

### Implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives in the EU

**March 2018 saw publication of a joint analysis by NGOs Bird Life International, European Environmental Bureau (EEB), Friends of the Earth Europe and WWF of the status of implementation of EU nature legislation (Birds Directive and Habitats Directive) in 18 EU Member States: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Sweden and the UK. The analysis is painting a bleak picture for implementation of the nature legislation.**

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The Birds and Habitats Directives are the main legal tool the EU has to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity. These Nature Directives are responsible for the creation of the largest and most coherent network of protected natural areas in the world – the Natura 2000 network. In 2016, the European Commission finalised a Fitness Check on these directives, concluding that they are still fit for purpose.

The analysis clearly identified the need for a substantial improvement in their implementation. In this context, member organisations from four big NGO networks have joined their expert opinions to score their Member States<sup>1</sup> on the current implementation of different aspects of the Nature Directives. Scores were given on 11 implementation criteria of the Birds and Habitats Directives, namely on their transposition into Member State legislation, Member State designation of Natura 2000 sites, the presence of management plans and whether they are put into practice, and the availability of funding and resources to put them into practice. Member States were scored on how well they ensure species protection, on their implementation of appropriate assessments, their management of invasive alien species and on the connectivity of the national network of protected areas. They also looked at how Member States are monitoring their habitats and species of Community importance, how they are encouraging research and scientific work on species and habitats, and how they engage stakeholders and ensure public participation in these processes.

Some trends are apparent. The only positive one relates to the transposition of the Birds and Habitats Directives into national law, where a majority (67%) of Member States have done so satisfactorily.

It is discouraging to see that no other of the aspects analysed have received a majority of positive scores. In fact, a number of aspects have not received a single green score, including for site management, species protection, appropriate assessments, funding, and stakeholder engagement.

Tellingly, over half of all countries analysed are overlooking the connectivity of their protected areas.

Almost half of the Member States analysed have scored red for site management, and for not implementing appropriate assessments properly. What's more, 44% have scored red for species protection.

Overall, Member States need to step up their game regarding most of the implementation criteria analysed, as the traffic lights blink disappointingly amber. A whopping 75% of Member States have a patchy Natura 2000 network, with many sites that should be

designated lacking official protection. And almost 90% of the Member States do not engage well enough with stakeholders to ensure real stakeholder dialogue. Some countries perform relatively well in relation to specific aspects of the Nature Directives' implementation. For instance, Hungary, Luxemburg and the Walloon region of Belgium are amongst the front runners in creating a coherent network of Natura 2000 sites. Most Member States could learn from Croatia, the only Member State analysed with appropriate site connectivity. Belgium, Denmark, and Hungary are doing a good job in monitoring habitats and species, and Belgium and Luxemburg overall perform better than other Member States when it comes to giving support to the scientific community to carry research on the status of threatened species.

With sufficient resources, commitment and willingness to learn from each other, full and effective implementation of the Directives is achievable. Ambition on the side of Member States and the Commission is needed to ensure best practice examples can become the norm across the EU, yielding the much-needed results that will ensure Europe's unique natural heritage is preserved for the generation to come.

Examples for country scores for Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania are outlined below.

Full report and individual country scores: <http://wwf.panda.org/?326895/The-State-of-Implementation-of-the-Birds-and-Habitats-Directives-in-the-EU>

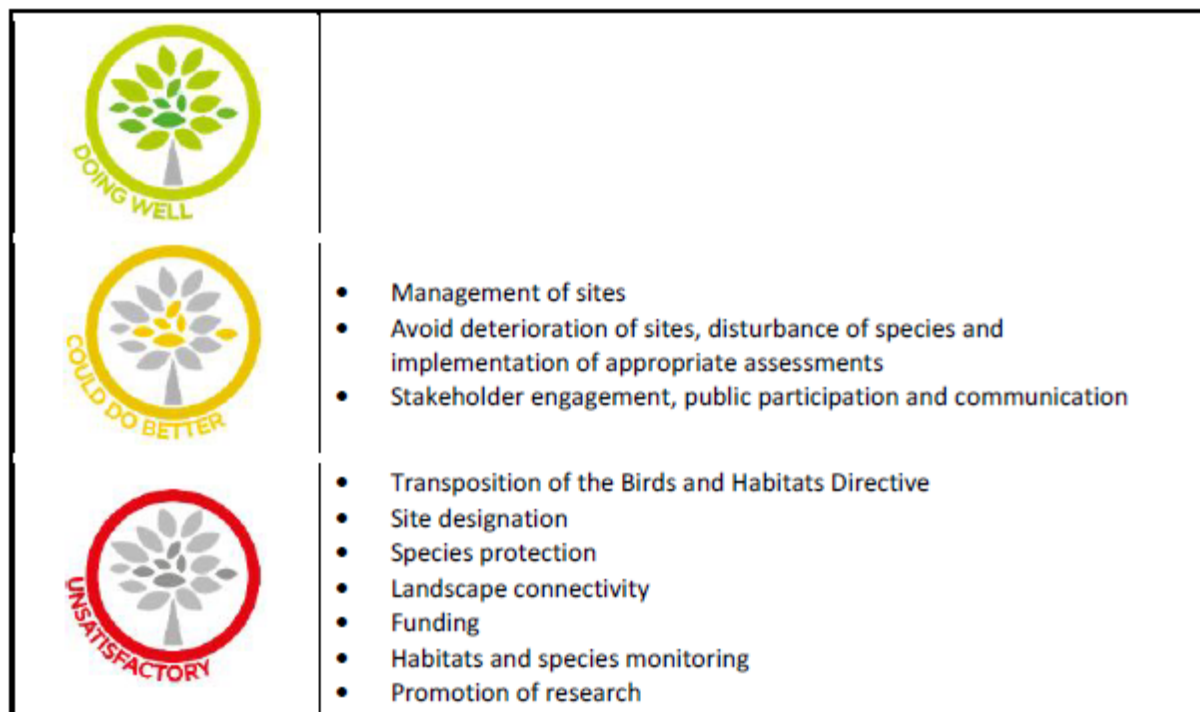
Source: Bird Life International, European Environmental Bureau, Friends of the Earth Europe and WWF, March 2018

## Graphics 1




### Scores for Austria, Belgium, Croatia and Romania



Austria






Belgium

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transposition</li> <li>• Site designation (Wallonia)</li> <li>• Habitats and species monitoring</li> <li>• Promotion of research</li> <li>• Non-native species (Wallonia)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site designation (Flanders + Federal (Marine))</li> <li>• Management of sites</li> <li>• Species protection</li> <li>• Non-native species (Flanders)</li> <li>• Funding and resources</li> <li>• Stakeholder engagement, public participation and communication</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscape connectivity</li> <li>• Avoid deterioration of sites, disturbance of species and implementation of appropriate assessments</li> </ul>






## Bulgaria

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transposition of the Birds and Habitats Directives</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site designation</li> <li>• Non-native species</li> <li>• Stakeholder engagement, public participation and communication</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management of sites</li> <li>• Species protection</li> <li>• Avoid deterioration of sites, disturbance of species and implementation of appropriate assessments</li> <li>• Funding and resources</li> <li>• Landscape connectivity</li> <li>• Habitats and species monitoring</li> <li>• Promotion of research</li> </ul>



## Croatia

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Landscape connectivity</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Transposition of the Birds and Habitats Directives</li><li>• Species protection</li><li>• Funding and resources</li><li>• Habitats and species monitoring</li><li>• Promotion of research</li><li>• Non-native species</li><li>• Stakeholder engagement, public participation and communication</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Site designation</li><li>• Management of sites</li><li>• Avoid deterioration of sites, disturbance of species and implementation of appropriate assessments</li></ul>