



Public consultation as part of the 'fitness check' for EU nature legislation (Birds Directive, Habitats Directive)

Objective of the consultation

This consultation is designed to gather opinions on current EU nature conservation legislation (the [Birds Directive](#) and the [Habitats Directive](#)) and its implementation to date, as part of the 'fitness check' that the European Commission is carrying out under its Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme (REFIT).

The fitness check looks at whether the current regulatory framework is proportionate and fit for purpose, and delivering as expected. Specifically, it assesses the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and EU added value of the legislation. However, the fitness check does not consider possible future changes to the legislation. If required, this would be done in a separate impact assessment.

[Details of the fitness check timetable and process](#)

The results of this consultation will be assessed and summarised in a report, which will be made publicly available on the [fitness check website](#). You are invited to read the privacy statement attached to this consultation for information on how your personal data and contribution will be dealt with.

Birds Directive & Habitats Directive – strategic objectives

Adopted in 1979, the Birds Directive is designed to protect all wild birds and their most important habitats across the EU. Its strategic objective is 'to maintain the population of all species of wild birds in the EU at a level which corresponds to ecological, scientific and cultural requirements, while taking account of economic and recreational requirements, or to adapt the population of these species to that level'.

The Habitats Directive, adopted in 1992, introduces similar measures for some 230 habitat types and 1 000 species of wild animals and plants — collectively referred to as 'species of EU interest'. Its strategic objective is 'to maintain or restore natural habitats and species of EU interest at favourable conservation status, taking into account economic, social and cultural requirements and regional and local characteristics'.

How the Birds and Habitats Directives protect nature

The Directives require all EU countries to:

- set up a strict protection regime for all wild European bird species and other endangered species listed in Annex IV to the Habitats Directive.
- designate core sites for the protection of species and habitat types listed in Annexes I and II to the Habitats Directive and Annex I to the Birds Directive as well as migratory birds.

Together, these designated sites form part of a network of areas for nature - the European Natura 2000 Network. This consists of some 27 000 protected areas of high biodiversity value covering about 18% of the EU and over 4% of its seas.

Natura 2000 sites are selected on purely scientific grounds. Each EU country then decides which measures are needed to ensure appropriate protection based on the needs of the species and habitats, taking into account economic, social and cultural requirements and any regional and local characteristics.

To check whether the Directives are achieving their aims, EU countries monitor progress and report back to the European Commission every 6 years on the status of the species and habitats of EU interest that are present in their territory. The Commission then brings together this information to determine:

- the overall EU-wide trend for each species and habitat
- whether they have reached a favourable conservation status, or are on the way to it.

[Fuller introduction \(in English\) to the Birds and Habitats Directives](#)

[Further information \(in English\) about the Directives](#)

Structure of the questionnaire

You are invited to fill in the online questionnaire, which is available below. Please note that it is available in all EU languages.

There are two parts to the questionnaire. The first part is designed for the general public and does not require extensive knowledge or experience of the Directives. The questions relate to issues of effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value. The questions in the second part build on those in the first part and cover similar issues, but in more depth. They require some understanding of the Directives and their implementation.

You must answer the questions in the first part for your response to be taken into account. You will then be asked whether you wish to answer the more detailed questions in the second part of the questionnaire. If not, you can still make additional comments in a free text box before submitting your response.

You may pause at any time and continue later. Once you have submitted your answers, you can download a copy of your completed responses

Please note that due to technical requirements for processing the questionnaire, and in order to ensure a fair and transparent consultation process, **only responses received through the online questionnaire will be taken into account and included in the report summarising the responses.** Questionnaires sent by e-mail or in paper format will not be analysed.