



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL  
ENVIRONMENT  
The Director-General

Brussels

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**Subject: Designation process of strictly protected areas in Romania**

Dear Madame, dear Sir,

We thank you for the letter that you have co-signed on 11 February 2026. In your letter you draw the attention of the Commission to your concerns regarding the designation process of strictly protected areas by the Romanian authorities, which is also a milestone (n° 34) under the Recovery and Resilience Plan of Romania.

The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 states the target of at least 30% of the EU's land and marine areas to be legally protected, with at least a third of these (i.e. 10% of EU's land and marine areas) under strict protection. We would like to clarify as background that the 10% strict protection is to be understood at EU level and is not legally binding on Member States.

The Biodiversity Strategy does not prescribe how the designation of sites for strict protection has to be carried out, including regarding the consent of owners and users. The Romanian authorities are responsible for the process of identifying and designating areas for strict protection. For this, they may rely on the guidance of the Commission services, formulated in the 2022 Commission Staff Working Document on *Criteria and guidance for protected areas designations*<sup>(1)</sup>. Furthermore, the Commission has issued guidelines for defining, mapping, monitoring and strictly protecting EU primary and old-growth forests<sup>(2)</sup>.

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(<sup>1</sup>) Commission Staff Working Document of 28.1.2022 SWD(2022)23, [12d0d249-0cdc-4af9-bc91-37e011620024\\_en](#), p. 17

(<sup>2</sup>) <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/cef2f588-7c54-11ee-99ba-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

However, in order to achieve the associated milestone 34 under the Recovery and Resilience Plan, Romania will need to pass legislation designating areas for strict protection. The Commission will assess the achievement of this milestone following the submission of the respective payment request.

Finally, I wish to thank you and all signatory organisations for your continued engagement and valuable work in support of biodiversity conservation and the effective implementation of EU environmental legislation.

Yours faithfully,

Eric MAMER

Cc : C. Gauer (SG-REFORM)