



Youth demands related to the Stress Test of the Birds & Habitats Directives

No provisions of the Nature Directives should be watered down. Revising the Directives could improve and strengthen them, e.g., in listing the species to be protected or defining their implementation timeline. Their core requirements for sufficient active conservation measures and prevention of deterioration, monitoring, and reporting must be maintained.

It should not be possible to delist Annex 1 habitats as well as Annex 2 species. The Natura 2000 network can already be adapted and impactful activities can be authorized within their boundaries. Removing species or habitats would cause unjustified insecurity in their management and create additional burden.

The Commission should launch an **initiative to identify the protection needs for marine species and habitats** to be added in the Directives.

Transparency in listing protected features: while changing species and habitats listing in the different annexes might be considered, notably to increase the protection level of hailable or unlisted species, the process must be fully transparent. Agreeing on a science-based process can be both complicated to standardize across the EU and be used politically, for example relying on population estimates or setting thresholds. From the start, the process should be fed by transparent consultation across Member States and EU level, and should not be restricted to participants of NADEG (the Expert group for the implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directive). Contributions and positions should be made public. Any change should be fully justified in public documents. Legal remedies must be available.

Additional means to support the enforcement at EU level: The European Commission requires additional means to ensure enforcement and support to Member States in implementing the EU biodiversity legislation, including the Biodiversity Strategy, the Nature Directives and the NRR. The number of permanent positions in DG ENV should therefore increase to ensure the implementation of these key legislation, as well as the availability of meaningful and engaging job opportunities for young professionals.

Improved meaningful stakeholder participation:

- **Youth organisations should be represented in the expert groups in charge of implementing the Directives** (Biodiversity Platform of the European Union, NADEG).
- There should be a **meaningful youth checking process of the stress test**, in addition to the planned reality check.
- The Commission should **develop guidance to support the development of significant stakeholder participation** in the implementation of the Nature Directives and NRR in Member States. Such guidance would also support the implementation of the Aarhus Convention and the target 22 of the Global Biodiversity Framework, to ensure participation in decision-making and access to justice and information.