

## 04. NATURE PROTECTION

### POLICY & LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENTS

The legislative process continues to be characterized by inadequate public participation and an overall lack of transparency.

The Strategy for Nature Protection of the Republic of Serbia 2016-2026 was published in November 2016. Drafting of the strategy began in 2014. There was no public participation during drafting the process. No information on the status of the strategy has been provided publically to date, nor any indication as to if or when public consultations will be held.

The City of Belgrade Development Strategy 2017-2021 was adopted in June 2017. There was no public participation in the process of drafting the strategy and no information was made available to the public before it was adopted. The strategy includes plans for a new harbour in the City of Belgrade, within an Important Bird Area and a potential Natura 2000 site.

Regulation on Appropriate Assessment has been drafted but not yet adopted.

In December 2016, the then Ministry of Agriculture and Environment adopted amendments to the Rulebook on the declaration and protection of protected and strictly protected species of plants, animals and fungi ("Official Gazette of Republic of Serbia", No 98/2016). The amendments transferred competency for management of four birds species (Northern Goshawk, Grey Heron, Hooded Crow and Great Cormorant) to the hunting authorities, contrary to the EU Birds Directive and the Bern Convention.

Procedures necessary for the adoption of the Law on the Confirmation of the Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of European Bats are on-going; however, no information about public participation in this process has been released.

Some progress has been achieved in the process of establishing coordination between public institutions responsible for cases of destruction of nature, through the preparation of Protocol on cooperation of institutions and organizations in combating illegal killing, trapping and trade of wild animals. CSOs were invited to provide expert opinion on the Protocol. However, no information has been provided on the current status of the Protocol; it is therefore unclear if the document has been completed or if the process of adopting it has begun.

In 2017, the Ministry of Environmental Protection initiated the process for protecting twenty four new areas of land, which cover slightly less than sixty-three thousand hectares<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> The budget is based on available information on the website of the Ministry of Environmental Protection.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Institutional capacity to implement laws and bylaws relating to nature protection remains weak, especially the police and inspectors for environmental protection, as well as local government bodies, with political influence noticeable.

The poor integration of nature protection principles and weak implementation of nature protection measures in other sectors continues to be a problem.

Illegal killing of wild animal species, especially birds, has been identified as a serious problem in Serbia for many years. Destruction of habitats by illegal construction in protected areas and intensive logging has been documented in 2017, but no official information on the reasons for this or the scale of it is publicly available. The capacities of management bodies in protected areas to implement protection measures are insufficient.