



EUROPEAN
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Joint Statement: Lack of scrutiny over future developments' impact on protected areas

February 2, 2017

Required procedures for assessing the potential negative environmental impacts of future developments on protected areas (1) in Europe are too often not carried out properly – and in some cases are being bypassed altogether. This malpractice is one of the factors contributing to the continued degradation of Europe's valuable natural heritage.

This evaluation was made in a study (2) carried out by the NGO Justice and Environment.

Justice and Environment has called (3) on the European Commission to address the main shortcomings in the way these assessments are carried out as it prepares its proposal on how to better implement EU nature protection laws over the next couple of months. This call is supported by the European Environmental Bureau, ClientEarth, and CEEweb for Biodiversity.

Siim Vahtrus, Chairman of Justice and Environment, said: "*When projects are permitted without proper assessment or by brushing aside scientific data, it often constitutes a breach of EU nature protection law. While developers and authorities may consider assessments too burdensome, they must remember that it is Europe's natural habitats that bear the real burden of this lack of oversight.*"

Notes for Editors:

(1) Under EU nature protection rules, development plans and projects which could impact sites designated as protected as part of the Natura 2000 network must be assessed (3) to ensure that they do not jeopardise natural habitats and the species which live there. Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive states that if it cannot be proven that a project or plan will not have a significant effect on a protected area then it should not go ahead. Natura 2000 is the EU's network of protected sites and is the largest of its kind in the world. It was established by the Birds and Habitats Directives.

(2) '[Practical Problems in Implementation of the Appropriate Assessment of Natura 2000. An analysis on Natura 2000 appropriate assessment in Bulgaria, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia.](#)'

(3) '[Making Natura 2000 Impact Assessments Truly Appropriate: NGO proposal for an Action Plan](#)'

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