



# Species Protection Rules under the Birds and Habitats Directives

## How effectively are they integrated into sectoral policies?

### Project

### Duration

Oct 2020 - May 2022

The EU-funded project "Species protection rules under the Birds and Habitats Directives: how effectively are they integrated into sectoral policies" supported the European Commission (DG Environment) in identifying existing gaps and uptake of the species protection system provided by the EU Nature Directives in the Member States, specifically in the agricultural and forestry sectors. The project was led by Milieu and is supported by Ecologic Institute, IEEP and Stritih.

### Background

The [Habitats and Birds Directives](#) aim to ensure that rare and threatened species are not endangered and are brought to favourable conservation status throughout the EU. Further to the measures in European protected area network [Natura 2000](#), the Directives require a strict system of protection for species outside Natura 2000 areas in order to ensure that they are not over-exploited.

These rules are longstanding and have been interpreted by the Court. Nonetheless, biodiversity in EU continues to decline, especially on agricultural land. The [2020 State of nature report](#) identified the agriculture and forestry sectors as one of the main drivers for this loss. The EU farmland bird index, for example, shows a 34% decline since 1990. Only 20% of European forests are included in the Natura 2000 network, though the remaining 80% are also of importance for protected species. Agricultural land and forests have the potential to make a valuable contribution to the protection of species in the EU. The [EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030](#) aims to strengthen this role with ambitious targets. A failure to successfully integrate species protection rules into agriculture and forestry would have severe consequences for the future of European wildlife.

### Main objective

The aim of this project was to identify the established species protection rules under the Birds and Habitats Directives and to assess how effectively they are integrated into the sectoral policies linked to agriculture and forestry.

### Ecologic Institute's Role

Within this project, Ecologic Institute led the activities related to the establishment of a data-base of species occurrences that Member States have reported for Annex IV species

under the Habitats Directive and birds under the Birds Directive. Together with National Experts, it further compiled evidence of data awareness and uptake via a survey to showcase gaps and best practices. Throughout the project, Ecologic provided the national expertise for Germany, Austria and Lithuania.

## **Funding**

European Commission, [Directorate-General Environment](#) (DG Environment), International

## **Partner**

[Milieu](#), Belgium

[Ecologic Institute](#), Germany

[Institute for European Environmental Policy, London](#) (IEEP), United Kingdom

[Institute for European Environmental Policy, Brussels](#) (IEEP), Belgium

[Stritih](#), Slovenia

## **Team**

Sandra Naumann

Rebecca Noebel

Dr. Christiane Gerstetter

Dr. Heidi Stockhaus

[Gregory Fuchs](#)

[Ruta Landgrebe-Trinkunaite](#)

[Ilka Merbold](#)

Lina Röschel

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