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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

39th meeting
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Complaints on stand-by

**Wind energy: Possible threats to an endangered
natural habitat in Izmir
(Turkey)**

- REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT -

*Document prepared by
the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Turkey*

REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

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GOVERNMENT REPORT ON COMPLAINT NO. 2014/6 “WIND ENERGY: POSSIBLE THREATS TO AN ENDANGERED NATURAL HABITAT IN İZMİR (TURKEY)”

Background:

This complaint was submitted in July 2014 by a citizen of Çeşme, İzmir. It claimed that wind energy installations (WEIs) in Karaburun Peninsula could affect a natural area and its wildlife. The Bureau assessed this complaint and requested for further information from the national authorities. The Turkish Government submitted reports regularly in July 2016 and February 2017.

After the 36th Standing Committee meeting, on Jan 10, 2017, the Secretariat sent another request to national authorities, to receive an updated report on (1) the measures put in place to assess the eventual cumulative impact of the wind farms constructed and to be constructed in the whole area, (2) on the monitoring already schemes put in place and (3) the eventual findings they have already produced. The bureau assessed the reports and requested for further information on all the WEIs installed in the area.

The requested report was both presented in the 6th Group of Experts Meetings on Conservation of Wild Birds which was held on June 21, 2017, and afterwards to the Secretariat on July 28, 2017. The presented report included the general strategy on wind energy development in Turkey, how the cumulative effects are evaluated, how environmental impact assessments are done and the monitoring results of the wind energy facilities in Çeşme region. In the 6th Group of Experts Meeting, following subjects are recommended to Turkish authorities.

- a) Consider strengthening cooperation with the Birdlife partner at national level as the wind energy installations in concerned area, apparently not on a major route for migratory birds, could have an impact on populations of other bird species,
- b) The national Birdlife partner offers to provide information, using their own sensitivity mapping methods, on which other bird species could be concerned,
- c) Consider discussing monitoring and mitigation measures with stakeholders and national NGO organisations, every time large numbers of the wind farms are developed, including in the Çeşme area.

The complaint was discussed at 2017 September meeting of the Bureau. The Bureau invited the national authorities to report again in detail for the next meeting of the Bureau in March 2018 on the cumulative impact of wind-farm developments in the whole area and on the possible follow-up given by the authorities to the discussions and possible actions identified at the meeting of the Group of Experts on the conservation of birds.

The results of 6th Group of Experts Meeting on Conservation of Wild Birds and the Bureau meeting is evaluated in this report.

Information on general environmental protection strategy of wind energy development in Turkey within the frame of Recommendation No. 109 (2004)

Recognising the environmental benefits of wind energy compared with the non-renewable energy sources and concerned about minimising the potential adverse impacts of wind turbines and associated infrastructure on wildlife, the wind energy strategy of Turkey is based on Recommendation No.109 (2004) of the Bern Convention.

There are two recommendations in Recommendation No.109 (2004);

1. Take appropriate measures to minimise the potential adverse effects of wind turbines in wildlife;

2. Support and advance by involving also the wind energy sector and adequate monitoring and surveillance to improve understanding of the impact of wind farms and through this to provide the broader public with trustworthy information.

Therefore, the procedures conducted by the General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks (GDNCNP) during the permission and operation processes of WEIs and monitoring of the activities are as follows;

- The WEIs in critical bottleneck regions like İstanbul Strait, Çanakkale Strait, Hatay (Belen), Artvin (Borçka), are prohibited with a Ministerial decision, as globally important bird migration routes pass over these sites.
- As with these, WEIs are not allowed in protected areas which are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, since those are protected through national legislation.
- Apart from the sites mentioned above, the rest of the WEIs are subjected to an EIA procedure which is conducted by the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization. According to the Regulation on EIAs, those WEI applications which happen to fall into the category of Appendix 1 of the Regulation (with a capacity greater than 50 MW) are evaluated by a commission. The GDNCNP, under the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs is in this commission. It requests the enterprises to prepare a report on the effects of WEI to all the elements of biodiversity including both flora and fauna for two years (one year during construction and at least two years during operation) and to take the necessary measures by evaluating these reports. All the measures to be taken are included as enterprise's commitments in the EIA report.
- For those WEIs which do not fall into category of Appendix 1 (less than 50 MW capacity), the EIA is conducted in a different way. The GDNCNP directly requests (without being part of a commission) a report from the entrepreneurs in which the installment's effects are evaluated in terms of particularly for but not limited to birds and bats, and also for biodiversity, elements of wildlife, natural landscapes. The WEIs impacts are stated and the measures that will be taken to mitigate these effects are also indicated in the reports. The reports are evaluated in the light of guidance documents "Wind Energy Development and Natura 2000" prepared by European Commission in 2011 and "Wind Farms and Birds: "An Updated Analysis of the Effects of Wind Farms on Birds, and Best Practice Guidance on Integrated Planning and Impact Assessment" prepared for Bern Convention. Then the permission is given after evaluation of these reports by the GDNCNP.

After evaluation of the reports, if the project is permitted, there are some obligations for all projects, such as, landscape restoration, two year monitoring of the project (1 year for construction and at least 2 years for operation), placing bat and bird repellents, plantation of the area. These activities are regulated through notarised commitments.

Moreover, either within the scope of Appendix 1 of the regulation or not, each WEI is subject to national authorities' sanctions. In case a clear threat to biodiversity is foreseen, the government bodies may request for further measures in the project like changing the place of the project, changing the locations of turbines, shutting down the turbines in the migration season, appointing a permanent observer for migration, placing bird detecting (avian) radars to the turbines.

All of the monitoring reports of the WEIs, which are prepared by ornithologists, are sent to the GDNCNP and the effects/impacts of the projects are followed and assessed through these reports. As the results of the evaluations of GDNCNP implies, no threatening activity for biodiversity has been reported so far. Some of the monitoring reports are given as examples below.

Cumulative Effects Evaluation Report

All of the the wind energy facilities around Çeşme peninsula region, have passed through the detailed Environmental Impact Assessment process. Furthermore, there is a cumulative evaluation report about the Çeşme basin to regulate planned WEIs.

According to the cumulative assessment report, Çeşme basin, which currently includes 12 WE projects, is not on one of the two main migration routes passing over Turkey (Figure 1). It is also 250 km west of the largest secondary route which comes from Eastern Europe and enters Turkey from Thrace, passing through Marmara Sea, over Manyas and Uluabat lakes and reaches to Burdur and Eğridir lakes (Figure 1). However, it is close to a third degree migration route which passes over Çeşme peninsula.

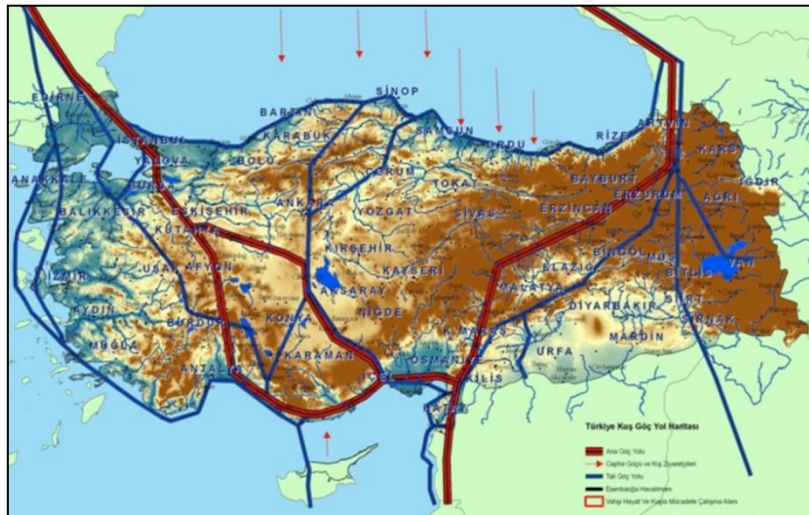


Figure 1. The position of Çeşme basin in comparison with the two main migration routes passing over Turkey. (From Kızıroğlu and Erdoğan, 2015)

During the monitoring procedure for cumulative impact evaluation, 56 bird species were monitored in one year. 27 bird species are resident, 12 of them are summer migrants, 12 are winter migrants and 5 are transit migrants. The next year 44 bird species were determined. In both monitoring years, no migration in groups or no thermals were detected in the whole project area. In the light of the evaluations above, the existing wind energy projects have no detrimental effects on the continuity of wildlife and ecological balance, neither in spring migration nor in autumn migration season.

Monitoring Reports

According to monitoring reports of the WEIs established in the area, no dead birds found resulting from collision with the wind energy turbines. This is mostly because the area is far away from the migration routes of large birds that use soaring as a main migratory strategy. As most of the flyways of soaring migratory birds depends on thermal air columns, Çeşme Peninsula's being distant from main migratory flyways is an advantage for them.

Impact of Wind Energy Farms on Resident Birds

Recently, a scientific study "Breeding Bird Atlas of Turkey" has been finalized with the contributions of nongovernmental organizations including Birdlife partner in Turkey, volunteers and relevant stakeholders including General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks (GDNCNP). This study was completed in 2018 and the Atlas was published in January 2019. According to this study, among the bird species breeding around the region (Boyla et al. 2019), 3 of them are categorized as Vulnerable (VU) and 4 of them are categorized as Near Threatened (NT) according to IUCN's redlist categories. The rest of the birds are in Least Concern categories. Vulnerable species are; *Pelecanus crispus*, *Aythya ferina* and *Streptopelia turtur*. For the Dalmatian Pelican, GDNCNP has published an action plan in 2018. A multispecies action plan including Common pochard and 4 other duck species is still under preparation by the GDNCNP.

References:

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