

European Commission opts to uphold Nature Directives.

The European Commission confirmed on Wednesday [7 December] that the EU's flagship nature laws — the [Birds and Habitats Directives](#) — will be saved.

President Jean-Claude Juncker and his Commission confirmed that the Directives will not be re-written or weakened, which ends two years of uncertainty over the laws' future. They have also called for a plan to better implement and enforce these laws.

This is a victory for the 500,000 people who called on the Commission to save and enforce the laws as part of the Europe-wide [#NatureAlert](#) campaign, which was implemented by a huge contingent of NGOs including the likes of BirdLife Europe and WWF.

The EU nature laws are fundamental to nature protection in Europe, safeguarding more than 1,400 threatened species and 1,000,000 km² of natural habitats in Europe that fall under their protection. They are also enormously popular, and have been fiercely defended by scientists, the public, businesses, the European Parliament and national governments.

Environmental NGOs have welcomed the decision and also emphasise that the tough work still lies ahead to turn this decision into a genuine victory for nature — by coming forward with strong proposals to implement and enforce these laws and tackle the drivers of nature loss, notably industrial agriculture.

Robbie Blake, nature campaigner at Friends of the Earth Europe, said: "Europe's troubled nature has dodged a bullet today. We all need nature in our lives for health and well-being, so this decision to keep some of Europe's most important and popular laws, is a no brainer - but these vital nature protections should never have been in doubt in the first place. This is a defeat for those who seek to slash our environmental protections in the name of cutting so-called 'red tape'."

Ariel Brunner, Senior Head of Policy at BirdLife Europe, said: "The Commission's decision to save our nature laws shows that the voice of over half a million citizens who called for the laws to be enforced were heard loud and clear. Nature is a key value of our society and necessary for our survival. This also is a victory for the idea of European cooperation as nature knows no boundaries."

Andreas Baumüller, Head of Natural Resources at WWF European Policy Office, said: "Today we have unanimous agreement: the EU Nature laws are 'fit for purpose' to protect nature and our health. The Juncker Commission must now open a new chapter and come up with a strong action plan to address the insufficient implementation of these laws, ensure their enforcement, and effectively target unsustainable developments. The best law is not worth the paper it is written on if it is not sufficiently implemented!"

Pieter de Pous, EU Policy Director at the European Environmental Bureau, added: "Not only is nature conservation chronically underfunded but the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) continues to degrade our natural environment by rewarding the biggest farms which pollute the most, driving up the cost of preserving our habitats and wildlife even further. The longer it takes to reform the CAP and align it with environmental objectives, the more difficult and expensive it will be to halt nature loss. The Commission must kick-start an ambitious overhaul of the CAP to ensure it rewards farmers who protect Europe's wildlife and the natural resources farming so heavily depends on — water and soil."

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