



Position Statement – Fitness Check of the EU Nature Directives *June 2015*

As part of its Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme (REFIT), the European Commission is undertaking a Fitness Check of the EU Nature Directives – the Wild Birds and Habitats Directives – which will involve a comprehensive assessment of whether the current regulatory framework is “fit for purpose”.

Phase 1 (January-April 2015) involved an extensive evidence-gathering exercise in which all Member States and selected key stakeholder groups were consulted.

In phase 2 (30 April- 24 July 2015) the Commission has launched a 12-week public consultation, which is open to all and is available in the 23 official languages of the EU. The questionnaire explores different aspects of the Fitness Check and the results thereof will be published in the autumn.

ENEP has created a Thematic Task Force (TTF) to respond to the Fitness Check. The TTF has drawn together evidence to submit to the Phase 1 consultation and has been encouraging all of its 45,000 individual members to respond to Phase 2.

In its evidence to Phase 1 the ENEP TTF made the following points:

ENEP firmly believes that **the professional competences of those implementing, and advising on implementing, the Directives are essential**. Mutually recognised qualifications and competences would improve standards of interpretation and application.

The issues addressed by the Directives are complex and continue to require action at the EU level. In many Member States adequate implementation of nature conservation legislation remains limited. Accordingly, **recognition for the role of appropriately qualified and skilled environmental professionals** in different Member States is needed to address these issues with a high degree of competence.

Beyond the concept of designating protected areas there remains limited capacity in many Member States on how to draw up management plans, estimate management costs for sites, and link up with area payments under the Common Agricultural Policy in support of Natura 2000. There is an **urgent need to build up professional standards** in these areas through formal education as well as **sharing knowledge and skills** between environmental professionals in different Member States.

ENEP believes that the **sharing of experience on implementation** between professionals from the older Member States with professionals involved in implementation of the Directives in the

new Member States is an effective means of **improving future implementation** and that **existing measures should be significantly strengthened**.

ENEP recommends an EU approach to **professional competency frameworks** (similar to those operated by a number of our members) that can guide and facilitate environmental professionals in **continually improving their knowledge, skills and competences**. A Europe-wide framework mutually recognised under the professional qualifications directive is suggested.

ENEP's environmental professionals report that there are **constant challenges concerning the costs** that may be incurred for surveys of specific European Protected Species due to lack of understanding from other sectors. The Directives need to be implemented by Member States in a proportionate way, and non-environmental sector professionals need to be made aware of the importance and implications of the EU nature legislation.

ENEP understands that the nature directives have a **disproportionate impact in different Member States**. The extent of the implementation of Natura 2000 is territorially very different among Member States, particularly in newer Member States, so that **enhanced support for such Member States is required**.

ENEP recognises that there is **no streamlined procedure for adapting the Directives**. Amendment proposals take time and the political debate is frequently cumbersome, which delays the implementation of the new legislation. **Nature legislation might benefit from a more dynamic approach** to updating the annexes to legislation through a Best Available Techniques approach, with particular regard for emerging issues such as **climate change, demographic changes, decline of pastoralism, genetic engineering and rewilding**.

ENEP recognises that **EU nature legislation has contributed significantly to harmonised and consistent approaches to European nature conservation**. The ENEP TTF believes that without EU nature legislation there would be a complex picture of national mechanisms and disjointed approaches that would have left species and habitats in danger and provided potential distortions for the Single Market.

About ENEP

ENEP is the European Network of Environmental Professionals (previously known as EFAEP - The European Federation of Associations of Environmental Professionals). It represents 20 European Environmental Organisations in 9 countries, and totalling over 45,000 individual professionals. ENEP is the leading environmental professional networking organisation across Europe.

ENEP seeks to influence and implement the environmental agenda throughout Europe. It aims to do so by being respected for its adherence to sound, objective science rather than political lobbying but will be proactive where scientific or technical evidence supports it. Where possible it will also use its influence within the wider global context and beyond the European boundaries.

ENEP is uniquely placed to promote and co-ordinate the many and varied aspects of environmental work and environmental professionals but prides itself on its ability to maintain the separate identities of its member organisations.

ENEP believes environmental professionalism is one of the essential prerequisites for achieving sustainability, so we have created a Platform to help build a professional community which promotes knowledge sharing, cross-border integration and an arena to positively influence and implement policy, science and education.

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