

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.

Tourism development: 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, such as the important turtle-nesting beaches of Zakynthos!

European biodiversity is in freefall. Major gaps in the implementation and enforcement of our nature laws are leaving nature dangerously exposed to serious threats from unsustainable tourism development – a major driver of biodiversity loss in Europe. Every year, millions of tourists flock to visit Europe's most stunning natural sites, excited to enjoy our sun-kissed beaches and beautiful countryside. But, all too often, tourism developments are trampling over protected nature and crowding out wildlife. Economic pressures are put ahead of saving Europe's precious natural heritage. We all enjoy visiting beautiful places, but to preserve them, tourism developments must be controlled. Sustainable tourism that works in harmony with nature conservation is possible and necessary.



SAVE THE TURTLES OF ZAKYNTHOS, GREECE



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The National Marine Park of Zakynthos hosts the most important nesting grounds for loggerhead sea turtles in the Mediterranean Sea. Yet these nesting grounds are under threat from tourism demands combined with weak implementation and enforcement of management measures. Tourists and turtles arrive during the same period on the beautiful sandy beaches of Zakynthos, an island struggling to find the right balance between development and conservation. Illegal coastal developments, shops and beach enterprises, as well as road constructions and light and noise pollution are some of the threats to these sensitive nesting grounds.

The nesting beaches of Zakynthos have been designated as Natura 2000 sites and protected nationally as a national park by virtue of a Presidential Decree which has, however, been inconsistently implemented and irregularly enforced. .

Zakynthos has been brought to the Court of Justice of the European Union twice, resulting in two separate rulings against Greece. In the first case, the Court found that Greece had failed to establish and implement an effective system of strict protection for the loggerhead turtle. . Since then, compliance with the court's decision has been unstable. The second ruling related to the the illegal operation of a landfill, which was finally closed down in 2018, more than three years after the Court of Justice ruled against Greece. Nonetheless, restoration of the area is still pending. The European Commission monitors the situation on Zakynthos regularly – but has not as yet taken further action. Recently the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention also decided to consider evidence relating to the management problems on Zakynthos, in coordination with the European Commission.

¹ January 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 for nature?

Please support our call for the European Commission to continue monitoring the situation closely in Zakynthos and review the effectiveness of management and warden measures to ensure the EU Habitats Directive is fully applied.

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