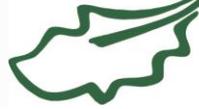




TERRA CYPRIA



ΤΟ ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΟ ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΠΡΟΣΤΑΣΙΑΣ ΤΟΥ ΠΕΡΙΒΑΛΛΟΝΤΟΣ
THE CYPRUS CONSERVATION FOUNDATION
KIBRIS ÇEVRE KORUMA VAKFI



PRESS RELEASE

Great news for nature: huge public campaign saves EU nature laws

Nicosia, 9 December 2016

European Commission confirms EU nature protection laws will be saved after record-breaking campaign – now is the time for better implementation, say NGOs.

BirdLife Cyprus, the Cyprus Conservation Foundation Terra Cypria and Friends of the Earth Cyprus, the leading nature protection NGOs in Cyprus, welcome the good news from the European Commission, which has officially confirmed that the EU's nature laws – the Birds and Habitats Directives – will be saved and not rewritten and weakened. This announcement ends two years of uncertainty over the future of the Directives. The Commission has also called for a plan to better implement and enforce these laws.

“This is a victory for the record half a million people who called on the Commission to save and enforce these laws as part of the Europe-wide #NatureAlert campaign. It is fantastic news for Akamas, for Limni and for all threatened Natura 2000 sites in Cyprus, as it confirms the vital importance of proper site protection and management,” said Lefkios Sergides of Terra Cypria.

The EU nature laws are fundamental to nature protection in Europe, safeguarding more than 1,400 threatened species and one million square kilometres of natural habitats in Europe that fall under their protection. They are also enormously popular, and have been fiercely defended by scientists, the public, businesses, the European Parliament and national governments. Cyprus has designated 63 Natura 2000 sites, but many of these face serious unsustainable development threats and there is an urgent need for protective management of these key nature areas.

Environmental NGOs emphasise that the tough work still lies ahead to turn this decision into a real victory for nature – by coming forward with strong proposals to implement and enforce these laws and tackle the drivers of nature loss, notably industrial agriculture.

“The message from the public campaign, and now from the Commission, is clear: we must effectively protect nature, for our own well-being. The EU and Cyprus must now open a new chapter, one of proper management of Natura 2000 sites and beyond, including a radical reform of the Common Agricultural

Policy (CAP) to ensure it no longer supports environmentally damaging agriculture.” said Martin Hellicar, Director of BirdLife Cyprus.

“Nature around Europe, and especially nature in Cyprus, has dodged a bullet. Nature in our lives is a right, and these vital nature laws should never have been in doubt in the first place. This is a defeat for those who seek to slash our environmental protections in the name of cutting so-called ‘red tape’”, added Natasa Ioannou from Friends of the Earth Cyprus.

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Notes to the Editors:

1. The Nature Directives comprise the Birds and Habitats Directives. They establish a common legal framework for the protection of rare or threatened species and habitats within the EU via the designation of a network of protected sites and the establishment of a system of species protection measures.
2. For more information on the “fitness check” click here: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/fitness_check/index_en.htm
3. 520,000 citizens and 120 environmental NGOs participated in the public consultation on the “fitness check”:
<http://birdlifecyprus.org/upload/20150724NatureAlertRecordbreakingnumberofEUcitizenscalltoprotectnatureEN.pdf>
4. More on the #NatureAlert campaign: <http://www.naturealert.eu>