheries* – the EU's blue print for addressing the seabird by-catch issue. There is a still long way to go, before the proposed actions are implemented to stop the death of estimated 200 000 seabirds per year (see case study: *BirdLife priorities for implementation of the Seabird by-Catch Action Plan*).

⁶⁵ Including that “changes in breeding seabird abundance should be within target levels for 75 % of the species monitored in any of the OSPAR Regions or their sub-divisions.”

⁶⁶ Read more in: <http://icesjms.oxfordjournals.org/content/65/8/1392.full>

⁶⁷ Helsinki Commission, Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission, Development of a set of core indicators: Interim report of the HELCOM CORESET project, Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings No. 129B, www.helcom.fi/stc/files/Publications/Proceedings/BSEP_129B_CORESET.pdf



A hook wedged in the bill of a Gannet. By-catch in fishing gear is just one of the problems affecting fisheries that the EU has still grossly failed to address. © David Grémillet

One of the reasons why the EU has been failing to deliver on the ecosystem approach to fisheries management is the lack of systematic data collection on the impacts of fisheries on marine ecosystems. It is vital that the new Data Collection Regulation obliges EU Member States to collect and share ecosystem data, including on seabird by-catch.

A positive development is the Ecological Quality Objectives (EcoQOs) for seabird abundance⁶⁵ developed for the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR), were officially adopted at the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) Working Group for seabird ecology in January 2012 and will be assessed on an annual basis.⁶⁶ Other EcoQOs relating to seabirds are also being proposed for seabird targets under the MSFD, which will hopefully give them a stronger status and help to achieve a greater level of coordination between EU Member States where they are proposed as GES targets.

Regional coordination has also been carried out in the Baltic Sea, where the HELCOM CORESET project is developing core indicators for the abundance of waterbirds in the breeding season and wintering season, the number of oiled waterbirds and the number of drowned waterbirds in fishing gears. The HELCOM core indicators, once approved by the Contracting Parties, will be used for Baltic Sea wide assessments for the MSFD and the Baltic Sea Action Plan.⁶⁷



TARGET 5: COMBAT INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES

5

TARGET FIVE

EU target By 2020, Invasive Alien Species and their pathways are identified and prioritised, priority species are controlled or eradicated, and pathways are managed to prevent the introduction and establishment of new IAS.

Relevant CBD Aichi Target Target 9

NOTE All case studies referred to in the report are available online at:
www.birdlife.org/eubiodiversityreport2012

Progress assessment summary

EU legislation to tackle the issue of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) is urgently needed. Despite support from the European Council and European Parliament for legislation, the European Commission has yet to publish any legislative proposals, although a stakeholder consultation process has been set up to support the drafting process. Meanwhile the damage caused by IAS in the EU currently is estimated to cost at least 12 000 million EUR annually, and their impacts are increasing.

BirdLife progress assessment

Progress made:

- > The European Commission has been working on legislative proposals since 2008, and has convened stakeholder consultation groups to advise on tackling the issue at EU level, but no proposals have yet been published, and some sectors are opposed to restrictions on the release of non-native species into the wild.
- > The EU already has comprehensive and strict plant and animal health legislation in place, which addresses those invasive species that constitute a threat to human health and to commercial animal and plant species. This legislation does not tackle the impacts of IAS on biodiversity.

- > A significant number of EU Member States already have national measures in place, but approaches vary enormously between EU Member States, and there is little or no harmonisation or consistency between neighbouring countries. There is a similar lack of co-ordination between the EU and both its immediate neighbours and trading partners (see case study: *Cooperation on Ruddy duck eradication*).
- > The EU has supported a project to compile a Database of Alien Invasive Species in Europe (DAISIE) which is intended to support delivery of an EU strategy on invasive species and any legislation.

Delays and missed opportunities:

- > Other environmental pressures, in particular climate change, increased deposition of nitrogen, changes in land management, and the destruction of natural habitats, make it yet more likely that new invasive alien species will be able to establish.

Counter-productive developments:

- > The number of Invasive Alien Species in the EU is growing daily, as are their economic and ecological impacts. Tackling IAS requires EU and global efforts. EC budget proposal 2014-2020 largely ignores global biodiversity funding.
- > The European Commission is resistant to spend LIFE funds on projects in the Overseas Countries and Territories, where the impacts of IAS are particularly significant.



Milestones - what needs to be achieved by 2014

- > EU strategy on Invasive Alien Species is published and includes comprehensive legislative proposals based on the three-stage hierarchical approach in line with the guiding principles of the CBD: Prevention, Early warning and rapid eradication, Long-term control and containment.
- > Financial resources are available to enable EU Member States to deliver management measures when needed. This includes a central EU emergency fund for rapid response to new invasive alien species; Compensation when mandatory control action is required, following the animal health model; EU LIFE funding and a replenished BEST scheme for work to alleviate the impacts of Invasive Alien Species in the EU and in the EU's Overseas Countries and Territories (see case study: *Tropical biodiversity of the EU*).

INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES: ENSURING EUROPE'S BIOSECURITY

Invasive alien species (IAS) are one of the main drivers affecting global biodiversity, but there is currently no comprehensive instrument at EU level to tackle this issue.

Over the last 500 years, invasive alien species have been partly or wholly responsible for the extinction of at least 68 bird species, representing half of all birds (135 species) driven to global extinction, and making this the most common contributory factor in recent losses to the world's avifauna. At the same time the damage caused by IAS in the EU currently is estimated to cost at least 12 billion EUR annually,⁶⁸ and as their impacts increase, so do the associated costs. The most urgent priorities for action should be those habitats most vulnerable to damage caused by IAS, namely freshwater habitats and islands (see case study: *Tropical biodiversity of the EU*).

Co-ordinated action at the earliest invasion stage is, by far, the most cost-effective and environmentally beneficial response to these threats. In a trading unit such as the EU, this means coherent action across the whole community is needed (see case study: *Cooperation on Ruddy duck eradication*). While the failure of any one Member State to take co-ordinated action on IAS puts the entire Community at risk.



The Coypus rat has been imported from South America for fur production but escaped animals have overrun large parts of the continent, causing significant damage to wetland habitats.

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⁶⁸ Shine, C. et al. 2010, Assessment to support continued development of the EU strategy to combat invasive alien species. IEEP, Brussels, Belgium.



The European Commission's decision to develop a co-ordinated EU-wide strategy to tackle IAS by 2012 is a positive step forward, but it needs to follow a three-stage hierarchical approach for both new introductions and the management of established IAS:

- 1 Prevention. Prevention is generally far more cost-effective and environmentally desirable than measures taken following introduction and establishment of IAS.
- 2 Early detection and rapid eradication. If an IAS has been introduced, early detection and rapid eradication is the most cost-effective way of preventing its establishment and wider spread.
- 2 Long-term control and containment. If eradication is not feasible, populations of IAS should, if possible, be controlled in the long term to prevent further spread.

More specifically, a White List approach should be adopted to deliberate introductions throughout the EU, i.e. there should be a general presumption in EU law against the introduction of non-native animals and plants into the wild. This precautionary approach is necessary because our ability to predict which species will cause problems is very imperfect. A Black List and Alert List approach should be adopted to record movement and trade of potentially harmful non-native species. The lists of potentially harmful species should be produced via mandatory national Risk Assessment, and regularly updated with special arrangements for the Outermost Regions.

These preventive measures must be supported with measures targeting the main pathways for the introduction of IAS, including shipping and forestry, a risk-assessment based approach to identifying and tackling IAS, and properly resourced, coordinated early warning and rapid response capacities at Member State level. Eradication or containment action for established IAS should be mandatory and should be based on a series of tests designed to assess the problem, and the feasibility and possible impacts of eradication/ control/containment measures on non-target species/habitats. A central EU emergency fund for rapid response to IAS is needed to ensure that the EU is able to respond to the unforeseen establishment of new IAS.



The Ruddy duck, introduced from America has spread from the UK to continental Europe posing a threat through hybridisation to the native White headed duck.

© Francois Van Bauwel



TARGET 6: HELP AVERT GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY LOSS

6

TARGET SIX

EU target By 2020, the EU has stepped up its contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.

Relevant CBD Aichi Targets Support to developing countries on all targets; special importance of targets 2, 3, 4, 10, 16 and 20.

NOTE All case studies referred to in the report are available online at: www.birdlife.org/eubiodiversityreport2012

Progress assessment summary

The EU is a major driver of global biodiversity loss through some of its common policies, harmful subsidies, and unsustainable production and consumption patterns. Despite its relatively progressive role in multilateral environmental agreements and although first initiatives have been taken to increase resource efficiency, no significant progress of the EU in actively reducing its global ecological footprint can be observed.⁶⁹ In particular, the EU-bioenergy policy is expected to have an increasingly detrimental impact on global ecosystems, as EU subsidized overfishing already has.

At the same time, despite promises made in 2010 the EU is so far failing to demonstrate it will mobilise its fair share of financial resources to address global biodiversity loss. The public budget crisis makes decision makers point at the need for private sector contributions; however they are shying away from proposing concrete and legally binding solutions in this respect.

BirdLife progress assessment

Progress made:

- > The EU has been instrumental for progress of the CBD (adoption of Strategic Plan 2011–2020, Nagoya Protocol), TEEB and IPBES.
- > The European Commission launched a 2020 “flagship initiative” on resource efficiency.

- > The EU adopted a Timber Regulation (prohibition of selling illegally harvested timber).
- > Several EU Member States made unilateral pledges at the CBD and UNFCCC (Green Climate Fund) for higher contributions to global biodiversity action – while questions about additionality of these funds remain largely unresolved.

Delays and missed opportunities:

- > Most EU Member States and the EU (through its own budget) are reluctant to commit sufficient financial resources for global biodiversity action.
- > For two years the EU has financed a Preparatory Action for the Voluntary scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories (BEST). However, the EU has not provided clarity on the implementation of the scheme beyond its preparatory phase, including ensuring sufficient funding sources. E.g. despite proposing to widen the territorial scope of its environmental funding programme LIFE, the European Commission is reluctant to explicitly include Overseas Countries and Territories.
- > The European Commission failed to deliver a strategy for environmental mainstreaming in EU development aid programmes (agreed in the European Council for 2011).

⁶⁹ see analyses of the EU's ecological footprint by the Global Footprint Network (www.footprintnetwork.org).



Counter-productive developments:

- > The EU Member States risk to reject even relatively unambitious reform proposals on EU agriculture and fisheries subsidies; a systematic strategy to phase out environmentally harmful subsidies is lacking, with detrimental ecological consequences around the globe (both direct, and through sending wrong political signals).
- > EU Renewable Energy Policy lacks important sustainability safeguards, in particular on biomass production and biofuels where the EU is reluctant to include a factor of Indirect Land Use Change (ILUC).

Milestones - what needs to be achieved by 2014

- > The EU committed at global level to support developing countries in reaching the CBD objectives through reliable, predictable and adequate financial flows; at CBD-COP 11 specific targets have been agreed for Resource Mobilisation and sufficient funding is mobilised for the Global Environment Facility (GEF) by EU Member States.
- > The EU 2014-2020 budget mainstreams biodiversity adequately in development aid and climate financing programmes, and tracks biodiversity expenditure.
- > The EU formalised the process to implement BEST and ensured sufficient funding sources for the 2014-2020 period including by opening the EU 2014-2020 LIFE programme to EU Overseas Countries and Territories.
- > Sustainability criteria to EU renewable energy targets are improved; the 10% "de-facto biofuels target" is abolished, or a factor of Indirect Land Use included; legally binding sustainability criteria for woody biomass are adopted.

- > The EU champions initiatives for biodiversity in its neighbourhood areas, e.g. a binding pan-European forest framework (see *Target 3b*).
- > Ambitious indicators have been adopted for the EU's Resource Efficiency Roadmap. "The EU has the political commitment to reduce its absolute resource consumption to the level of the year 2000."





GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION: THE DUAL ROLE OF THE EU

The European Union, in terms of GDP, is the largest economic block in the world and a major driver of global biodiversity loss. Its unsustainable production and consumption patterns and its policies notably on agriculture, fisheries and trade result in Europeans using much more of the planet than their fair share in ecological and ethical terms. In addition, the EU countries still serve as role models for development patterns and lifestyle in emerging economies with raising per-capita income. If these follow current European and North American nutrition patterns or transport behaviour, the collapse of global ecosystems seems unavoidable. For these and other reasons, the EU therefore has to move rapidly to a low-carbon and ecosystem friendly economy.

At the same time the EU has a good track record in promoting ambitious global action through the support of multilateral environmental agreements. For example, at the 10th Conference of the Parties to the CBD, the EU has been crucial for the adoption of an ambitious Strategic Plan 2011-2020 for the CBD, as well as the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing of genetic resources.

Collectively, the EU Member States and the EU budget represent the largest donor of financial support to developing countries worldwide with an ODA/GNI ratio more than double those of Japan and the USA.⁷⁰ Average annual external assistance for biodiversity amounted in the last years, according to European Commission estimates, to 750 – 1000 million EUR.⁷¹

Furthermore, the European Commission and several EU Member States have been instrumental for financing the ground-breaking study on “The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity” and are supporting the establishment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity (IPBES) in Bonn/Germany.

In this context it is welcomed that the EU’s Biodiversity Strategy aims to address the two essential sides of the same coin: reducing its negative impact on global biodiversity and stepping up its (still far insufficient) support to developing countries in tackling the roots and consequences of biodiversity loss and climate change, following the principle of “shared, but differentiated responsibility”.



Jaguars require large scale natural habitats that are becoming ever scarcer due to expansion of agriculture and other human activities. The EU plays a key role at the global scale, both through its consumption footprint, and as the world leading donor of development aid.

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⁷⁰ European Commission (9 July 2012): EU Accountability Report 2012 on Financing for Development - Review of progress of the EU and its Member States. Staff Working Paper - SWD (2012) 199.

⁷¹ Fourth National Report of the European Community to the Convention on Biological Diversity (May 2009); speech of European Commission President at UN General Assembly (22 September 2010)



EUROPE'S ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT: LIVING WITHIN OUR MEANS

Unfortunately, the EU's ten years growth strategy "Europe 2020" is lacking any direct reference to biodiversity. Nevertheless it includes a promising attempt to address the massive overuse of natural resources by introducing the Resource Efficiency Flagship Initiative. The EU recognises that the planetary boundaries are not only characterised by the climate system, but by a whole range of other ecosystem elements of equal importance, including biodiversity. Awareness is increasing that the turn-around to a low-carbon, resource-efficient and ecosystem friendly economy is the only sensible strategy to secure and improve Europe's long-term economic sustainability. Unfortunately, EU Member States have so far not shown great support and enthusiasm in further developing and implementing the proposed measures.

Another important measure was the adoption of the EU Timber Regulation (EUTR) to prohibit placing illegally harvested timber on the EU market. EUTR will enter into force in March 2013, while there are still open questions regarding the efficient planning of its implementation.

It should be recognised also that the EU has presented a reform proposal to reduce the unsustainable exploitation of the world's fish stocks through EU fleets. Unfortunately most EU Member States are fiercely opposed and are thus not only openly acting against any global or European biodiversity commitments, but also against any long-term economic sense (see *Target 4*).



**Logging in Sumatra,
Indonesia.**

© Marco Lambertini

EU ENERGY POLICY: NOT AT THE COST OF GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY

The efforts of the EU and many of its Member States to switch away from dirty fossil fuels to a low-carbon energy system are to be applauded, despite too slow progress so far: climate change is the greatest long-term threat to biodiversity. However existing policy frameworks to a low-carbon energy policy, so far, lack clear safeguards for ecosystems, within and outside of Europe. The objective to achieve 20% renewable energy supply by 2020 is of key importance. However, the EU has failed to implement legislative conditions to ensure the sustainability of renewable energy – which is a particular problem as regards biomass, whose production can result in devastating harm to essential ecosystem services and biodiversity around the world.

At the same time, the 10% "de facto biofuel" target for the transport sector which the EU has adopted, remains one of the most harmful and counterproductive EU policy decisions taken in recent years. Despite overwhelming scientific evidence and political opposition, the European Commission, driven by lobby groups, refuses to accept that this objective has already triggered massive damages to biodiversity, ecosystems and the climate, in particular through indirect land-use change (ILUC). ILUC has to be urgently addressed by the biofuels sustainability criteria (see case study: *Biofuels in Kenya*).



**The beauty of blooming
oilseed rape fields hides a
dangerous reality. As EU
subsidies have
increasingly diverted rape
seed to biodiesel
production, imports of
palm oil have soared,
further fueling the
destruction of south east
Asian rainforests.**

© Ade Long



ENVIRONMENTALLY HARMFUL SUBSIDIES: ALWAYS WITH US

The so far largely insignificant moves of the EU to reduce and reform its environmentally harmful subsidies at Union and Member State level remain the “Achilles heel” of Europe’s global credibility (see also *Chapter 1 and Target 3*). As long as a great part of the EU’s budget is wasted for activities that jeopardise ecosystem protection and undermine long-term well-being of Europeans, public budget constraints can hardly be accepted as an excuse for not increasing environmental overseas development aid. EU subsidies also directly affect the state of the environment outside the continent, e.g. through the financially supported overcapacities of fishing fleets, incentives for using imported soy instead of domestically grown grass to feed European livestock, etc. Ironically, EU Agriculture Ministers are using the argument of “global food security” against farming reform proposals. In reality, global food security is put at risk if Europe deprives its soils, water and biodiversity the ability to remain fertile and functional on the long-term.



The sky over the Amazonian rain forest in Mato Grosso, Brazil, is obscured in mid-day by smoke from land clearing. EU demand for animal feed and biofuels is helping drive deforestation across the world.

© Pierre Commenville

FUNDING GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION: IS THE EU DOING ITS SHARE?

The EU must mobilise sufficient financial, technological and knowledge resources to support countries, that are still developing economically and institutionally, in preserving biodiversity – for reasons of historical responsibility, but also because of the “polluter pays” principle: a lot of biodiversity damage in the South is resulting from unsustainable consumption and production patterns in the North. However, in particular stepping up the support to the poor would also be a highly strategic measure for preventing huge economic, societal and security risks to Europe itself. For example, the economic existence of half a billion people globally depends on intact coral reefs.⁷² Their degradation and collapsing fish stocks are already resulting in increased migration to industrialised countries and political instability.



Coral reefs in New Caledonia, where a marine protected area has been established on 1.4 million km². The management of such an area often requires outside financial assistance.

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72 TEEB (2009): TEEB Climate Issues Update. www.teebweb.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=L6XLPaoaZv8%3d&tabid=1278&language=en-US



The existing financial contributions of the EU and its EU Member States are significant, however far from sufficient. While this is recognised in the EU Biodiversity Strategy, it is hard to see progress of the EU and its EU Member States with regard to the implementation of the CBDs Strategy for Resource Mobilisation. In order to ensure a swift implementation of the Strategic Plan of the CBD, politically supported by Parties, it is of utmost importance to agree, at COP-11 in Hyderabad/India, on the key elements regarding baseline, needs assessments and funding targets. The EU and its Member States must, despite of their budget constraints, take a pioneering role here, if they do not want to put their great achievements made at Nagoya in 2010 at risk.

In particular, the EU's future 2014-2020 budget has to ensure clear additionality of financing international environmental commitments in relation to current Overseas Development Aid (ODA), provide sufficient funds by mainstreaming biodiversity in its development aid programmes, ensure a clear tracking mechanism of international commitments, and support financing for a thematic programme for the environment. The proposals made by the European Commission in these fields are largely on the right track; however they still need some improvement, corrections and support from the EU Member States and the European Parliament.

In addition, the European Commission proposal to establish, outside of the EU budget a mechanism/fund to pool together contributions from the EU Member States and the EU budget, has so far not been developed further.

Furthermore, it is of key importance that clear synergies are sought between funding of development, climate change and biodiversity objectives.





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