The European Birds Directive’s purpose is to protect all wild birds. This directive is a codified version of the Birds Directive of 1979 (79/409/EEC), without prejudice to the obligations of the Member States relating to the time limits for transposition into national law.

For the habitats of the bird species of Annex I and the species that occur in large number as breeding birds, migrating birds or wintering birds in a certain area, special protection measures are taken. Each Member State needs to determine special protection areas (SPAs) that, along with the Habitats Directive (see Habitats Directive p.74; 92/43/EEC), are part of the European ecological Natura 2000 network. The Member States have to report every six years to the European Commission on the preservation status of the species, and on the results of the policy used.