



PRESS RELEASE

EU Court rules on Bulgaria: Government has failed nature

Nicosia, 21 January 2016

The European Court of Justice has condemned Bulgaria on 14th January 2016 for failing to protect nature and putting threatened species at risk.

The Court found that Bulgaria had not safeguarded Natura 2000 sites on cape Kaliakra and adjacent coastal areas properly, allowing a large number of developments to go ahead.

The region is part of the wintering grounds of the Red-breasted Goose, a globally threatened species, and it is on the migration route of thousands of birds, such as White Storks and Great White Pelicans.

Projects such as wind turbines, a golf course, spa and hotels have been approved and built in the area with permission by the Bulgarian authorities, despite the likelihood it would lead to significant disturbance to these protected species.

The Bulgarian government has also breached the Directives by failing to fully designate the Kaliakra area as a protected Natura 2000 site. Although the government had designated the coastline, until recently it was not protecting the inland agricultural areas that are important for internationally important bird populations.

The Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB), BirdLife in Bulgaria, has been fighting against the continued degradation and destruction of this amazing wildlife site for more than a decade.

Stoycho Stoychev, BSPB Conservation Director, said: *'The judgement of the European Court of Justice reminds us that the Law should be respected and fully implemented. This judgement creates a loud and clear need for the Bulgarian government to take immediate action to remove impacts on the damaged Natura 2000 sites. It is also important that Natura 2000 sites all over the country are properly protected and the Government should ensure that it does not allow damaging projects in Natura 2000 areas, but instead encourages sustainable development that is profitable both for nature and people.'*

Clairie Papazoglou, Executive Director of BirdLife Cyprus said: *'The Kaliakra judgment should send a powerful signal to the Cyprus authorities also, in view of recent damaging projects in Cyprus like the Oreites Windfarm, the Limni Golf Resort and recent developments in Akamas. The Cyprus authorities should not allow damaging projects to go ahead and should fully implement the provisions of nature legislation'.*

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Notes to the Editors:

1. **BirdLife Cyprus** is a registered, non-governmental, not for profit organisation (NGO) that dedicates itself to the conservation of wild birds and their habitats in Cyprus. It was formed in 2003 through the merge of the two Cyprus Ornithological Societies and now has offices in Strakka, Nicosia comprised by professional staff. <http://www.birdlifecyprus.org/>
2. The **Court of Justice's judgment** is available to view here: <http://goo.gl/W10cJp>
3. More information on the **EU Birds and Habitats Directives** is available here: <http://www.birdlife.org/europe-and-central-asia/birds-and-habitats-directives>