

Natural capital

EU protected species



Indicator	EU indicator past trend	Selected objective to be met by 2020	Indicative outlook of the EU meeting the selected objective by 2020
Species of European interest		Ensure that 34 % of species assessments under the Habitats Directive are in a favourable or improved conservation status, and that 78 % of species assessments under the Birds Directive show a secure or improved status — EU Biodiversity Strategy.	
<p>The EU has shown limited progress in improving the conservation status of EU protected species and the pressures on species remain. It is therefore unlikely that the 2020 target will be met</p>			

The Seventh Environment Action Programme (7th EAP) includes the objective of halting biodiversity loss and the degradation of ecosystem services by 2020. Preserving and restoring species of European interest is a key element in this. The overall aim of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives — the cornerstones of EU biodiversity legislation — is to ensure that species of European interest are in a good status. According to the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020, 34 % of species assessments (under the Habitats Directive) should be in a favourable or improved conservation status ⁽¹⁾ and 78 % of birds assessments (under the Birds Directive) should show a secure or improved status. According to the latest assessments covering the 2007–2012 period, 28 % of species assessments are in favourable or improving status, while 61 % of bird species assessments have a secure or improved status. Despite limited progress, with recovery of some species due to dedicated conservation efforts and improved site management, species continue to face pressures including habitat loss and modification, and pollution arising from factors such as agriculture and forestry. It is therefore unlikely that the 2020 target will be met.

For further information on the scoreboard methodology please see Box I.1 in the EEA Environmental indicator report 2016

Setting the Scene

The 7th EAP (EU, 2013) includes the objective of halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services by 2020. Preserving and restoring species of European interest, which constitute an important part of the EU's biodiversity, is a key element, not only for the intrinsic value of these protected species, but also because protecting their habitats supports a wider range of biodiversity and contributes to ensuring the continued delivery of ecosystem services — water purification, pollination, recreation etc. — which benefit EU citizens.

Policy targets and progress

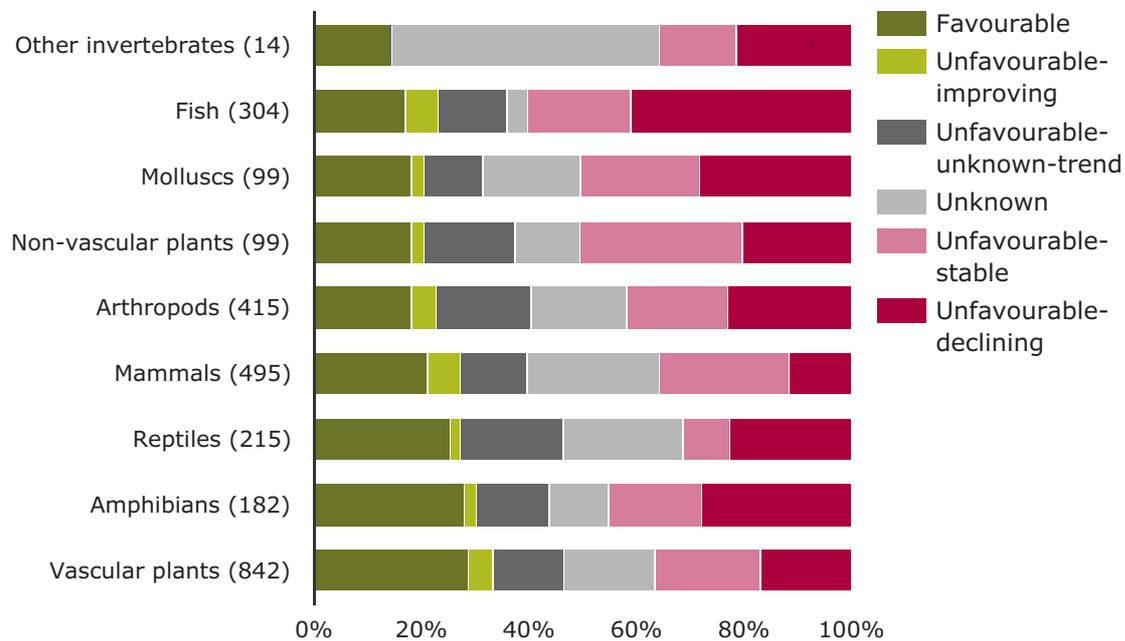
In line with the 7th EAP objective, the overall aim of the EU Biodiversity Strategy (EC, 2011) includes halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020. The EU Birds and Habitats Directives (EU, 1992 and 2009) aim to ensure that species of European interest are maintained or restored to good status throughout their natural range within the EU. Target 1 of the Biodiversity Strategy sets out the specific goal that, by 2020, 34 % of species assessed under the Habitats Directive should have a favourable or improved conservation status, and that 78 % of species assessed under the Birds Directive should have a secure or improved status.

The latest assessments (covering the 2007–2012 period) for the conservation status and trends for species under the Habitats Directive show that the total proportion of these species having either favourable (23 %) or improved (4 %) status was 27 % (the adjusted 2020 target is 34.5 %). A total of 22 % are still deteriorating and 14 % are without a known trend.

As can be seen in Figure 1, the majority of species are assessed as being in unfavourable status (60 %). For all taxonomic groups, moreover, the number of species whose status is deteriorating is significantly higher than those whose status is improving towards favourable status. The largest negative trend is observed in fish, molluscs and amphibians. With more than 66 % of assessments categorised as 'unknown' and only 7 % as favourable, the status of marine species gives rise to particular concern.

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Figure 1: Conservation status and trends for species assessed as unfavourable under the Habitats Directive (2007-2012), EU



Note:

These are species from the Habitats Directive. The number of assessments is indicated in parenthesis. The total number of assessments is 2 665.

Data

sources:

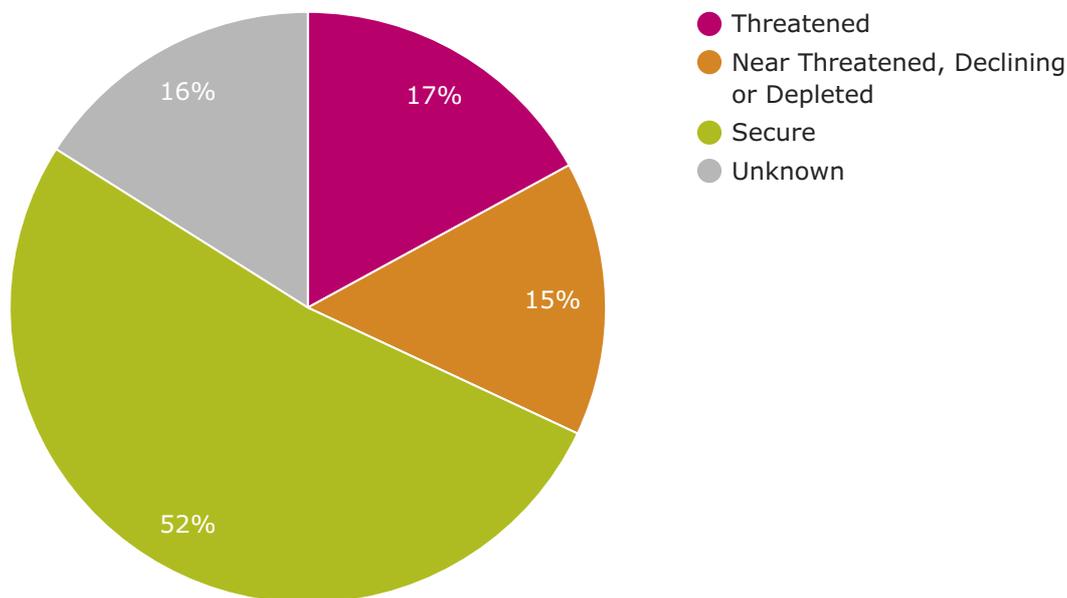
- a. DG ENV. Conservation status of habitat types and species (Article 17, Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC)
- b. EEA. Conservation status of habitat types and species (Article 17, Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC)
- c. EEA – Indicator CSI007

For birds, the total proportion of species assessments with either secure status (52 %) or non-secure but improving status (8.5 %) was around 61 % of species (the target for 2020 is 78 %). The proportion of secure species did not change compared with the assessment in 2004 (EC, 2015; EEA, 2015a).

The EU population status of bird species (see Figure 2) indicates that around 15 % are near threatened, declining or depleted, while another 17 % of species are threatened. It should also be noted that the EU population status for another 17 % of bird species remains unknown. Populations of some common birds appear to be stabilising but other species — especially those linked to fragile freshwater, coastal and agricultural ecosystems — continue to decline (EC, 2015).

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Figure 2: EU population status of bird species



Note:

The total number of assessments is 447 (only species were assessed).

Data

a. EEA. [Status and trends of bird populations \(Article 12, Birds Directive 2009/147/EC\)](#)

sources:

b. DG ENV. [Status and trends of bird populations \(Article 12, Birds Directive 2009/147/EC\)](#)

c. EEA – Indicator CSI007

There has been limited progress, with recovery of some species due to dedicated conservation efforts and improved site management. The EU-wide network of nature conservation areas (Natura 2000) has been expanded to cover 18 % of EU land and is now considered complete (the coverage of protected marine areas has increased to 6 % but still requires additional effort). Conserving and managing the Natura 2000 network effectively through implementation of conservation measures under the Birds and Habitats Directives is central to improving the conservation status of EU protected species. It is also important to enhance the network's coherence through developing green infrastructure, such as wildlife corridors.

Nonetheless, EU protected species continue to face many pressures: the highest ranked pressures and threats to terrestrial species are reported to be agriculture (including both intensification and abandonment) and changes to hydrology (especially in wetlands) (EEA, 2015a). Many of these threats and pressures arise from a wide range of sectors and policies (including agriculture, fisheries, forestry, transport etc.) and are expected to continue. Consequently, the fate of European biodiversity is closely intertwined with developments in these areas, including implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy reform. The

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adequate integration of biodiversity considerations into certain economic sectors and regional policies therefore remains critical in attempting to reduce pressures on biodiversity (EEA, 2015b).

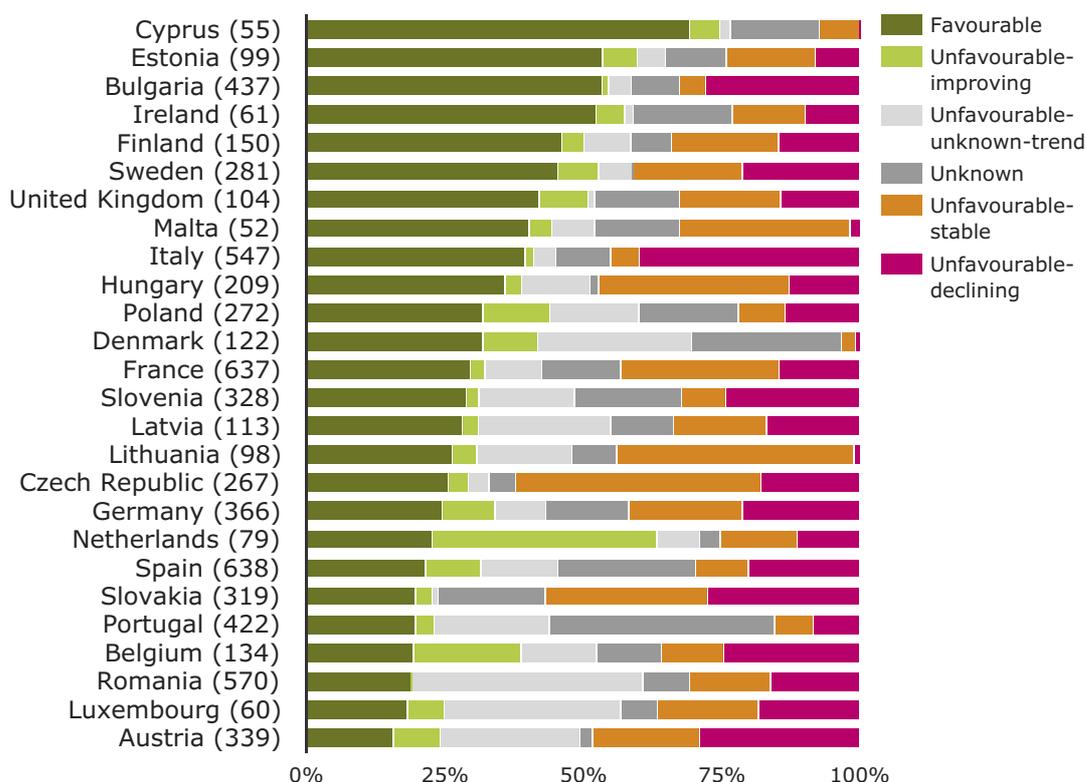
Given the limited progress in improving the conservation status of species and the ongoing cumulative pressures on their habitats, it is unlikely that the 2020 target will be met.

Country level information

At the EU Member States level, almost half of the countries have 30 % or less of species assessments considered as favourable, and only four Member States (Ireland, Bulgaria, Estonia and Cyprus) have more than 50 % of species assessments as favourable (see Figure 3).

The proportion of species assessments classified as unfavourable–declining exceeds 20 % in nine countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden, while for Italy up to 40 % of its species assessments are classified as unfavourable–declining (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Conservation status and trends of species assessed under the Habitats Directive (2007-2012), by country



Note:

These are species from the Habitats Directive. The number of assessments is indicated in parentheses. The total number of assessments is 6 759. Greece did not provide an Article 17 report.

Data

sources:

- EEA. Conservation status of habitat types and species (Article 17, Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC)
- DG ENV. Conservation status of habitat types and species (Article 17, Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC)
- EEA – Indicator CSI007

Outlook beyond 2020

Dedicated conservation efforts under the Habitats and Birds Directives can be expected to result in the recovery of some species, but achieving favourable conservation status for all EU protected species in the longer term is very challenging. Many species are expected to continue their decline beyond 2020 since widespread pressures are expected to be ongoing.

Intensification of agriculture is expected to continue or increase in Eastern Europe, for example, and some pressures (including climate change and invasive alien species) are set to increase.

The fate of marine species is a particular concern given the high proportion of 'unknown' assessments and given also that a substantial increase in the network of marine protected areas still needs to be implemented.

About the indicator

This indicator covers the status of and trends in: (1) around 450 wild bird species that are naturally present in the EU (Birds Directive, EU, 2009); and (2) more than 1 250 other species of wild animals and plants (Habitats Directive, EU, 1992) considered to be rare, threatened or endemic. The protected species are often collectively referred to as species of European interest. They cover many taxonomic groups, trophic levels and habitats.

Conservation status of species under the Habitats Directive is assessed every 6 years (latest period 2007–2012) at the national and EU biogeographical levels. Population status of species of the Birds Directive is also assessed every 6 years (first period 2008–2012) at the EU level.

Assessments cover the status of the species and their evolution during this period (trend). The indicator thus reflects combined results for both status and trend.

For bird species, the population status is categorised as 'secured', 'near threatened, declining or depleted', 'threatened' or 'unknown', and conservation trends (for 'near threatened, declining or depleted' and 'threatened' species) categorised as 'increasing', 'stable', 'fluctuating', 'deteriorating', or 'unknown'.

For other species, conservation status is categorised as 'favourable', 'unfavourable–inadequate', 'unfavourable–bad' and 'unknown', and conservation trends (for unfavourable assessments) as 'unfavourable–improving', 'unfavourable–stable', 'unfavourable–deteriorating' and 'unfavourable–unknown'.

Footnotes and references

[1] The official target is that 25 % of assessments must be favourable or improving. Due to changes resulting from better data or changes in methodology, the target has been 'backcasted' so that 34.5 % of assessments must be favourable or improving. See also page 146 in EEA, 2015a.

EC, 2011, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 'Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020' (COM(2011) 244 final)

( http://ec.europa.eu/environment/marine/pdf/1_EN_ACT.pdf) accessed 14 November 2016.

EC, 2015, Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council 'Mid-term review of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 — EU assessment of progress towards the targets and action' (COM(2015) 478 final) (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52015DC0478&from=EN>) accessed 14 November 2016.

EEA, 2015a, State of nature in the EU, EEA Technical Report No 2/2015, European Environment Agency (<http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/state-of-nature-in-the-eu>) accessed 14 November 2016.

EEA, 2015b, SOER 2015 —The European environment — State and outlook 2015, European Environment Agency (<http://www.eea.europa.eu/soer>) accessed 14 November 2016.

EEA, 2016, 'Species of European interest (SEBI 003)', European Environment Agency (<http://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/indicators/species-of-european-interest/species-of-european-interest-assessment>) accessed 14 November 2016.

EU, 1992, Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7–50).

EU, 2009, Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (OJ L 20, 26.1.2010, p. 7–75).

EU, 2013, Decision No 1386/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 November 2013 on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2020 'Living well, within the limits of our planet', Annexe A, paragraph 28a (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013D1386&from=EN>) accessed 14 November 2016.

Environmental indicator report 2016 – In support to the monitoring of the 7th Environment Action Programme, EEA report No30/2016, European Environment Agency