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The new European Green Deal



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Natura News



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Editorial

It is my great honour and privilege to take up the reigns as the new Commissioner for the environment, oceans and fisheries at this defining moment in Europe's history. As a Lithuanian born after the re-establishment of the Independence of Lithuania, the European ideal is in my DNA. For me, Europe is synonymous with freedom and opportunity, with hope and solidarity.

The new Commission starts its mandate with high ambitions thanks to the new European Green Deal. Our first objective is to make Europe climate neutral by 2050. But, this must be accompanied by much wider environmental initiatives, starting with a new EU Biodiversity Strategy.

Our ambitions are high, but so are the stakes. Scientists have been warning us for years that we have only a short window of opportunity left in which to address the climate and biodiversity crises and transition towards a much more sustainable lifestyle that is within the earth's capacity.

Ambitious climate and environment policies should also bring greater social justice since they improve health, quality of life and wellbeing for all. But I want to go a step further to ensure that the green transition works for all. We need targeted measures that leave no one behind, especially vulnerable people and communities.

Therefore, it will be essential to better integrate the Green Deal into the EU budget and also mobilise national and private funding. The combined opportunities of different EU funds under the 2021–2027 Multiannual Financial Framework – including the Common Agriculture Policy, Regional and Cohesion Funds, Horizon Europe, the European Marine and Fisheries Fund, LIFE and external action funds, need to be fully availed of.

To deliver on our climate and environmental ambitions, we also need to ensure our policies support each other. I will therefore strive for effective mainstreaming of environmental and biodiversity priorities across all policy areas to ensure effective systemic change. This includes improving the sustainability of our farming and fisheries practices and addressing the environmental impacts of the way we produce and consume food in Europe. We will also need to give higher priority to nature-based solutions, such as the protection and restoration of biodiverse and carbon-rich ecosystems, in the EU climate mitigation and adaptation policy.

The next years will be crucial. I will do all I can to make them count for nature and biodiversity, not only for our benefit but also for that of future generations.

Virginijus Sinkevičius
European Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries



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Cover: Sunrise over bog, Endla
Nature Reserve, Jõgevamaa,
Central Estonia.

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Conservation measures are now in place for around 70% of all Sites of Community Importance (SCIs) under the Habitats Directive.

The Nature Action Plan – taking stock of progress

Adopted in April 2017, the EU Action Plan for nature, people and the economy aimed to address the principal shortcomings identified during the fitness check of the two EU Nature Directives published the previous year. The Plan put forward 15 concrete actions, structured around four priorities, designed to speed up the implementation of the Directives on the ground and improve their coherence with broader socio-economic objectives. Nearly three years on, as the Action Plan reaches the end of its mandate, the time has come to look back at all that has been achieved.

Priority A: Improving guidance and ensuring better coherence with broader socio-economic objectives

Under this priority, the Commission, in close cooperation with Member States and stakeholders, committed to develop and update several guidance documents in order to promote a greater understanding of the two Directives and help public

authorities and stakeholders apply their provisions more effectively.

A total of six guidance documents have been published so far, following extensive consultations with interested parties. Four more are being finalised for adoption. Some, such as the Article 6 general interpretation guide or the species protection guide under the Habitats Directive, have been updated to take account of experience and recent EU Court of Justice Rulings. Others are entirely new and respond to identified needs for clarification in particular areas of activity, such as hydropower and energy transmission infrastructure.

Each document provides comprehensive information on how Natura 2000 sites should be protected and managed,

including interactions with different key sectors, while also explaining the flexibility embedded in the Directives. They highlight the benefits of early strategic planning and smart participatory approaches that encourage the full involvement of landowners and other interest groups from the outset.

In addition, the Commission has translated and summarised other existing guidance documents to ensure greater outreach, and is actively promoting them with the help of Member States and the Committee of the Regions.

Also, under this priority, the Commission, in close collaboration with the European Environmental Agency (EEA), has improved the functionality and accessibility of the Natura 2000



Viewer (<https://bit.ly/2H8bygK>). This online tool enables users to locate Natura 2000 sites anywhere in the EU or search for any protected species or habitats within these sites.

The Joint Research Centre (JRC), meanwhile, has created a smartphone application on Invasive Alien Species in Europe to enable the general public to receive and share information on 48 of the EU's worst offenders. The user can record the GPS coordinates of any invasive species they spot in the wild and send in additional documentary evidence, such as photos, on their whereabouts (<https://bit.ly/2Hcg510>).

The work on satellite-based remote sensing as a support to better implementation of the nature directives has also been intensified and work is currently underway to develop a prototype for monitoring Natura 2000 habitats through satellite images under Copernicus, the European Union's Earth Observation Programme.

Priority B: Building political ownership and strengthening compliance

Under this priority, Member States were urged to complete

the designation of their Natura 2000 sites as well as establish and implement the necessary conservation objectives and measures for all sites.

The marine Natura 2000 network has since almost doubled in size. The number of sites with conservation measures in place has also increased to almost 70% of all Sites of Community Importance (SCIs) under the Habitats Directive. However, progress is still too slow across the board, which is why the Commission is increasing its infringement actions against Member States in order to force those who are lagging behind to redouble their efforts.

The Commission has also organised a series of tailor-made discussions with each Member State to discuss the challenges of implementing the Nature Directives. These so-called bilateral "nature dialogues" have taken place in 22 countries so far and have enabled parties to agree on detailed roadmaps to help speed up implementation in their country and overcome remaining hurdles.

These meetings have involved not only DG Environment and the nature authorities but also other relevant authorities, such

as those responsible for Rural Development Programmes under the CAP or Operational Programmes under other EU funds. This encouraged face-to-face discussions on key problems and a joint exploration of how Natura 2000 can be better integrated into other policy and funding priorities for that country. In addition, back-to-back meetings have been held with stakeholders to give them an opportunity to set out their views and indicate areas where greater efforts are needed to improve implementation.

Additionally, the Commission has continued to support the Natura 2000 Biogeographical Process, which brings Member State authorities and stakeholders together to share experience and expertise on key management, monitoring and financing challenges for Natura 2000 within each biogeographical region (<https://bit.ly/38f9czb>).

Also under this priority, a series of species and habitat action plans were developed in close collaboration with scientists, stakeholders and public authorities. They include a new EU multi-species action plan for 44 bat species protected under the Habitats

Directive (<https://bit.ly/37jBkch>) as well as EU species action plans for 16 bird species protected under the Birds Directive (<https://bit.ly/2uxWUf5>). For the first time, an EU-wide Habitat Action Plan has also been developed for semi-natural dry grasslands (habitat type "6210"), (<https://bit.ly/2uqRXFX>). A second plan for European dry heaths (habitat type "4030") will be published later this year.

Meanwhile, the Commission continues to actively support the EU Platform on the Coexistence between People and Large Carnivores, a key stakeholder forum that aims to find practical ways to encourage the coexistence between economic activities, such as farming, and large carnivores (<https://bit.ly/38mwBZ2>).

Finally, to further improve synergies between the nature directives and other key EU environmental laws, the Commission has published a 'Frequently Asked Questions' document dealing with the relationship between the Nature Directives and the Nitrates Directive (<https://bit.ly/38bQrG6>). A further FAQ on interactions with the Invasive Alien Species Regulation is currently being finalised.

Recent Commission Guidance on Natura 2000 (<https://bit.ly/37kXESH>)

Guidance on fisheries and Natura 2000 under the Common Fisheries Policy	May 2018
Guidance on the requirements for hydropower in relation to Natura 2000	June 2018
Guidance on energy transmission infrastructure and EU nature legislation	June 2018
Article 6 interpretative guide on the conservation and management of Natura 2000	November 2018
Guidance to support the integration of ecosystems and their services into planning and decision-making processes	August 2019
Guidance on a strategic framework for further supporting the deployment of EU-level green and blue infrastructure	August 2019
Guidance document on wind energy developments and EU nature legislation	Ongoing
Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive	Ongoing
Guidance on species protection rules under the Habitats Directive	Ongoing
Key concepts document on the period of reproduction and pre-nuptial migration of hirable bird Species in the EU	On going



© David Tipling / naturepl.com

New Commission guidance on wind energy and nature directives will be published in 2020.

Priority C: Strengthening investment in Natura 2000 and improving synergies with EU funding instruments

Significant efforts have been made to strengthen investments in Natura 2000. Dedicated workshops on funding Natura 2000 have been held in 22 Member States to help them make better use of EU financing under the future 2021–2027 Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF). Member States have also been actively encouraged to update and improve their Prioritised Action Frameworks (PAFs). PAFs are strategic planning tools designed to help Member States establish their strategic needs and priorities for investment in Natura 2000 and related Green Infrastructure, under both EU and national funding streams (<https://bit.ly/2UF6fNH>).

Thanks to the Nature Action Plan, the EU LIFE programme has seen a 10% increase in budget allocations for Nature and Biodiversity projects. Greater emphasis has also been placed on encouraging more strategic, large-scale Integrated Projects aimed at speeding up the implementation of the nature Directives over a larger



Conservation volunteers helping out in a nature reserve in Belgium.

geographical scale. Eighteen Integrated Projects for Natura 2000 have been approved to date. LIFE and its Natural Capital Financing Facility (NCFF) are also actively encouraging private sector investment in nature projects.

Meanwhile, the Commission continues to promote closer synergies with funding from the Common Agricultural Policy, the Common Fisheries Policy, the Cohesion Policy and Horizon 2020, but it is clear that more efforts will be required to better target funds to meet the

conservation objectives for Natura 2000 sites and protected species.

Priority D: Better communication and outreach, engaging citizens, stakeholders and communities

Under this priority, knowledge exchange and engagement of local and regional authorities has been actively supported through the Joint Platform for Cooperation on the Environment with the European Committee of the Regions (<https://bit.ly/2Sx9vYJ>).

Several activities have taken place to raise awareness of Natura 2000 and the Nature Directives. This has included two editions of the EU Natura 2000 Award aimed at raising awareness about, and recognising excellence in, the management and promotion of the network and its many benefits to European citizens (<https://bit.ly/2OJAQ8Z>). It also includes an annual Europe-wide celebration of Natura 2000 day on 21 May. In 2019, over 140 celebrations and networking events took place across the EU.

As part of the European Year of Cultural Heritage in 2018, the links between natural and cultural heritage in Natura

2000 sites were showcased through the publication of a series of case studies and good practice tips. This not only revealed the common challenges facing both natural and cultural heritage in the EU but also the multiple benefits of the two sectors joining forces (<https://bit.ly/3bo7U02>).

Finally, the European Solidarity Corps supported almost 400 environment and climate change projects over the past two years under Erasmus+ and the LIFE partnership. This has given thousands of young volunteers an opportunity to get involved in nature projects on the ground (<https://bit.ly/3brHpgl>).

Conclusions

The Action Plan has put in place key processes to strategically support the implementation of the Nature Directives and the delivery of their objectives. Many of its actions will continue over coming years in order to maintain the momentum generated under the Action Plan.

The experience with delivery of the Nature Action Plan is also providing a valuable input into the development of the future EU Biodiversity Strategy for the post-2020 period.

LIFE Integrated Projects

Integrated Projects are strategic projects supporting EU Member States to achieve full implementation of Strategies or Action Plans required by the EU environmental and climate legislation. They are implemented at national or regional scales, involving relevant authorities and very significant budgets from several EU and national sources, lasting for 6–10 years on average.

Under the sub-programme for environment, these large-scale projects implement plans, strategies or roadmaps in the areas of nature (including Natura 2000 network management), water, waste, and air. Projects receive a co-funding of up to 60%, with an average of €10 million LIFE grant per project.

Full details on the LIFE database (under Integrated Projects Environment): <https://bit.ly/2H94T5S>





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Natura 2000 sites in cities provide ample opportunity for recreation, relaxation, education and discovery.

Natura 2000 in cities



Contrary to popular belief, European cities harbour a surprising array of wild plants and animals, including many endangered species, and can play an important role in their conservation.

There may be several reasons for this unexpected wealth. It could be linked to the fact that certain cities sprouted up in already productive regions, such as estuaries or along river banks, that were biodiverse to begin with. It could also be due to Europe's long history of urban development that has allowed wildlife to adapt, over time, to the urban environment.

The structural complexity of cities has also no doubt had a strong influence, encouraging the emergence

of a highly diversified mosaic of habitats and eco-niches capable of hosting a wide array of different species. Residential gardens and parks, for example, have become important reservoirs for bees and other pollinators that find it difficult to survive in surrounding intensively farmed agricultural areas.

Natura 2000 in cities

Last year, the Commission launched a study to explore the extent to which Natura 2000 sites are present in European cities. For this, the EU Urban Atlas of Cities database was overlaid on the Natura 2000 viewer map.

The analysis revealed that the vast majority (82%) of the 808 EU cities analysed (those with over 50,000 inhabitants) have Natura 2000 sites within their boundaries. In total, 2842 Natura 2000 sites are located at least partly within cities, representing around 10% of the Natura 2000 network. A third of these (855) are entirely or mostly within the city (i.e. more than 80% of their surface area is within the city boundary).

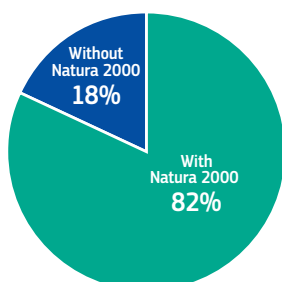
As expected, the total surface area of Natura 2000 within the city boundary is relatively small (16,737 km²) compared to size of the Natura 2000 network as a whole, but it is not insubstantial. It represents ca. 2% of the network – equivalent to an area more than half the size of Belgium.

Most urban Natura 2000 sites start within the city boundary and extend outwards across the wider countryside. If these contiguous Natura 2000 areas are included, the coverage increases substantially, confirming the close proximity of many Natura 2000 sites to people and urban areas.

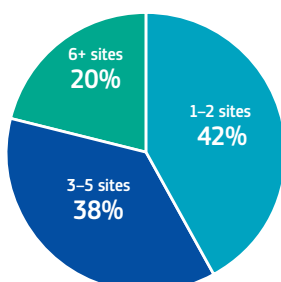
This correlates well with recent studies that estimated that Natura 2000 covers around 15% of the total Functional Urban Area in Europe (FUA) and that 65% of EU citizens live within 5 km of a Natura 2000 site.

The main habitats found in these 2842 urban Natura 2000 sites were also investigated. Forests (especially riparian forests, beech forests and oak forests), grasslands (dry grasslands, wet meadows) and

Cities with Natura sites



No. of Natura sites per city



freshwater habitats (lakes and rivers) were the most frequently mentioned in the Standard Data Forms that accompany each of the 2842 sites. This is not unexpected as forests and grasslands are also the main habitat groups within the Natura 2000 network as a whole.

In terms of species, birds are by far the most frequently mentioned, followed by mammals. Amongst the most common are bats and birds of prey along with kingfishers, storks, red-backed shrike, butterflies, land turtles, otter and beetles, such as the stag beetle and the great Capricorn beetle.



In the city, nature can be 'up close and personal' rather than distant and abstract.

Nature – an integral part of the urban agenda

Until now urban development has generally been viewed as a major threat to natural habitats and species due to its appetite for land. Whilst this remains true, it ignores the important role that cities can play in safeguarding biodiversity and undervalues the contribution urban areas can make in improving the quality of life and sustainability of the cities themselves if they are sustainably planned with biodiversity thinking placed at their heart.

Today, many of Europe's cities suffer from a series of demographic problems, including social inequality, segregation, unemployment, poverty, crime, congestion, urban sprawl, pollution etc... all of which

reduce their capacity to function properly.

Biodiversity-rich green spaces, such as Natura 2000 sites, can help combat these problems and render the city more sustainable, liveable and resilient in many ways. They can absorb pollution from the air and waterways, reduce noise, create areas of shade and ventilation, absorb storm water and reduce run-offs. They can also encourage alternative means of transport (cycling, walking, trams) and stimulate new nature-based jobs (city farms, allotments, city parks and gardens).

In addition, nature in cities provide ample opportunity for recreation, relaxation and social interaction as well as education and discovery. For many city dwellers, protected wildlife areas

often appear far off and remote, and without any relevance to their daily lives. But, in the city, nature is 'up close and personal' rather than distant and abstract.

However, for nature to survive in an urban environment it must be given sufficient space and protection, and be managed in a sympathetic manner. It is not enough to just 'turn a grey area into a green space'. Green spaces are not automatically synonymous with nature and biodiversity.

All too often, urban parks tend to have tightly cropped lawns, well-tended flower beds (often planted with short-lived exotic plants), as well as large areas without vegetation (e.g. paths and playgrounds) and sometimes little or no tall or dense vegetation in which

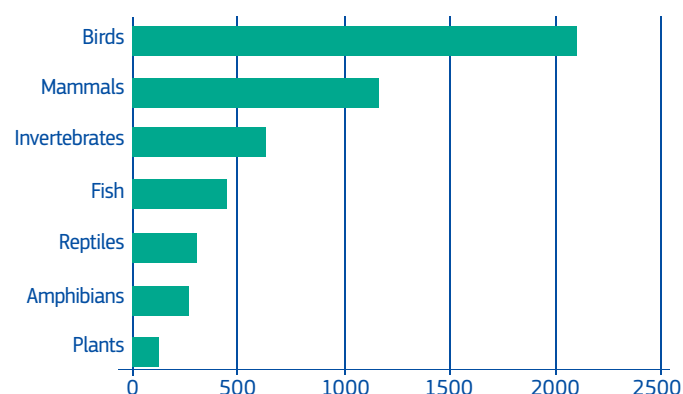
animals can take refuge, away from the public.

Such highly managed, and largely artificial green spaces, rarely contain much biodiversity and, because they are bereft of wildlife, they do not function as well as they could when it comes to providing their valuable ecosystem services.

It will therefore be crucial in coming years to ensure that green spaces are made biodiversity-rich and that biodiversity is put on the same footing as green infrastructure in urban development and regeneration programmes. The new European Green Deal launched in December 2019 should help pave the way.

The Natura 2000 in Cities report is available on:
<https://bit.ly/2w3oLFn>

Frequency of species groups in urban Natura 2000 sites



The EnRoute initiative provides scientific knowledge of how urban ecosystems can support urban planning at different stages of policy. It illustrates how collaboration between and across different policy levels can lead to concrete green infrastructure policy setting. Its follow up – the BiodiverCities project – aims to enhance civil society participation in local and urban decision-making, building a joint vision of the green city of tomorrow. The project is collecting practical examples of how to engage citizens in vision building around urban nature, monitoring, and solutions to improve urban biodiversity. It will also assess how urban green infrastructure can be used to provide local benefits for people and nature and how it can contribute to enhancing biodiversity.

<https://oppla.eu/groups/enroute> | <https://oppla.eu/groups/biodivercities>

natura 2000 barometer

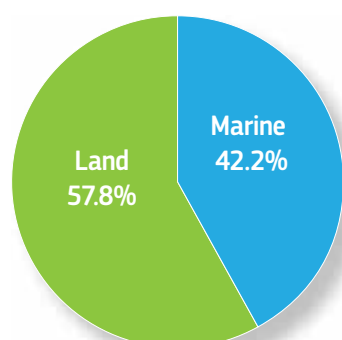
THIS NATURA BAROMETER is produced by DG Environment with the help of the European Environment Agency. It is based on information officially transmitted by Member States up to **December 2019**.

The Natura 2000 network is composed of sites under the Habitats Directive (pSCI, SCIs or SACs – labelled 'SCIs' in the barometer) and sites under the Birds Directive (SPAs). The figures relating to the total area of Natura 2000 sites (i.e. SPAs + SCIs) have been obtained through GIS analysis. This avoids any risk of counting sites twice if they have been designated under both Directives.

Arrows indicate increase in the area of the Natura 2000 network since the last update of the barometer in March 2019.

Significant progress continues to be made in the marine environment. Further marine sites have been designated in Cyprus, France, Italy and Portugal.

Natura 2000 in EU 28



Member States	Natura 2000 network (terrestrial and marine)		TERRESTRIAL			
	Total N° Natura 2000 Sites	Total area Natura 2000 km²	SCI	SPA	Natura 2000 network	
			SCI area (km²)	SPA area (km²)	Natura area (km²)	% land area covered
AUSTRIA	352	12895	9378	10334	12895	15%
BELGIUM	310	5163	3282	3186	3891	13%
BULGARIA	341	41554	33629	25609	38728	35%
CYPRUS	62	10133	959	1493	1669	30%
CZECH REPUBLIC	1153	11148	7951	7035	11148	14%
GERMANY	5200	80831	33550	40263	55228	15%
DENMARK	384	22664	3289	2488	3616	8%
ESTONIA	567	14861	7806	6203	8106	18%
SPAIN	1872	222515	117584	101619	138111	27%
FINLAND	1866	50636	42197	24550	42495	13%
FRANCE	1776	203564	48752	44016	70875	13%
GREECE	446	58778	21912	27761	35982	27%
CROATIA	783	25954	16036	17050	20716	37%
HUNGARY	525	19949	14442	13747	19949	21%
IRELAND	604	19481	7163	4311	9226	13%
ITALY	2621	69302	42902	40295	57258	19%
LITHUANIA	556	9699	6344	5530	8136	13%
LUXEMBOURG	66	702	416	418	702	27%
LATVIA	333	11834	7421	6607	7447	12%
MALTA	55	4184	41	16	42	13%
NETHERLANDS	197	20605	3139	4771	5522	15%
POLAND	985	68405	34196	48428	61168	20%
PORTUGAL	167	61403	15655	9199	18970	21%
ROMANIA	606	60577	40310	37118	54214	23%
SWEDEN	4087	75854	55106	26448	55611	12%
SLOVENIA	355	7682	6634	5066	7672	38%
SLOVAKIA	683	14633	6151	13105	14633	30%
UNITED KINGDOM*	934	153137	13176	16091	21008	9%
EU	27886	1358143	599421	542757	785018	18%

* The United Kingdom withdrew from the European Union as of 1 February 2020. During the transition period, which ends on 31 December 2020, Union law, with a few limited exceptions, continues to be applicable to and in the United Kingdom.

update December 2019

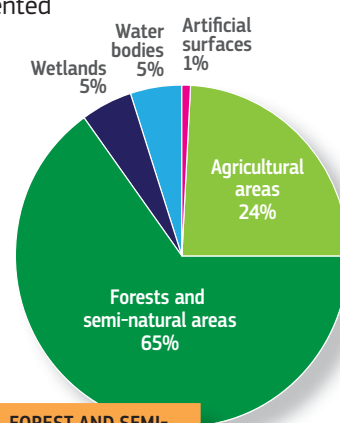
MARINE			
SCI	SPA	Natura 2000 network	
SCI area (km ²)	SPA area (km ²)	Natura area (km ²)	
n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	AT
1128	318	1271	BE
2482	550	2827	BG
↗ ↗ ↗ 8457	110	↗ ↗ ↗ 8464	CY
n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	CZ
20938	19738	25603	DE
16492	12176	19048	DK
3883	6480	6754	EE
54895	52071	84405	ES
7676	7402	8141	FI
106306	↗ 119646	↗ 132689	FR
17528	10764	22796	GR
4919	1112	5238	HR
n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	HU
9781	1584	10255	IE
6587	↗ ↗ 8809	↗ ↗ 12044	IT
958	1056	1563	LT
n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	LU
2664	4280	4387	LV
2283	3221	4142	MT
12074	8627	15083	NL
4339	7224	7237	PL
37383	8747	↗ ↗ 42433	PT
6188	1630	6362	RO
20174	14448	20243	SE
4	9	10	SI
n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	SK
121745	21582	132130	UK
468884	311584	573125	EU

- ↗ Small increase in 2019
 ↗ ↗ Moderate increase in 2019
 ↗ ↗ ↗ Substantial increase in 2019

Land cover within the Natura 2000 network

The CORINE Land Cover (CLC) inventory was initiated in 1985 (reference year 1990). It consists of a harmonised inventory of 44 land cover classes across all EU countries. Updates have been produced in 2000, 2006, 2012, and 2018. The CLC data is now part of the Copernicus programme. The Natura 2000 network was laid over the Corine Land Cover (level 1) to reveal the types of principal land use within the network as a whole and per country. The two most prominent categories – agricultural area and forest and semi-natural areas – are presented

below for each country. As can be seen, the Natura 2000 network as a whole is made up mostly of forest and semi-natural areas (65%) followed by agricultural areas (24%), wetlands (5%) water bodies (5%) and artificial areas (1%).



COUNTRY	AGRICULTURAL AREAS	FOREST AND SEMI-NATURAL AREAS
Austria	19%	75%
Belgium	32%	60%
Bulgaria	29%	68%
Croatia	24%	71%
Cyprus	15%	83%
Czechia	25%	71%
Denmark	30%	44%
Estonia	7%	61%
Finland	0%	65%
France	33%	60%
Germany	38%	55%
Greece	20%	75%
Hungary	36%	54%
Ireland	15%	30%
Italy	21%	74%
Latvia	22%	58%
Lithuania	21%	67%
Luxembourg	41%	57%
Malta	39%	57%
Netherlands	12%	34%
Poland	34%	58%
Portugal	40%	55%
Romania	28%	61%
Slovakia	25%	74%
Slovenia	20%	79%
Spain	24%	73%
Sweden	1%	74%
United Kingdom	5%	48%
Grand total	24%	65%



Last December the Commission adopted a new roadmap for a more sustainable growth agenda.

The new European Green Deal



© Xinhua / Alamy Stock Photo

“The European Green Deal will turn Europe into the world’s first climate-neutral continent by 2050.”

President Ursula von der Leyen

The new Commission

On 1 December 2019, the new European Commission President – Ursula von der Leyen – and her team of 26 Commissioners began their five-year political mandate. Just 10 days later, they set out an ambitious new European Green Deal aimed at tackling the most pressing EU environmental and climate-related problems.

With the new strategy, these challenges will be turned into new opportunities across all EU policy areas to boost the economy, while promoting a transition towards a more sustainable growth agenda that is socially just and leaves no-one behind.

The European Green Deal will engage all sectors of the economy, especially transport, energy, agriculture, construction and industries like steel, cement, information and communications technology, textiles and chemicals.

It will be further supported by a comprehensive investment drive designed to help the EU transition towards a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy. The ultimate goal is to decouple economic growth from resource use and to restore environmental quality and health for both people and nature.

By working together, the 27 Member States can significantly transform the EU’s economy and society, and put them on a more sustainable path, building on its strengths as a global leader on climate and environmental measures, consumer protection, and workers’ rights.

However, as the drivers of climate change and biodiversity loss are global, Europe cannot act alone. The Commission will therefore continue to promote its environmental goals and standards internationally, leading by example and using its influence and expertise to mobilise other nations to follow a more sustainable path.

Priorities for 2020

The details of the new Green Deal are set out in a Commission communication, published on 11 December 2019. The document outlines over 50 key policy initiatives and concrete actions that the Commission will put forward progressively over the next few years (see roadmap below):

Several initiatives are directly relevant for biodiversity. They include the following:

- A **European 'Climate Law'** will be proposed by March 2020. This will enshrine the 2050 climate neutrality objective in legislation. The Climate Law will also ensure that all EU policies contribute to the climate neutrality objective and that all sectors play their part. In parallel, the Climate Law will address the risk of carbon leakage in order to avoid that production is transferred from the EU to other countries with lower climate ambitions or that EU products are replaced by more carbon-intensive imports. As the world's largest single market, the EU is in a strong position to set standards that apply across global value chains. Industry also seems ready for this move. In November 2019, 44 of Europe's largest investors, representing €6 trillion of assets, called on the EU to adopt, as quickly as possible, a new climate law for climate neutrality by 2050. This, they say, should give them the confidence to make long-term decisions about investments.
- A **new Biodiversity Strategy** will also be proposed by the end of March 2020, and will be followed by a detailed action plan in 2021. The strategy will outline the EU's position and ambitions for a new global biodiversity framework, expected to be adopted at the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity next October.

As Europe aims to lead by example, the Biodiversity Strategy will identify specific targets and measures. These could include quantified objectives, such as increasing the coverage of protected biodiversity-rich land and sea areas, building on the Natura 2000 network. Member States will also be encouraged

to reinforce cross-border cooperation over the protection and restoration of sites within the Natura 2000 network.

Additionally, the Commission will identify measures (including legislation) which would help Member States improve and restore damaged ecosystems, including carbon-rich ecosystems. This could take the form of a nature restoration plan supported by targeted funding. Proposals will also be made to green European cities and increase biodiversity in urban spaces.

- A new **'Farm to Fork' Strategy** will be put forward in Spring 2020 to pave the way for a more sustainable food policy. This will be combined with the launch of a broad stakeholder debate covering all the stages of the food chain. The new Strategy will aim to strengthen the efforts of European farmers and fishermen to tackle climate change, protect the environment and preserve biodiversity as well as reduce the environmental impact of the food processing and retail sectors.

As the Common Agriculture Policy and Common Fisheries Policy for 2021–2027 will remain the main support mechanisms for farmers and fishermen, the Commission will work closely with the Member States and stakeholders to ensure that, from the outset, the new National Strategic Plans for agriculture and fisheries fully reflect the ambitions of the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy. Moreover, during the course of 2021, the Commission will identify the measures (including legislation) that are needed to significantly reduce the use and risk of chemical pesticides, fertilisers and antibiotics.

- Also in 2021, the Commission will adopt a **zero pollution action plan** for air, water and soil. The EU needs to better monitor, report, prevent and remedy pollution from air, water, soil, and consumer products in order to better protect its citizens and the environment. This means looking more systematically at all policies and regulations with a view to strengthening and enforcing existing laws or proposing new measures where gaps are identified.

MOBILISING RESEARCH AND FOSTERING INNOVATION

New technologies, sustainable solutions and major innovation are critical to achieve the objectives of the European Green Deal. To keep its competitive advantage in clean technologies, the EU will need to significantly increase the large-scale deployment and demonstration of new technologies across sectors and across the single market, building new innovative value chains.

The Horizon Europe programme, in synergy with other EU programmes, can play a pivotal role in leveraging national public and private investments in this sector. The intention is therefore to allocate at least 35% of the Horizon Europe budget to financing research into new solutions for climate, that are relevant for implementing the Green Deal.

Four 'Green Deal Missions' will help deliver large-scale changes in areas such as adaptation to climate change, oceans, cities and soil. These missions will bring a wide range of stakeholders together, including regions and citizens. Partnerships with industry and Member States will also support research and innovation on transport, including batteries, clean hydrogen, low-carbon steel making, circular bio-based sectors and the built environment.

In 2020, the Commission will propose a new strategy for sustainable and smart mobility.



Financing the Green Deal

Clearly, meeting the objectives of the European Green Deal will require significant additional investment. The Commission has estimated that achieving the current 2030 climate and energy targets alone will require €260 billion of additional annual investment, which represents about 1.5% of 2018 GDP. This means that both the public and private sectors will need to be mobilised.

To kick-start this new investment drive, the Commission launched a **Sustainable Europe Investment Plan** in January 2020 to mobilise EU funding and create an enabling framework to facilitate and stimulate the public and private investments needed for the transition towards a climate-neutral, green, competitive and inclusive economy.

Complementing other initiatives announced under the Green Deal, the plan is based on three dimensions: *financing* to mobilise at least €1 trillion of sustainable investments over the next decade; *enabling* by providing incentives to unlock and redirect public and private investment; and *practical support* from the Commission to public authorities and project promoters in planning, designing and executing sustainable projects.

The EU's budget will play a key role in pump-priming this investment drive. The proposal is to allocate 25% of the budget to climate mainstreaming across all EU programmes under the new Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021–2027. The European Investment Bank will also be heavily involved through its Invest EU fund.

Because not all Member States are at the same starting point, a **Just Transition Mechanism** will be set up to channel at least €100 billion into those regions that are most exposed to the economic and social challenges of the

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL

KEY ACTIONS	KEY MEASURES FORESEEN IN 2020
Increasing the EU's Climate ambition for 2030 and 2050	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A European Climate Law enshrining the 2050 climate neutrality objective in legislation by March 2020 • Comprehensive plan to increase the EU 2030 climate target to at least 50% by October 2020
Supplying clean, affordable and secure energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the ambition of the final National Energy and Climate plans by June 2020 • Review of the Trans-European Network – Energy Regulation • Offshore Wind initiative
Mobilising industry for a clean and circular economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU industrial Strategy by March 2020 • A new Circular Economy Action Plan, including a sustainable products policy by March 2020
Building and renovating in an energy and resource-efficient way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renovation wave for the building sector aiming to double the current renovation rate
A zero pollution ambition for a toxic-free environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chemicals Strategy for sustainability in June 2020 • Zero pollution action plan for air, water and soil in 2021
Preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU biodiversity strategy for 2030 by March 2020 • New EU forest strategy
From Farm to Fork: a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm to Fork strategy in Spring 2020
Accelerating the shift to a sustainable and smart mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy for sustainable and smart mobility
Financing the transition whilst leaving no-one behind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal for a Just Transition Mechanism, including a Just Transition Fund and a Sustainable Europe Investment Plan in January 2020
The EU as a global leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to lead the international climate and biodiversity negotiations, further strengthening the international policy framework
Working together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch a European Climate pact March 2020 • 8th Environmental Action Plan

The new EU Farm to Fork strategy will cover all stages of the food chain.



EUROPE'S STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT 2020

In December 2019, The European Environment Agency published its latest report on the 'European environment — state and outlook 2020 (SOER 2020)'. It concludes that overall environmental trends in Europe have not improved since the last EEA report in 2015. The assessment notes however that, while most of the 2020 targets will not be achieved, especially those on biodiversity, there is still a chance to meet the longer-term goals and objectives for 2030 and 2050.

Europe has made important gains in resource efficiency and the circular economy. However, recent trends highlight a slowing down of progress in areas such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions, industrial emissions, waste generation, improving energy efficiency and the share of renewable energy. Looking ahead, the current rate of progress will not be enough to meet 2030 and 2050 climate and energy targets.

There has been much less progress in achieving objectives for the protection and conservation of European biodiversity and nature than for other areas. Of the 13 specific policy objectives set for 2020 in this area, only two are likely to be met: designating marine protected areas and terrestrial protected areas. Looking ahead to 2030, if current trends continue, further deterioration of nature and continued pollution of air, water and soil is expected.

The inevitable impacts of climate change, air and noise pollution on the environment and human health are also still of concern. Exposure to fine particulate matter is responsible for around 400 000 premature deaths in Europe every year, affecting central and eastern European countries disproportionately. There is also growing concern over hazardous chemicals and the risks they pose. Looking ahead, the prospects for reducing environmental risks to health could be improved with a better integration of environment and health policies.

The report urges European countries, leaders and policymakers to seize the opportunity and use the next decade to radically scale up and speed up actions to put Europe back on track to meeting its medium and longer-term environmental policy goals and targets to avoid irreversible change and damage.

<https://bit.ly/3762Hqw>

Progress in reducing air, water and soil pollution across Europe has been slowing down in recent years.



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Europe intends to lead by example on the global climate challenge.

transition to a climate neutral economy. These regions are still highly dependent on fossil fuels or on carbon-intensive processes. At the same time, the mechanism will also protect citizens, re-skill workers and help create jobs in emerging climate neutral economic sectors, or in energy-efficient housing.

Finally, the private sector will also be encouraged to contribute to financing the green transition. The Commission will therefore present a **Green Financing Strategy** in the third quarter of 2020 that will focus on a number of actions to promote and mobilise private sustainable finance.

Involving civil society

The involvement and commitment of the public and of all stakeholders is crucial to the success of the European Green Deal. Recent political events show that game-changing policies only work if citizens are fully involved in designing them. The Commission will therefore launch a **European Climate Pact** by March 2020 to focus on different ways to engage with the public on climate action.

The first step will be to foster a greater public understanding

of the threat and the challenge of climate change and environmental degradation, and share ideas on how to counter this. The Commission will use multiple channels and tools to do so, including events in Member States, drawing on its experience with its on-going citizens' dialogues.

Secondly, both real and virtual spaces will be created for people to express their ideas and creativity, and work together, both at individual and collective level. Participants will be encouraged to commit to specific climate action goals.

Thirdly, the Commission will work on building capacity to facilitate grassroots initiatives on climate change and environmental protection and encourage an exchange of good practices.

Endorsing the European Green Deal

The Commission presented the Green Deal to both the European Parliament and the European Council in December 2019 in order to receive their full backing for its overall political ambition and for the measures proposed.

Full details on the European Green Deal are available on:
<https://bit.ly/36YWBrg>

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Bearded vulture *Gypaetus barbatus*, Spain.

A new EU Raptor Conservation Strategy

In January, the Commission published a new all-encompassing report on the EU's Strategic Approach to Raptor Conservation, as requested under the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). The document details the full range of activities that are underway, within the existing EU legal framework, notably the Birds Directive, to protect and improve the conservation of raptor species that occur in Europe.

Many of the 50 species of birds of prey present in the EU remain under threat from a range of activities, including illegal killing and poisoning, habitat loss and degradation, a

reduction in prey, electrocution and collisions with powerlines. In the case of migratory species, these pressures are often exacerbated during periods of migration and over-wintering, hence the need for a strategic coordinated approach along their flyway.

See: <https://bit.ly/3c4VfPX>

Natura 2000 award

On 15 October 2019, the fifth edition of the Natura 2000 Award closed for applications. Eighty eligible applications were received from 27 EU Member States, which is more than in the previous edition. The range of themes covered is as impressive as ever and illustrates the very real contributions that Natura

2000 managers continue to make to protecting and managing European nature.

The finalists for each of the five award categories – communication, socio-economic benefits, conservation, reconciling interests and perceptions, cross-border cooperation and networking – was announced in February. A high-level jury will now decide on the winners, to be revealed at a major award ceremony in Brussels in June during Green Week.

A sixth award will also be given to the finalist who receives the most public votes. So, be sure to cast your vote for your favourite project before mid May. Last time over 50,000 people voted.

See: <https://bit.ly/30JP6Dr>

Green Week 2020

This year's EU Green Week 2020, to be held in Brussels from 1–5 June, will put the spotlight on the looming global biodiversity crisis. The aim is to explore possible pathways for change and examine how a range of EU policies – such as the new European Green Deal – can help step-up actions to protect, restore and sustainably manage nature, both in Europe and across the globe.

Green Week also marks an important milestone along the path to the 15th Biodiversity Convention conference in Kunming, China, in October 2020, where world leaders will need to adopt a new 10-year action plan for biodiversity – dubbed the new global deal for people and nature.

See: <https://bit.ly/36fUWVv>

The 2020 State of Nature report

After two years of intensive data gathering and reporting, Member States have now submitted their national reports to the Commission on the conservation status of species and habitats that are protected under the two Nature Directives and present in their territory. This exercise is done every six years and involves the collation of over 15,000 datasets on individual species and habitats from all EU countries.

The European Environment Agency's Topic Centre for Biodiversity is currently cross-checking the national reports in order to be able to aggregate the results at an EU level. This will lead to the publication of a new State of EU Nature report in October 2020. First results will, however, be presented in Green Week in June 2020.

See: <https://bit.ly/38sbvYG>

New LIFE nature projects

Last autumn, 52 new nature and biodiversity projects were agreed for funding under the EU LIFE programme, representing a total investment of €260 million, with around €160 million coming from LIFE. Projects will again tackle a wide range of issues from controlling invasive species, such as the American bullfrog in Belgium or American mink in Greece and restoring important wildlife habitats along the Danube or in Swedish, Spanish and Scottish rivers, to preserving old-growth forests in Romania and conserving threatened species, such as the lesser spotted eagle in Bulgaria or the fire-bellied toad in Slovenia and Denmark.

See: <https://bit.ly/2RIS8E9>



© Project website

Conducting a population survey of freshwater pearl mussels under the Interreg programme.

The EU Interreg programme and Natura 2000

In place since 1990, Interreg provides a framework for the implementation of joint actions between national, regional and local actors from different Member States. This includes actions to protect and restore Europe's biodiversity.

Under the current programme (2014–2020) around €581 million of EU investment is foreseen for nature and biodiversity. Of this, €163 million is specifically for the protection, restoration and sustainable use of Natura 2000 sites. Around 190 projects involving Natura 2000 sites have been funded since 2000, which represents a total EU investment of almost of €200 million.

In January this year, the Commission published a report on the use of Interreg for the management of cross-border or transnational Natura 2000 sites and protected species, such as the European lynx, freshwater pearl mussel or common tern, in order to illustrate the wide range of activities that can be funded under the programme. The aim is to encourage further applications for nature and biodiversity under Interreg.

See: <https://bit.ly/2VmKHpa>

The Non-Energy Extractive Industry and Natura 2000

The Non-Energy Extractive Industry (NEEI) provides many of the basic raw materials for Europe's manufacturing and construction industries. In 2011, the Commission published guidance to assist the industry in ensuring their extraction plans and projects are in line with the requirements of EU nature legislation and avoid or minimise any potential effects on Natura 2000 sites.

In order to complement this guidance, and as foreseen

under the Action Plan for Nature, People and the Economy, the Commission published a series of good practice examples recently to illustrate how different types of NEEI activities have succeeded in practice to meet the demand for raw materials, whilst at the same time safeguarding Natura 2000 sites, and, where possible, further enhancing biodiversity, especially through land restoration.

See: <https://bit.ly/30GqrzQ>

New Habitat Action Plans

In November 2019, the Commission published the first ever EU Habitat Action Plan for semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (6210), a habitat type protected under the Habitats Directive. A second Action Plan for European dry heaths (code 4030) will be published in spring.

Both habitat types are present in a large number of Member States and have an unfavourable conservation status across much of their range. They are also important refuges for many other protected species and pollinator species.

The action plans describe the conservation status, ecological requirements and major threats to the habitats

before going on to identify the key actions and measures that are required to improve their conservation within the EU. Both plans are the result of two years of extensive consultations with leading scientific experts, stakeholders and competent Member States' authorities.

See: <https://bit.ly/2T15tz7>

Latest on the Biogeographical Process

The Atlantic and Boreal Natura 2000 seminars, held in 2019, helped to build capacity and develop transboundary cooperation priorities across the Natura 2000 community, for instance in relation to identifying conservation measures or improving landscape connectivity. Last year also saw various technical workshops being organised across the EU on a wide range of topics, from remote sensing to calcareous grassland conservation and marine site management.

The third Alpine and Mediterranean seminars will be held in 2020, the dates will be announced soon.

See: <https://bit.ly/36hpoHR>

Update on the Large Carnivores Platform

The EU Platform on Coexistence between People and Large

European dry heaths are present in 24 Member States and have mostly an unfavourable conservation status.



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Carnivores continues to explore ways of minimising conflicts between human interests and large carnivore species. During the course of 2019 and early 2020, several regional or local meetings were held in Romania, Italy, Spain, Germany and Austria. Plans are also afoot to establish further regional platforms in France, Germany and Sweden under two EU-funded projects.

Meanwhile, a Frequently Asked Questions paper has been drafted on large carnivores in Europe and their common misperceptions. A new interactive webpage has also been produced to illustrate the different measures that Member States are taking to tackle conflicts in different regions of the EU. This will be updated at regular intervals.

See: <https://bit.ly/36fQy1H>

EU Conference on pollinators

The European Commission and the European Committee of the Regions co-organised a Conference on *"Halting the loss of pollinators: the role of the EU agricultural and regional development policies"* on 21 February in Brussels. The conference took stock of the contribution of the current



Flowering mountain pasture, Gran Sasso National Park, Central Apennines, Italy.

EU agricultural and regional development policies to the conservation of pollinators and discussed how to build on the lessons learnt to ensure more effective measures and projects during the 2021-2027 period.

See: <https://bit.ly/3aydjKc>

Global business meets to act for nature

In November 2019, over 320 representatives from business and finance communities, as well as governments and civil society convened in Madrid for the European Business and Nature Summit (EBNS). The Summit provided an opportunity to discuss ways of scaling

up the integration of natural capital and biodiversity into economic decision-making, in the run-up to the 2020 UN Biodiversity Conference.

Because mobilising the private sector is such a critical part of delivering an ambitious post-2020 biodiversity framework, the summit drew particular attention to various

initiatives that are integrating natural capital and biodiversity into their daily management practices, and taking practical action for nature on the ground. They include initiatives such as 'Value Balancing Alliance', 'Business for Nature' or 'One Planet Business for Biodiversity'.

See: <https://bit.ly/204FFJZ>

Results of the newsletter survey

We would like to thank all those who took the time to complete the online survey on this newsletter. We received over 500 replies in all! We are happy to report that the vast majority of respondents were generally satisfied, rating the contents of the newsletter as good (58.4%) or excellent (26.9%).

There were also a lot of useful comments and suggestions on how the newsletter could be further improved in years to come. We will make every effort to take these into account in future issues.

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