

WILL YOU LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY FOR NATURE?

BirdLife Europe & Central Asia, EEB (European Environmental Bureau), Friends of the Earth Europe and WWF European Policy Office call on Commissioner Karmenu Vella to take decisive action in his remaining time as EU Environment Commissioner to improve the implementation and enforcement of the EU's world-leading nature laws – the Birds & Habitats Directives¹.

Intensive agriculture: threats to the implementation and enforcement of the EU Birds & Habitats Directives

The #NatureAlert Countdown is on! But there is still time to take action to save threatened wildlife and habitats across Europe!

European biodiversity is in freefall. Major gaps in the implementation and enforcement of our nature laws is leaving nature dangerously exposed to serious threats from intensive agriculture – one of the main drivers of biodiversity loss in Europe. Bees, birds and wildflowers are disappearing as intensive farming ploughs over grasslands, drains wetlands and rivers, pumps lakes with toxic chemicals and pollutes the air with greenhouse gas emissions from livestock. And even protected nature sites are not spared this senseless destruction. But agriculture and nature can peacefully coexist. When farmers work in harmony with nature – like in Castro Verde, Portugal – biodiversity bounces back. The EU must support farmers to practice nature-friendly farming in accordance with our nature laws.



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A SUCCESS STORY: CASTRO VERDE, PORTUGAL



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Castro Verde is an extensive island of nature in a sea of intensive agriculture. Traditional land use with one year of crops followed by several years of extensive grazing by sheep preserved a unique flora and fauna, including birds of prey and vultures, as well as little and great bustard. In the 1990s the environmental group LPN, the local farmers' organisation (AACB) and the Portuguese Ministry of Agriculture developed the "Zonal plan" (an agri-environment measure as part of the Portuguese Rural Development Programme) – an integrated scheme covering 64000 ha. Over the years, the scheme had its ups and downs, but overall it was successful, resulting in a massive increase of the Great bustard population from 300 to 1000.

Now an internationally well-known case study. The zonal plan is viewed as a good example of how to use the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Rural Development Programme money well in order to protect Natura 2000 sites. Castro Verde was also awarded the status of UNESCO world heritage site in 2017.

¹January 2019, 'Joint Policy Brief on the Implementation and Enforcement of the Birds & Habitats Directives'

The #NatureAlert countdown is on!
Will you, Commissioner Vella, leave a lasting legacy

Please support our call for other sites to replicate how rural development programmes and funding are used in Castro Verde to work with nature.

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