



Wild birds protected under common wings

Wild birds know no borders, so the conservation of endangered species requires trans-frontier cooperation. The first European directive to protect wild birds was adopted in 1979 and is the oldest EU environmental law still in force. It restricts hunting and prohibits deliberate killing and destroying of nests and eggs. For its 30th birthday, lawyers are working to give it a new, clearer and more concise shape.

Several thickly filled pages under slightly mysterious Latin taxonomy contain dozens of bird species that are protected under EU law. Among them, one can find familiar feathered creatures like the common crane (*Grus grus*), but also some whose names may sound a bit curious like *Cursorius cursor* (cream-colored courser), or Eurasian woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*).

"Conservation of wild birds is a very good example of an area where international cooperation is necessary: birds know no borders, hence national legislation is less efficient than joint action within the EU," said Polish Socialist Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg, who deals with this directive on behalf of the Legal Affairs Committee.

Economic development is the worst enemy of wild birds. Industrialisation, environmental pollution, human settlement and large scale farming break the food chain and suppress natural habitats of many species.

The directive envisages the creation of protected areas the upkeep and management of habitats in accordance with ecological needs and stresses the need to re-establish and create biotopes.

It forbids the deliberate killing or capture of birds by any method, the deliberate destruction or removal of nests and eggs and the taking of eggs in the wild even if they are empty.

The rules also forbid the deliberate disturbance of the birds particularly during the breeding and rearing period.

It also imposes restrictions or a total ban on hunting of certain species.

The aim is to simplify existing laws to better protect the birds. The new legislation will replace separate rules. The MEPs approved the legislation on Tuesday.