

# International Conference

.....13 -14 december 2022 .....

**The Habitats Directive as game changer for nature and law in the EU: emerging trends and novel approaches**

**Invitation**

**Hybrid Meeting**

**Auditorium  
bel.brussels**

**2022**



**More information: [www.Habitat-congress2022.Brussels](http://www.Habitat-congress2022.Brussels)**

# International Conference

## The Habitats Directive as game changer for nature and law in the EU: emerging trends and novel approaches

Scientific committee: H.Schoukens (UG), D. Misonne (USL-B), C-H.Born (UCL), A. Cliquet (UG), G. Van Hoorick (UG)

In 2022, the EU Habitats Directive celebrates its 30th birthday. As of today, this cornerstone of EU environmental law has turned into a grown-up adult, gradually reshaping itself in an unexpected hallmark of ecological law. That might come as a surprise, since in its beginning years the EU Habitats Directive was mainly used to tackle classic threats to the EU's protected habitats and species, such as overhunting, direct destruction of natural habitats and unsustainable project developments. It was generally assumed that more transformative change would require new legislation. However, recent case-law developments before the Court of Justice of the EU have revealed that the EU Habitats Directive is capable of forcing Member States to tackle more systemic environmental challenges, such as nitrogen pollution, unsustainable forestry and even climate change. More and more, the EU Habitats Directive is used as a lever in strategic lawsuits directed against unsustainable lock-ins, such as intensive agriculture, fossil-based infrastructure and landscape fragmentation.

The unlocked potential of one of the most well-known pieces of EU legislation for also addressing more long-term environmental challenges is the main focus of this conference, which aims to take stock of the transformational character of the EU Habitats Directive and sketch the novel solutions and approaches might emerge in the 21st century, such as adaptive management and nature restoration.

The conference aims to take stock of the transformational character of the EU Habitats Directive in addressing current systemic environmental threats and sketch the novel solutions and approaches that emerge in light of these impending environmental pressures, such as climate change, generic and accumulated biodiversity loss and chemical pollution.

In doing so, the conference aims to address both theoretical as well as more practical questions and challenges when applying legislation aimed at preserving and restoring the integrity of Europe's most threatened habitats and species in a time which is now referred to as the Anthropocene era, in which humans have become the main transforming force of the planet.

On Tuesday 13 December 2022, talks will focus on the unlocked potential of the Habitats Directive more in particular in terms of policy, strategic biodiversity litigation, the case of the wild hamster, sustainable agriculture.

On Wednesday 14 December 2022 future challenges and emerging trends for the Directive will be discussed, such as climate change, rights of nature, adaptive management, ecosystem restoration and finally, the keystone of enforcement.

The programme will include internationally renowned speakers from the European Environmental Agency, the European Commission, universities, ngo's and environmental authorities.

The conference will take place physically, at the premises of Leefmilieu Brussel and online participation will be possible. Possible corona measures applicable in Belgium in December 2022 will followed by the organizers.

Target audience: academics, legal professionals, ngo, public authorities







# Programme

## The Habitats Directive as game changer for nature and law in the EU: emerging trends and novel approaches

Tuesday 13 December

### Exploring the unlocked potential of the EU Habitats Directive

#### ***I. Challenges and policy: the EU Habitats Directive as necessary gamechanger in the Anthropocene***

09h00 The Habitats Directive is a game changer: an unexpected twist?  
[Hendrik Schoukens](#)

09h20 Main challenges for the EU's Biodiversity: a toxic cocktail?  
[Hans Bruyninckx](#)

09h40 Planetary Boundaries and the EU's biodiversity policy to 2030: mixing rhetoric with results?  
[Stefan Leiner](#)

10h00 Debate: Respondent An Cliquet

10h30 **Coffee Break**

#### ***II. Strategic biodiversity litigation as novel instrument: can we achieve system change via court room action?***

11h00 Urgenda revisited: ensuring compliance with biodiversity targets via court room action  
[Andrew Jackson](#)

11h15 Strategic litigation to ensure the integrity of EU protected sites: lessons from the Dutch Nitrogen Crisis  
[Valentijn Wösten](#)

11h30 Forestry management vs strict species protection: primeval forests at the horizon via courtroom action?  
[Jan Darpö](#)

11h45 Debate: Respondent Delphine Misonne

12h15 **Lunch**

#### ***III. Going beyond protected sites: will the EU Habitats Directive lead to more sustainable agriculture?***

13h30 Article 6 of the Habitats Directive as driver for system change: vested rights vs biodiversity recovery?  
[Ralph Frins](#)

13h45 Agriculture, climate change and biodiversity protection: a match made in heaven?  
[Jonathan Verschuuren](#)

14h00 Chemicals, pesticides and persistent pollutants vs conservation goals: a complex cocktail?  
[Dries Verhaeghe](#)

14h15 Debate Respondent : Chris Backes

14h45 **Coffee Break**

#### ***IV. The unfortunate case of the Wild Hamster: is the EU Habitats Directive effective and resilient enough to save species from extinction?***

- 15h15 Deathbed conservation and strict species protection: is extinction a lawful option?  
[Floor Fleurke](#)
- 15h30 The Wild hamster as victim of conflicting policy goals: CAP vs EU Habitats Directive, an uneven battle?  
[Harm Dotinga](#)
- 15h45 Urban biodiversity, the law and reconciliation ecology: is the law too strict for city hamsters?  
[Christoph Sobotta](#)
- 16h00 Debate: Respondent : Geert Van Hoorick

**Wednesday 14 December**

#### **Future challenges and emerging trends for the EU Habitats Directive**

#### ***V. Climate change and biodiversity: are we doomed to run behind the facts***

- 09h00 Climate change and the appropriate assessment: Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive goes global?  
[Julien Bétaille](#)
- 09h15 Climate adaptation and the Natura 2000 Network: a complex future ahead  
[Alexandra Aragão](#)
- 09h30 A conflict of interests: how to avoid unsustainable deadlocks?  
[Nicolas De Sadeleer](#)
- 09h45 Debate: Respondent : Dries Van Eeckhoutte
- 10h15 **Coffee Break**

#### ***VI. Rights of nature: is the Habitats Directive granting legal rights to endangered habitats and species?***

- 10h45 Property rights for wild species: a hidden, new reality?  
[Karen Bradshaw](#)
- 11h00 Invasive species and rights of nature: a unexpected paradox  
[Elien Verniers](#)
- 11h15 NGOs as imperfect guardians of endangered species in court  
[Yaffa Epstein](#)
- 11h30 Debate: Respondent : Marie-Sophie de Clippele

## ***VII. Adaptive management: more than a cover-up for business-as-usual?***

- 12h00 Adaptive management and biodiversity conservation in the post-Brexit era  
Donald McGillivray
- 12h15 Programmatic approaches and Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: a impossible match?  
Lolke Braaksma
- 12h30 Technology, access to information and environmental law: a case study in the marine environment  
Betty Queffelec
- 12h45 Debate: Respondent : Alicia Sikora
- 13h15 **Lunch Break**

## ***VIII. Ecosystem restoration as a novel paradigm: reconstructing a paradise lost or new new future?***

- 14h30 A New EU Restoration Law – a first assessment  
An Cliquet
- 14h45 From theory to practice: obstacles to ecosystem restoration  
Moritz Reese
- 15h00 Lions, hyenas and elephants: baseline and reference questions  
Arie Trouwborst
- 15h15 Debate: Respondent : Volker Mauerhofer
- 15h45 **Lunch Break**

## ***IX. Enforcement 2.0: the inevitable lock on the door?***

- 16h15 Putting a price on nature: The polluter pays (finally)?  
Jan Van den Berghe and Jomme Desair
- 16h30 From eco-crime to ecocide: a logical and effective step forwards?  
Charles-Hubert Born
- 16h45 Effective legal protection in nature protection cses: Aarhus to the rescue?  
Jerzy Jendroska
- 17h00 Debate: Respondent : Lorenzo Squintani

## ***X. Conclusion and outlook: building blocks for a more sustainable future?***

- 17h30 A sneak peak in the legislative agenda of the European Commission: towards enforceable biodiversity targets?  
Nicola Notaro (European Commission)
- 17h50 Concluding remarks
- 18h00 END

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## Registration Fees

Registration Fees Congress 2022		
	One Day	Two days
Physical participant (LIVE)	100 €	150 €
Online participants (streaming)	60 €	120 €
Students	50 €	100 €
Dinner on 13 December	50 €	

More Information and registration:

<http://www.Habitat-congress2022.brussels>