




Natura 2000 Seminars

Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea Biogeographical Region

European Commission

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NATURA 2000

Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea Seminar
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Kick-off Seminar Report

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A list of participants per working group is presented at the end of the document.

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Contents

1 Introduction

This document presents the main outcomes from the Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea Kick-off Seminar. This Seminar was the first meeting bringing together a wide range of Natura 2000 practitioners and experts from the Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea region to discuss issues of common concern and interest in relation to the conservation and management of habitats selected for priority consideration as part of the Natura 2000 Biogeographical Process.

The Seminar, hosted by the Duchy of Luxembourg, in close cooperation with the European Commission took place at the Parc Alvisse Hotel in Luxembourg from 29th June to 1st July 2015. The Seminar was attended by 115 delegates. All EU Member States in the Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea region participated.

The Kick-off Seminar was opened by **Mr Camille Gira**, Secretary of State for Sustainable Development & Infrastructures of Luxembourg. He emphasized the importance of Natura 2000 and the Birds and Habitats Directives in the face of biodiversity loss. Mr Gira's speech was followed by an address from **Mr François Kremer**, Policy Coordinator on Natura 2000 at the European Commission. He expressed his sincere gratitude to the Duchy of Luxembourg for its support and assistance under the auspices of Luxembourg's EU Presidency. **Ms Zelmira Gaudillat** from the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity (ETC-BD) made a summary presentation on conservation status, significant issues (threats & trends) and management responses. Finally, **Mr Neil McIntosh** from ECNC presented an overview of the program and expected outcomes from the seminar and **Ms Nora Elvinger** introduced the field excursions. Together, the introductory speeches provided a summary overview of the wider context of the Natura 2000 Biogeographical Process, and some its implementation challenges at national and site levels.

1.1 Context of the Kick-off Seminar

The Natura 2000 New Biogeographical Process is a practical process for Natura 2000 practitioners and experts to work together in achieving the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy[1] targets. The first target of this strategy focuses on Natura 2000 and reaching favourable conservation status for the habitats and species listed in the Birds and Habitats Directives' (EU Nature Directives) annexes. Natura 2000 is a key instrument for nature conservation in Europe. It consists of 27.000 sites, and sets conservation objectives and measures for over 200 habitats and over 2.000 species of Community interest. To maintain/achieve favourable conservation status of these habitats and species, a coherent network of sites has been created. However, Natura 2000 is not only a network of sites: it is first and foremost a network of people working together.

To support the targets of the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy and implement the EU Nature Directives, the Natura 2000 New Biogeographical Process was launched in 2011. As its title implies, this Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea Kick-off Seminar is just a beginning of a hopefully long list of successful

[1] http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/2020.htm

actions at biogeographical level. The Natura 2000 Platform[2] is an important online tool that supports this Process and all stakeholders involved are encouraged to use it for their benefit. In addition to facilitating the main events, such as this seminar, the Natura 2000 New Biogeographical Process also supports the organisation of follow-up activities. Furthermore, different EU funding mechanisms (for example, LIFE and INTERREG) are available to (co-)finance selected projects in the area of nature conservation.

In the process leading up to this meeting, **fifty-nine habitats of Community interest** have been selected for priority consideration. They provide scope for collaboration and for the development of future action. As part of this Process, the **Kick-off Seminar aims at identifying common issues and solutions and opportunities for joint actions** to address these issues. These joint actions will capitalise on the vast number of good practice examples about successful management approaches, also including those showing the multiple benefits of protected areas, and ways to engage constructively with diverse stakeholders. The knowledge and information exchanges between experts from the region will provide valuable contributions for site managers to set adequate and realistic conservation targets.

This Kick-off Seminar has brought together experts from the Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea regions to discuss and interpret information, share practical experience and knowledge at biogeographical level. The results of the LIFE platform meeting (Sighisoara, Romania, 27-28 May 2015) analysing the results of a selection of Natura 2000 related LIFE projects were presented as part of the habitat working group sessions. An interesting component of the programme was **the Knowledge Market** where over thirty projects and initiatives were presented from the concerned regions. The relevance of a Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea Biogeographical Process can be summarised as follows:

- Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea conservation practitioners face many common issues.
- The development and implementation of integrated approaches is a difficult task.
- There is an urgent need for improvement to achieve/maintain favourable conservation status of habitats and species of Community interest.
- The implemented approaches need more focus and should be more result oriented.
- The exchange of experience and learning from each other can play a decisive role.

1.2 Introduction to the field visits

Field visit 1. Mëllerdall and Our Valley (Luxembourg)

Site 1: Mëllerdall region (Luxembourg, Forests)
The so-called Mullerthal (valley of the mills) - also known as the Little Switzerland of Luxembourg - harbors very particular animal and plant communities with very interesting overlaps between the Continental and Atlantic biogeographical regions. Because of its picturesque landscapes, the Mullerthal attracts tourist from all over Europe, putting pressures on the ecosystem that need to be channelled and incorporated in management practices.

[2] http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/platform/index_en.htm

The entire region is in the process of creating a Natural Park in order to place emphasis on biodiversity and nature as well as the promotion of regional products.
The Administration for nature and forests manages the Natura 2000 areas (SAC LU0001011), including overseeing of forest management and recreational activities.

Site 2: Our Valley and the freshwater mussel nursery (Luxembourg-Germany, Rivers & Lakes)
"Our" project area overlaps with the northernmost part of the Natura 2000 site "Our Valley" (SAC LU0001002 and SPA LU0002003) and extends from the point where the three borders (Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg) meet near Ouren to Stolzemburg in the South.
The Our Valley is among the most impressive nature reserves in Luxembourg. It gains its attractiveness from a diversity of valuable habitats, animal and plant species, such as the Freshwater Pearl Mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) and the Thick Shelled River Mussel *(Unio crassus*), that occur on the national Red List and on the Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive. Currently Freshwater Pearl Mussels can be seen at the freshwater mussel nursery at the mill of Kalborn located along the River Our.

Field visit 2: Sierck region (France) and Haff Réimech (Luxembourg)

Site 1: Dry grasslands and rocks of the Sierck region (France, Grasslands)
SAC « Pelouses et rochers du Pays de Sierck » (FR4100167) includes five distinct areas around the town of Sierck-les-Bains. The local population and municipalities have been committed to the achievement of the restoration and conservation of the site since the 1980's. Part of it, around the village of Montenach, has been classified as a national nature reserve in 1994. These sites are managed by the Conservatoire d'espaces naturels de Lorraine.
The River Moselle and its tributaries have carved the limestone plateau into a landscape of hills and valleys. The species and habitats diversity of the site has resulted from this landscape. Among the 13 habitats of interest identified in the SAC, the calcareous grasslands shelter major orchid sites. 80% of the identified habitats of Community interest are forests (including small areas of forests on slopes and alluvial forests). The site also includes a petrifying spring with tufa formation, an alkaline fen and caves resulting from ancient mining activities.
Restoration and conservation actions started in the 1980's, mainly on the grassland habitats that lost their agricultural economical interest after the 1950's. The management plans of the Natura 2000 site and the nature reserve now include a continuous grazing or mowing program which is being implemented mainly through Natura 2000 measures.

Site 2: Haff Réimech (Luxembourg, *Wetlands*)
Haff Remich is an area of former gravel pits with some 40 ponds and lakes, most of them surrounded by read beds. It is situated in the Moselle Valley just north of Schengen. Haff Remich is one of Luxembourg's two Ramsar sites, a Natura 2000 site (designated under both EU Nature Directives: SPA LU0002012, SAC LU0001029) and a national nature reserve. Priority bird species are Little Bittern (*Ixobrychus minutus*), Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) and Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*) as breeders, and Smew (*Mergus albellus*) and Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*) in wintertime. Some 250 bird species have been recorded, of which 97 are breeding.
In the summer months, Haff Remich is well-known tourist site: up to 50.000 people visit the recreational area with the large swimming lake. Haff Remich was awarded European Destination of Excellence for

combining nature protection and sustainable tourism. A new visitor centre called Biodiversum will be opened to the public in autumn 2015.

Field visit 3: Prenzebierg-Giele-Botter (Luxembourg) **and La Praille** (Belgium)

Site 1: Prenzebierg-Giele-Botter (Luxembourg, *Grasslands*)
Former open-pit mining areas are today nearly entirely designated as Natura 2000 sites (SAC LU0001028, SPA LU0002008) protecting dry meadows, rocky habitats and a number of species such as the eagle owl and bats.
The management focusses on the conservation of a habitat mosaic of different successional stages creating suitable habitat for a range of species of community interest.
Due to their location in the direct vicinity of a number of towns and cities, channelling recreational uses in accordance with conservation priorities is a major challenge for site managers.
The development of a new grazing strategy of open habitats using a herd of sheep and goats is in the making. The aim of the project is to seek collaboration with an organization working with unemployed people, combining ecological management, social work and marketing of products form sheep and goat herding.

Site 2: La Praille (Belgium, *Grasslands*)
"La Praille" is a 40 ha state-owned nature reserve located in the Belgian Lorraine, along the River Semois. The first conservation initiative was implemented in the 1990ies by the Forest and Nature Administration to protect some of the most valuable Molinia meadows known in Belgium, with very important orchid and Viper's Grass (Scorzonera humilis) populations. Traditionally managed as hay meadows, these Molinia meadows grow on clay, along the Semois floodplain. Since the Nature reserve has been extended to 40 ha as a result of consecutive land acquisitions, two types of Annex I grassland habitats have been restored: hay meadows (6510) on alluvial soils which had been intensively grazed pastures before, and Molinia meadows (6410) on former spruce plantations. To restore the meadows, the spruce plantations on former agricultural lands were cut down and their stumps removed. Meadow seeds harvested elsewhere were sown on the deforested land to accelerate the restoration process. The grasslands are now managed by farmers, with the financial support of the Walloon agro-environmental scheme.

1.3 Habitats selected in the Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea Biogeographical Process

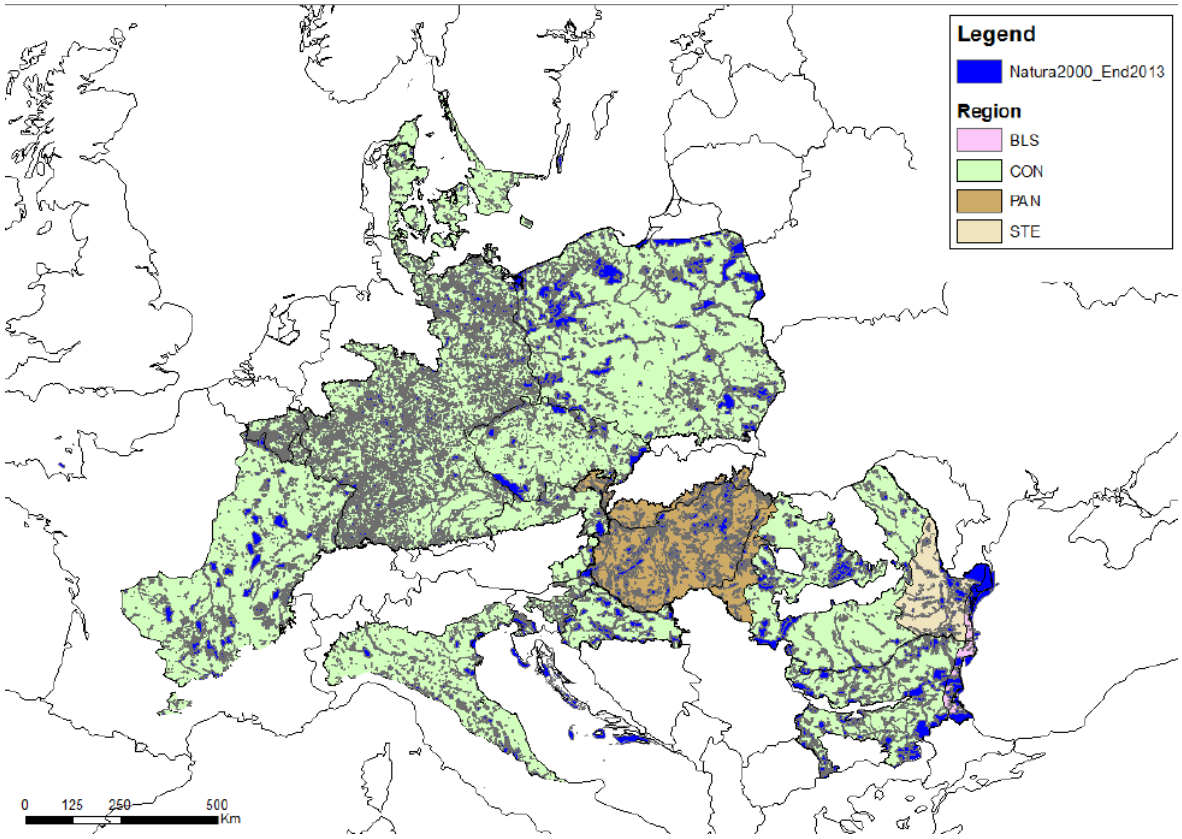
The habitat types selected for priority consideration are presented in ascending order of their Natura 2000 code as introduced in Annex I of the Habitats Directive. The colour codes refer to the habitat groups to which they belong: coastal (yellow), grassland (light green), forest (dark green), and freshwater and wetlands (blue). Map 1 shows all Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea terrestrial sites.

Table 1: Selected habitats in the four habitat groups

HABITAT GROUP	***HABITAT***
Coastal	1130 – Estuaries
Coastal	1150 - Coastal lagoons
Coastal	1210 - Annual vegetation of drift lines
Coastal	1240 - Vegetated sea cliffs of the Mediterranean coasts with endemic *Limonium* spp.
Coastal	1310 - *Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand
Coastal	1410 - Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritimi*)
Coastal	2110 - Embryonic shifting dunes
Coastal	2130 - Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation ('grey dunes')
Coastal	2190 - Humid dune slacks
Grassland	1340 - Inland salt meadows
Grassland	1530 - Pannonic salt steppes and salt marshes
Grassland	2330 - Inland dunes with open *Corynephorus* and *Agrostis* grasslands
Grassland	2340 - Pannonic inland dunes
Grassland	6110 - Rupicolous calcareous or basophilic grasslands of the *Alysso-Sedion albi*
Grassland	6120 - Xeric sand calcareous grasslands
Grassland	6210 - Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) (* important orchid sites)
Grassland	6230 - Species-rich *Nardus* grasslands, on silicious substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas in Continental Europe)
Grassland	6240 - Sub-Pannonic steppic grasslands
Grassland	6250 - Pannonic loess steppic grasslands
Grassland	6260 - Pannonic sand steppes
Grassland	62C0 - Ponto-Sarmatic steppes
Grassland	6410 - *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*)
Grassland	6420 - Mediterranean tall humid grasslands of the *Molinio-Holoschoenion*
Grassland	6430 - Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels
Grassland	6440 - Alluvial meadows of river valleys of the *Cnidion dubii*
Grassland	6510 - Lowland hay meadows (*Alopecurus pratensis*, *Sanguisorba officinalis*)
Grassland	6520 - Mountain hay meadows

HABITAT GROUP	HABITAT
Heathland and scrub	4030 - European dry heaths
Heathland and scrub	40A0 - Subcontinental peri-Pannonic scrub
Heathland and scrub	40C0 - Ponto-Sarmatic deciduous thickets
Heathland and scrub	5130 - *Juniperus communis* formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands
Rivers and lakes	3130 - Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the *Littorelletea uniflorae* and/or of the *Isoëto-Nanojuncetea*
Rivers and lakes	3140 - Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of *Chara* spp.
Rivers and lakes	3150 - Natural eutrophic lakes with *Magnopotamion* or *Hydrocharition*-type vegetation
Rivers and lakes	3160 - Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds
Rivers and lakes	3260 - Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitricho-Batrachion* vegetation
Rivers and lakes	3270 - Rivers with muddy banks with *Chenopodion rubri* p.p. and *Bidention* p.p. vegetation
Sparsely and unvegetated land	8310 - Caves not open to the public
Wetlands	7110 - Active raised bogs
Wetlands	7120 - Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration
Wetlands	7140 - Transition mires and quaking bogs
Wetlands	7150 - Depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion*
Wetlands	7210 - Calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the *Caricion davallianae*
Wetlands	7220 - Petrifying springs with tufa formation (*Cratoneurion*)
Wetlands	7230 - Alkaline fens
Woodland and forest	9110 - *Luzulo-Fagetum* beech forests
Woodland and forest	9160 - Sub-Atlantic and medio-European oak or oak-hornbeam forests of the *Carpinion betuli*
Woodland and forest	9170 - *Galio-Carpinetum* oak-hornbeam forests
Woodland and forest	9180 - *Tilio-Acerion* forests of slopes, screes and ravines
Woodland and forest	91AA - Eastern white oak woods
Woodland and forest	91D0 - Bog woodland
Woodland and forest	91E0 - Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*)
Woodland and forest	91F0 - Riparian mixed forests of *Quercus robur*, *Ulmus laevis* and *Ulmus minor*, *Fraxinus excelsior* or *Fraxinus angustifolia*, along the great rivers (*Ulmenion minoris*)
Woodland and forest	91G0 - Pannonic woods with *Quercus petraea* and *Carpinus betulus*
Woodland and forest	91H0 - Pannonian woods with *Quercus pubescens*
Woodland and forest	91I0 - Euro-Siberian steppic woods with *Quercus* spp.
Woodland and forest	91M0 - Pannonian-Balkanic turkey oak–sessile oak forests
Woodland and forest	92A0 - *Salix alba* and *Populus alba* galleries
Woodland and forest	92D0 - Southern riparian galleries and thickets (*Nerio-Tamaricetea and Securinegion tinctoriae)*

Map 1: Natura 2000 sites across the Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea regions



1.4 The Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea Seminar Document

The Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea Seminar Document was produced to serve the discussion and planning of the Kick-off Seminar in Luxemburg. As a primary source of background information, the document:

- Identifies key issues in relation to establishing favourable conservation status (FCS) for the four habitat groups and the habitat types and species within them;
- Outlines potential solutions to those issues;
- Identifies possible actions for consideration and the forms of concrete actions that could be envisaged as part of follow-up to the Kick-off Seminar.

Table 2: Chairpersons and facilitators of the four habitat groups

HABITAT GROUP	*Lead MS / CHAIR*	*Seminar support by the contractor*
Lead Coordinator: **Neil McIntosh** (ECNC)		
Coastal	**Dr Peder Agger**, Danish Society	Malgorzata Siuta (CEEweb for

	for Nature Conservation, Denmark	Biodiversity)
Freshwater & wetlands	**Ms Jana Durkošová**, Ministry of Environment, Slovakia	Agnes Zolyomi (CEEweb for Biodiversity)
Grasslands	**Ms Sophie Ouzet**, Ministry of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and Spatial Planning, France	Mark Snethlage (ECNC)
Forests	**Mr Frank Wolf**, Forest and Nature Agency, Luxembourg	Paulo Castro (Europarc Federation)

2 Results of the habitat working groups

The information presented in this section is a summary of the discussions and conclusions of the four habitat working groups, as presented at the plenary closing session of the Kick-off Seminar and refined subsequently during follow-up consultations.

2.1 Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea coastal habitats

2.1.1 Selected habitats

Table 2 shows the coastal habitats selected for discussion at the seminar. Due to the small size of the Coastal Habitats Discussion Group and a lack of experts on each of the habitats selected for priority consideration, the group held a more general discussion on pressures, threats, barriers and solutions.

Table 2: Coastal habitats selected for priority consideration

NATURA 2000 CODE	NAME
1130	Estuaries
1150	Coastal lagoons
1210	Annual vegetation of drift lines
1240	Vegetated sea cliffs of the Mediterranean coasts with endemic *Limonium* spp.
1310	Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand
1410	Mediterranean salt marshes (*Juncetalia maritime*)
2110	Embryonic shifting dunes

2130	Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)
2190	Humid dune slacks

2.1.2 Introductory case study presentations

Coastal habitats group listened to two case study presentations, which are available on the Communication Platform[3]. Firstly, **Mr Ivan Kamburov** from the directorate of Strandja Nature Park in Bulgaria talked about the challenges that his protected area faced. Strandja is located at the edge of the Euxinial botanical province and most of its area is covered by oak forests. It comprises 1200 km^2, or 20% of Bulgaria's protected areas' territory and includes 42 habitat types of Community interest. The pressure of development in the Park culminated when, in 2007, the Bulgarian Supreme Administrative Court announced that the designation order of Strandja Nature Park (issued in 1995) was in fact invalid due to missing administrative documents and therefore the Park was inexistent. While this crisis has been overcome, pressure from holiday homes, construction on former dune areas and surrounding farmland continues to intensify. Local municipalities together with investors frequently violate the Park's regulations and environmental impact assessments are not carried out in a sound manner. In addition to formal methods of signalling system malfunctions, the Nature Park tries to cooperate with the local municipalities by promoting local cultural heritage, sustainable tourism, environmentally friendly farming, involving them in the slow food movement and many more initiatives to support sustainable local development compatible with the Park's conservation goals.

The second case study presentation was conducted by **Ms Maria Sandell** from Skåne County in Sweden, who presented the SandLife Project. The project aims to improve habitat quality, increase awareness of the biodiversity-rich sandy habitats and communicate new management methods. The project focuses on 23 Natura 2000 sites. In *Wooded sand dunes (2180)*, openings are being created and non-native species are being removed. On *sand dunes (2120, 2130 and 2140),* Japanese rose *Rosa rugosa* is being removed and more open sand patches are created through burning and digging. On *grasslands on sandy soils (2330, 6210, 6270)*, patches of bare sand are created through removal of encroachments, prescribed burning and heather management. Finally, on sand steppes (6120), burning and clearing of encroachments as well as bringing up of high lime content sand takes place. Some useful conclusions reached during the project were: the importance of conservation activities on military areas and good collaboration with the armed forces, the importance of providing detailed information to local communities and the public, studying the history of conservation and cooperation with local inhabitants in the area and finally integrating the project's findings into the Common Agricultural Policy and its agri-environmental schemes.

2.1.3 Issues, pressures and threats

Discussion during the seminar allowed for greater elaboration upon the main issues and threats that were identified prior to the event. Discussion group members selected several themes for consideration (as presented in Table 3): how to better involve stakeholders (sectors, local authorities, neighbouring

[3]http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/platform/events/events-upcoming/145_continental_kickoff_seminar_en.htm

countries and the general public), how to plan and prioritise issues (e.g. nature conservation versus local development), how to fill knowledge gaps and two cross-cutting themes: climate change and mapping and assessment of ecosystem services (both as a knowledge gap and as a method to gain support of the public and of local municipalities).

Table 3: Issues selected for discussion by group participants

THEME	PRIORITY ISSUES SELECTED BY THE GROUP MEMBERS
Stakeholder involvement	Involvement of municipalities
	Cross-sectorial approach
	Transboundary cooperation
	Public awareness
Planning and prioritisation	Implementation of comprehensive planning
	Local development and nature
Knowledge	Filling knowledge gaps (e.g. in the Danube Delta)
Cross-cutting theme	Climate change
Cross-cutting theme	Mapping and assessment of ecosystem services

2.1.4 Management requirements, measures and solutions

The group discussed each pressure and threat separately and proposed solutions. Better stakeholder involvement mechanisms, more effective cross-sectorial cooperation and integration of priorities, communication and outreach and transnational communication stand out as number one priority. Better planning and prioritisation can help to avoid conflicts between stakeholders while showing the (ecosystem) services that Natura 2000 can provide. Communicating ecosystem services can also often persuade local communities and the general public of the need to engage in ecosystem conservation. Integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) constitutes one tool to address the above listed issues. Last but not least, we should strive to fill major knowledge gaps while keeping in mind the uncertainties resulting from climate change related processes.

Key measures are listed in Table 4.

Table 4: Measures to address issues in coastal habitats

ISSUE	MEASURES

Involvement of local municipalities	Communication through excursions, fieldtrips and training courses, provision of information, organising local councils, workdays and lobbying both through politicians and through voters. Comprehensive spatial planning is needed (especially in new EU countries); sometimes the top-down approach is necessary. Emphasis should be on far-sighted approach rather than short-term economic gain. Development should be sustainable!
Cross-sectorial approach	Coordination and biodiversity proofing within: • Transport • Tourism • Agriculture • Improving the Common Agricultural Policy • Supporting small-scale farming • Forestry • Fisheries and Hunting • Pollution management Water management (River Basin Management Plans)
Transboundary cooperation	Utilising regional convention, EU initiatives and agreements such as: • Garbage in the Danube Delta could be tackled through the Danube Convention (but: there is also garbage coming from Crimea!). • Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals. • Ramsar initiative for the Black Sea.
Public awareness	Things may change, e.g. degrowth debates are appearing and investments do not need only to be short-sighted. Planning can support far-sighted growth. More EU financial mechanisms and instruments are needed for public awareness and communication on nature conservation.
Lack of comprehensive planning	Integrated Planning Approach, e.g.: • Following the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Directive. Better enforcement of EU and national regulations is needed.
Local development and nature	Proper spatial planning should be executed (rather than just on paper). Strategic Environmental Assessment should be properly done. Environmental Impact Assessment is good for locating a project, but not as a yes/no decisive method. Increase the understanding of the benefits of Natura 2000. This is easier when there is an obvious shortage of ecosystem services.
Lack of knowledge	Information exchange → updated interpretation manual. Evaluation of the effects of projects should be carried out, in order to evaluate what went wrong and why. Sharing best practice on site management and effects of practices should be collected when making new projects (no need to re-invent the wheel). Simple data should be collected (e.g. habitat maps around the Danube in Romania).

Lack of comprehensive planning	Integrated Planning Approach, e.g.: • Following the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Directive. Better enforcement of EU and national regulations is needed.
Climate change	Mitigate the effects of climate change through maintaining Favourable Conservation Status of habitats. Improve the dispersal possibilities for plants and animals. Plan for potential new substitute sites for sites that will be lost through sea level rise.
Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystem Services	Promote experience and exchange of knowledge on mapping methods. Raise awareness regarding the intrinsic value of nature as well as the value of habitats and ecosystem services (provisioning, regulating and cultural). Pay more attention to ecological aspects of local traditions.

2.1.5 Identified opportunities for cooperative action: recommendations and commitments

Actions, outputs and mechanisms listed in Table 5 were suggested at the Seminar. As can be seen, not all were able to be quantified, nor could lead bodies always be identified, but they are valuable to record. Some actions simply rely on active participation as part of informal networks. Others require the active collaboration of a range of partners, some of which were present at the Seminar. Consequently, the development of the actions is open to being adapted and refined over time.

Table 5: Actions, outputs and mechanisms to address issues

ACTION	OUTPUTS / MECHANISMS	WHO	WHEN
Seminar	A follow-up seminar for Pannonian, Black Sea and Steppic grassland habitats in autumn 2015 (tbc).	Romania, Mr John Smaranda	October 2015
Best practice sharing	Shared best practice on municipality involvement in projects	SandLife Project, Sweden	ASAP
Best practice sharing	Create a database of good and bad management practices and habitats that they are successful in. The LIFE Platform/ Natura 2000 Communication Platform cases should be searchable by management practice.	ECNC/Life platform operators	ASAP
Communication	Communicate to other nature parks the benefits of being part of the Slow Food movement (and other community involvement methods)	Strandja Nature Park	ASAP
Communication	Communicate the benefits of Natura 2000		ASAP

ACTION	OUTPUTS / MECHANISMS	WHO	WHEN
	though promoting successful projects (e.g. ADEPT NGO working with farmers) and awareness raising campaigns (e.g. Natura 2000 Day)		
Communication & best practice sharing	Bulgaria has prepared a Communication Strategy for Natura 2000 for 2014-2020 With concrete actions and will share it through the Natura 2000 Platform	Bulgaria	ASAP
Site designation &international cooperation	Designate more transboundary sites	EC + MSs	ASAP
International cooperation	Bulgaria and Romania will strive to communicate better regarding transboundary management plans (which is challenging due to lack of a Natura 2000 administrative body in Romania)	Bulgaria and Romania	ASAP
International cooperation	Make better use of the experience from the HELCOM Convention	Baltic MSs	ASAP
Best practice sharing	Share best practice presented at the seminar	ECNC	ASAP
Funding	Utilise scientific funds for data collection and inventories as part of conservation projects		
Best practice sharing & cross-sectorial inclusion	Praise and promote plans which include environmental measures		ASAP
Best practice sharing & cross-sectorial inclusion	Support municipalities to set aside land for nature in due time before coastal habitats are being flooded by sea level rise		ASAP

2.2 Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea forest habitats

2.2.1 Selected habitats

The forest habitat group consists of fourteen habitat types selected for priority consideration during the seminar, outlined in Table 6. According to the 2002-2012 assessment, 35% of them are in an unfavourable-bad state, 55% in unfavourable-inadequate and 9% are favourable.

Table 6: Woodland & forest habitats selected for priority consideration

NATURA 2000 CODE	NAME
9110	Luzulo-Fagetum beech forests
91E0	Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)
9180	Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines
91D0	Bog woodland
91F0	Riparian mixed forests of Quercus robur, Ulmus laevis and Ulmus minor, Fraxinus excelsior or Fraxinus angustifolia, along the great rivers (Ulmenion minoris)
9160	Sub-Atlantic and medio-European oak or oak-hornbeam forests of the Carpinion betuli
9170	Galio-Carpinetum oak-hornbeam forests
91H0	Pannonian woods with Quercus pubescens
92A0	Salix alba and Populus alba galleries
91I0	Euro-Siberian steppic woods with Quercus spp.
91G0	Pannonic woods with Quercus petraea and Carpinus betulus
91M0	Pannonian-Balkanic Turkey oak – sessile oak forests
91AA	Eastern white oak woods
92D0	Southern riparian galleries and thickets (Nerio-Tamaricetea and Securinegion tinctoriae)

2.2.2 Introductory case study presentations

The below summarised presentations are available on the Communication Platform[4]. Firstly, **Mr Iovu Adrian Biris** from the Romanian National Forest Research and Management Institute presented the pressures, threats and solutions discussed by the *Working Group on Woodlands and Forests* which gathered at the LIFE Platform meeting in Romania in May 2015 as shown in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 7: Issues identified at the LIFE Platform meeting

HABITAT	ISUES
91E0 Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion	• Replacement of the habitat with Norway spruce plantations in the floodplains (DE) • Channeling of streams/rivers (DE, RO, BG) • Historical river regulation works/hydrological modifications (DE, RO, BG) • Sand and gravel extraction from the riverbed (RO, BG)

[4]http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/platform/events/events-upcoming/145_continental_kickoff_seminar_en.htm

albae)	• Forest restitution and fragmentation of ownership (RO). In Ro, management planning is voluntary for forest properties below 10 ha according the new Forest Code • Urbanization and infrastructure network development (RO) • Illegal cuttings, especially in the proximity of villages (RO; BG) • Excessive grazing (RO, BG) • Household waste and excessive human pressures (RO) • Hydroelectric power plants on rivers/streams (RO)
91F0 Riparian mixed forests of Quercus robur, Ulmus laevis and Ulmus minor, Fraxinus excelsior or Fraxinus angustifolia, along the great rivers (Ulmenion minoris)	• Historical river regulation works/hydrological modifications (RO) • Invasive plant species (mainly Amorpha fruticose, Fraxinus pennsylvanica) (RO) • Replacement of the habitat with black walnut (Juglans nigra) plantations in the floodplains (RO) • Inadequate forest management (mistakes in natural regeneration of oak, forest harvesting without replanting) (RO) • Forest restitution and fragmentation of ownership (RO). In Ro, management planning is voluntary for forest properties below 10 ha according the new Forest Code
92A0 Salix alba and Populus alba galleries	• Historical river regulation works/hydrological modifications (RO, BG) • Sand and gravel extraction from the riverbed (RO, BG) • Invasive plant species (mainly Amorpha fruticosa) (RO, BG) • Replacement of the native poplars and willow species with hybrid poplars plantations in the floodplains (≈ 100 000 ha in RO) (RO, BG) • Danube and major rivers bank erosion (RO, BG) • Forest restitution and fragmentation of ownership (RO). In Ro, management planning is voluntary for forest properties below 10 ha according the new Forest Code • Grazing by domestic animals (RO) • Replacement of alluvial forests and wetlands with agricultural polders in Danube Delta and Floodplain during 1960-1980 (RO)
91H0 Pannonian woods with Quercus pubescens & 91AA Eastern white oak woods	• Clearcutting and inappropriate forest management which deteriorate stand structure and natural regeneration process (by reducing the proportion of pubescent oak and impeding natural regeneration and increasing the proportion of scrubs–Fraxinus ornus, Prunus spinosa, Crataegus sp.) (RO, BG) • Cutting without replanting followed by succession process to scrub communities (illegal cuttings, especially for stands in the proximity of villages (RO) • Costly management and conservation measures (RO, BG) • Replacing of oak-based forests with non-native species (e.g. Robinia pseudacacia, Pinus nigra) (RO, BG) • Grazing by domestic animals (RO, BG) • Drought/changing in temperature and precipitation regime, affect seed production and quality, seed germination and trees dieback (RO, BG) • Insects/defoliators and diseases which affect the trees health and seed production (RO, BG) • Land erosion and landslides (RO, BG)

	• Illegal cuttings, especially for stands in the proximity of villages with poor/unemployed people and minority communities (RO; BG) • Forest restitution and fragmentation of ownership (RO). In Ro, management planning is voluntary for forest properties below 10 ha according the new Forest Code • Small isolated populations which causes inbreeding (RO)
91I0 Euro-Siberian steppic woods with Quercus spp. & 91M0 Pannonian-Balkanic Turkey oak – sessile oak forests	• Clear-cutting and inappropriate forest management which deteriorates stand structure and natural regeneration process (by reducing the proportion of oak species and impeding natural regeneration and increasing the proportion of scrubs–Fraxinus ornus, Acer tataricum, Prunus spinosa, Crataegus sp.)-(RO) • Replacing of oak-based forests with non-native species (e.g. Robinia pseudacacia) (RO) • Costly management and conservation measures (RO, BG) • Grazing by domestic animals (RO) • Drought/changing in temperature and precipitation regime, affect seed production and quality, seed germination and trees dieback (RO) • Insects/defoliators and diseases which affect the trees health and seed production (RO) • Forest restitution and fragmentation of ownership (RO). In Ro, management planning is voluntary for forest properties below 10 ha according the new Forest Code

Table 8: Solutions identified at the LIFE Platform meeting

HABITAT	SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
91E0 Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)	• Eliminating (young) spruce with non-destructive methods • Restoring the stream to ensure the water level (re-flooding the area); • Replanting black alder and protecting it against browsing by deer, grazing etc.
91F0 Riparian mixed forests of Quercus robur, Ulmus laevis and Ulmus minor, Fraxinus excelsior or Fraxinus angustifolia, along the great rivers (Ulmenion minoris)	• Ensuring natural water regime by re-flooding the area • Amending the current management plan (In Ro, the provisions of forest management plans are compulsory, any changes should be approved by the central authority for forestry) • Creating favorable conditions for oak regeneration (removing understory herbaceous and scrub layers) • Applying regeneration cuttings by opening gaps (group shelterwood forest system) • Planting oak seedlings and maintaining existing/advanced seedlings of accompanying species • Weeding, removing of shoots • Controling of invasive plant species • Enclosing against browsing/grazing • Appropriate silvicultural activities
92A0 Salix alba and Populus alba galleries	• Cutting the hybrid poplar stands • Amending the current management plan (In Ro, the provisions of forest

	management plans are compulsory, any changes should be approved by the central authority for forestry) • Removing Amorpha fruticosa by mechanical and chemical methods • Soil preparation • Replanting white and black poplars • Supporting natural regeneration of poplar native species • Weeding and controlling Amorpha sprouts
91H0 Pannonian woods with Quercus pubescens & 91AA Eastern white oak woods & 91I0 Euro-Siberian steppic woods with Quercus spp. & 91M0 Pannonian-Balkanic Turkey oak – sessile oak forests	• Removal of coniferous plantations progressively to allow natural regeneration of oak • Amending the current management plan (In Ro, the provisions of forest management plans are compulsory, any changes should be approved by the central authority for forestry) • Regenerative cuttings: removing undesirable competing vegetation/understorey–herbaceous and scrub layer. Clear-cuttings must be banned! • Soil preparation for planting acorns and saplings (manually and mechanised) • Planting acorns and saplings • Protecting the regeneration/plantations against browsing / grazing • Caring for seedlings during the next growing seasons

Mr Biris concluded his presentation with recommendations regarding stakeholder involvement and the most pertinent obstacles in that area, the need to make more funding instruments available as well as the importance of dialogue and collaboration between the forestry and conservation sectors and adapting forest practices to conservation objectives.

The second case study was presented by **Mr Csaba Nemeth** from Őrség National Park Directorate who talked about the Natura 2000 sites of Vas County in Hungary and the relevance of microhabitat management for favourable conservation status of some species and habitats.

The forest discussion group started from the *Seminar Input Document* which identified the following issues listed in Table 9.

Table 9: Seminar Input Document, summary of Woodlands and Forests chapter

Issues and problems:	**Main conservation requirements:**	**Management and conservation measures:**
1. Forest management 2. Natural processes 3. Land-use changes	1. Intensive versus extensive management 2. Integrative versus segregative approaches 3. Implementing Natura 2000 management plans 4. EU funds and their use	1. Non-intervention and restoration models 2. Forestry models and forestry techniques 3. Habitat or species management
Bottlenecks and problems	**Solutions and opportunities:**	**Cross-cutting issues:**
1. Forest area increase versus decrease in	1. Funding instruments 2. Forest certification	1. Participatory planning with all stakeholders

	forest quality	3.	Stakeholder engagement	2.	Spatial planning and defragmentation
2.	Fragmentation versus ecological corridors			3.	Policy coherence
3.	Property size, access to funds, knowledge				

The group then subdivided into smaller working groups on 1) Favourable Conservation Status, 2) Habitat types, tree species composition and structures depending on the maintenance of human activities, 3) Microhabitats, rare habitats and old growth forests and 4) Integrated and participatory planning of forest and nature management and communication.

2.2.3 Favourable Conservation Status Working Group

The first discussion group reflected upon how the conservation status can be evaluated at various scales, such as e.g. the national level or the biogeographical level. In addition, different EU Member States have different criteria for evaluating whether FCS has been reached. The group identified the following actions listed in Table 10 to 1) Improve common understanding on the degree of habitat conservation at site level and 2) improve understanding of the contribution of site level objectives to achieving FCS at biogeographical level.

Table 10: Actions identified by the FCS working group

ACTION	OUTPUTS / MECHANISMS	WHO	WHEN
1. Collect information on national/regional approaches for the assessment/ evaluation of habitat condition at site level 2. Compile & analyse this information	Questionnaire, transmission of documents per email, translation of relevant documents, workshops (including case studies) on specific habitat types (beech etc.)		
1. Collect information on national/regional approaches to identify the actual and potential contribution of individual sites to the coherence of the Natura 2000 network including FCS 2. Collect information on how socio economic aspects are/can be taken into account when defining site level objectives	1. Literature/questionnaire overview 2. Analysis 3. Expert meetings 4. Guidance		

2.2.4 Habitat types, tree species composition and structures depending on the maintenance of human activities Working Group

The second working group reflected upon the natural regeneration processes and management of specific habitat types, the importance of traditional sylvicultural practices as well as game density, regeneration and species.

Table 11: Actions identified by the Habitat Types working group

TOPIC	ACTION	OUTPUTS / MECHANISMS	WHO	WHEN
Necessity of management to maintain selected designated habitat types/composition (9160 and 9170)	Identify and classify (incl. legal status in different MSs) different habitat types facing this issue and species linked to their maintenance	Communication platform and exchange of typologies (in English)		Before having a workshop on the issue
	Exchange of good practices and management approaches about maintenance of oak-hornbeam forests	Natura 2000 communication platform (bibliography on existing techniques) Workshop	Germany	Before Workshop 2016-2017
Future of traditional forest management practices (incl. coppices)	Identify different types of traditional forest management practices, list habitats and species linked to their maintenance	Natura 2000 communication platform (bibliography on existing techniques)		
	Surface evaluation at national and biogeographical scales + socio-economic assessment	Reports by MSs about surfaces (for instance with data from national inventories), assessment of socio-economic aspects	EEA? External consultant?	ASAP
Impact of game density on forest habitat types CS	Bibliographical review/ research about hunting practices/strategies and their link to game density (incl. effect on vegetation, tree composition and biodiversity)	Bibliographical study, incl. consulting each MS, new studies if/where knowledge gaps have been identified		After bibliographical study

2.2.5 Microhabitats, rare habitats and old growth forests Working Group

The third working group thought about non-intervention management, old growth forest conservation and restoration of rare and endangered forest habitats (alluvial and ravine forests).

Table 12: Actions identified by the “old growth forests” working group

TOPIC	ACTION	OUTPUTS / MECHANISMS	WHO	WHEN
Existing experiences of non-intervention areas	Exchange of good practices and strategies, awareness raising about non–intervention and its benefits/constraints for biodiversity	Workshops (incl. case studies), questionnaire, transmission of documents per email, translation of relevant documents		
Improving common understanding of the importance of old growth forests (OGF) and Historical Stands in conservation status assessment	Collect and make available information on definitions and how OGF contribute to FCS (structures and functions)	Habitat type studies, workshops, knowledge exchange, elaboration of guidance		
	Identification and aggregation of publically available information of the old-growth forest (OGF)	Existing sites with OGF made available to the public		
	Exchange on cost effective mechanisms for private forest owners to participate (Compensation)	Questionnaire, transmission of documents per email, translation of relevant documents, workshops (incl. case studies)		
Restoring rare and priority habitats (e.g. ravine forests and alluvial forests)	Gathering knowledge about the functions of the ecosystem	Expert-Workshop Exchange of good practices and strategies		
	Collection of experience on technical requirements and methods	Expert-Workshop Exchange of good practices and strategies		
	Better understanding of importance of rare habitats for biodiversity	Questionnaire, transmission of documents per email, translation of relevant documents, workshops (incl. case studies)		

2.2.6 Integrated and participatory planning of forest and nature management and communication Working Group

The fourth group discussed stakeholder participation in forest management planning and implementation, communication, coherence and integration of Natura 2000 with Forestry Management Plans and the problems related to private forest property rights and scattered land ownership. Table 13 shows the proposed actions to improve the situation.

Table 13: Actions identified by the Participation working group

ISSUE	ACTION	OUTPUTS / MECHANISMS	WHO	WHEN
Stakeholder participation (direct and indirect)	Exchange of good practices among Member States (e.g., association of forest owners, agreements, inclusion of small size owners concerns in the preparation process of forest	Web platform / publication of guidelines/ dissemination, site visits		

ISSUE	ACTION	OUTPUTS / MECHANISMS	WHO	WHEN
	plans)			
Cooperative approach between Natura 2000 and Forest authorities	Compile good practices and develop guidance about the cooperation between forest authorities and Natura 2000 authorities in MS (including bodies responsible for management)	Questionnaire, transmission of documents per email, translation of relevant documents, workshops (incl. case studies)		
Compliance of forest management plans with Natura 2000 objectives	Showcase good practices in integrating Natura 2000 objectives in forest management plans with a close reference to guidance document	Meetings and workshops to provide a list of key points which forest plans should include, best practices, scientific review with the help of experts from different MS		
Coherence between forest planning and other sectoral plans and land use (urban, wildlife, hunting, etc.)	Identify conflicts and opportunities between different planning instruments and identify good practices of harmonizing plans	Questionnaire, transmission of documents per email, translation of relevant documents, workshops (incl. case studies)		
Link between silvicultural systems and Natura 2000 conservation objectives	Promoting silvicultural systems which maintain favourable conservation status or improve it (species and habitat specific measures)	Meetings between forest managers and/or nature conservationists on species and/or habitat specific base within the same biogeographical region collecting different experiences from real examples		
	Convergence of sustained yield assessment and favourable conservation status assessment	Expert groups		
	Integrating the use of advanced methods of inventory into Natura 2000 management (e.g. LiDAR)	Look for initiatives, use of these data to assess conservation status of habitats		
Improve exchange of information on financing opportunities	Exchange of information on existing financing schemes for forest management (compensation payments etc.)	Questionnaire, transmission of documents per email, translation of relevant documents, workshops (incl. case studies), communication for better uptake by forest managers		
	Exchange of information on innovative financing support to forest management (payment for	Questionnaire, transmission of documents per email, translation of relevant documents,		

ISSUE	ACTION	OUTPUTS / MECHANISMS	WHO	WHEN
	ecosystem services)	workshops (incl. case studies)		

2.3 Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea freshwater and wetland habitats

2.3.1 Selected habitats

The fresh water and wetland habitats selected for priority consideration in this process are listed in Table 14.

Table 14: Rivers and lakes and wetland habitats selected for priority consideration

NATURA 2000 CODE	NAME
7110*	Active raised bogs (Continental, Pannonian)
7120	Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration (Continental)
7140	Transition mires and quaking bogs (Continental, Pannonian)
7150	Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion (Continental, Pannonian)
7210*	Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae (Continental, Steppic)
7220*	Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) (Continental, Pannonian, Black Sea)
7230	Alkaline fens (Continental, Pannonian)
3130	Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or of the Isoëto-Nanojuncetea
3140	Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp.
3150	Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition-type vegetation
3160	Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds
3260	Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation
3270	Rivers with muddy banks with Chenopodion rubri p.p. and Bidention p.p. vegetation

After the general introduction on the process by the Chair, the group started the discussion by listing the main expectations from the process and the actual group work. This was followed by three presentations on different aspects of wetlands and rivers and lakes and the presentation of the seminar document's main outcomes to kick-off brainstorming. The group was then subdivided into three discussion groups on 1) rivers and lakes, 2) mires and bogs and 3) general to discuss key issues. The groups then tackled these key priorities and elaborated further the problem/issue, solution and further details based on Table 15 provided.

Table 15: Livers and lakes and wetlands priority issues

WG	PRIORITY ISSUES

Rivers and lakes	• Hydromorphology • Water quality improvement • Nutrient loads from agriculture, waste water problems and pollution • Fragmentation of habitats and management • Restoration • Focus on rivers processes and large scale projects • Invasive species • Problems of scientific coordination • Different projects have differences in interpretation of habitat sites and methodologies
Mires and bogs	• Hydromorphology (natural hydromorphology should be preferred) • Need to take resilience into account in management • Intervention should be economically sustainable in the long run • Maintaining cultural landscape • Local and regional scale in terms of mowing and grazing, but mowing cannot be recommended at a EU level as the main management measure • Peatlands to inquire into management planning • Recognize carbon dioxide from dried peatlands • Take action within the Natura 2000 and link to CBD, Ramsar and EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020
General	• Policy integration • Administrative, legislative, financing issues (integrating conservation policy into e.g. transport) • Linking different EU directives: Water Framework Directive, Nature Directives and the Flood Directive (working closer with the agencies on water management plans to integrate) • Have clear strategies from planning to implementation (how to approach land owners and economic sector) • Common Agriculture Policy, Pillar 1 and Agri-Environmental Measures

2.3.2 Introductory case study presentations

Three case studies were presented to give some practical food for thought for the following discussions. The power point presentations are available on the Communication Platform[5].

Firstly, **Mr Wiktor Kotowski** from Warsaw University spoke about applying resilience thinking to fen conservation and restoration. Fens have been traditionally cut for hay in Europe for the past several centuries. If undisturbed, they can persist as open habitats without human management. The famous Rospuda Valley in Poland has not changed for thousands of years as natural mires have very high resilience capacity. Despite that, fens are usually managed through mowing. In Biebrza Valley fens are being mowed with tracked mowers for aquatic warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola.* However, it was found that such track mowers impact functional plant diversity and may threaten rare plant species. Small-scale

[5]http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/platform/events/events-upcoming/145_continental_kickoff_seminar_en.htm

mowing with tractors is another option for fen management. A study on the impacts of this type of mowing found that mowing has the potential to increase diversity in low-diversity sites but tends to decrease diversity in high-diversity sites. Secondly, Mr Kotowski emphasized that for fens, both socio-economic and ecological resilience are of considerable importance. He concluded that restoring fens for ecosystem services requires long-term strategies and might compromise short-term biodiversity benefits.

Table 16: Conclusions and recommendations regarding fen restoration and ecosystem resilience

CONCLUSIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS
Semi-natural systems (i.e. managed by humans) are less resilient than natural systems, when long-term unpredictability of the human-factor is taken into account.	Focus mowing management on sites where it really helps preserve threatened species.
Moderately drained fens may have larger species and functional diversity than natural ones but are less resilient in the long run.	Where possible, replace regular mowing with less invasive management (e.g. tree cutting).
High resilience (or long-term stability) can be reached in highly productive systems, which are however less interesting from biodiversity point of view.	Consider high rewetting in large areas of drained fens, even with temporal loss of biodiversity.
	Explore possibilities to re-start peat formation by topsoil removal, taking care of the wise use of removed peat.
	Explore social mechanisms to manage wet fens other than subsidies -> paludiculture for energy and materials.

The second presentation on the role of wetland type on the maintenance of riverine vegetation was delivered by **Mr Rossano Bolpagni** from the University of Parma. Mr Bolpagni started by stressing that aquatic and riparian vegetation located in lowland floodplains is of great conservation value. Littoral and riparian zones of water bodies and remnant marginal aquatic habitats are amongst the world's most threatened ecosystems. By conducting surveys in 60 riverine habitats along Oglio River (northern Italy), the project evaluated the role of habitat type in driving the diversity of hydro-hygrophilous vegetation, the structural heterogeneity of marginal aquatic habitats and their interactions.

Table 17: Conclusions and recommendations from the riverine vegetation study

CONCLUSIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS
Diversity, vegetation distribution patterns and habitat heterogeneity are strictly dependent on habitat type	Actions are essential to support aquatic vegetation diversity in exploited river-scapes
Natural marginal habitats play a fundamental role in conserving aquatic vegetation within human–altered floodplains	However, similar experiments carried out considering flora suggested a clear positive role of artificial water bodies to support diversity
Seasonal wet–dry cycles are important for driving the spatial arrangement and	For vegetation more time is needed to re–create the conditions for the development of "well-structured/diversified plant

abundance of hydro–hygrophilous vegetation	communities"
	Conserving flora needs different strategies
	It is essential to elaborate monitoring frameworks for the evaluation of goals achieved! To make different approaches to the restoration performed throughout the Natura 2000 Network across Europe more comparable.

Last but not least, **Mr Bent Jepsen** presented the main findings from the LIFE Platform meeting (Romania, May 2015) wetlands discussion group.

- Key factors: restoring hydrology & stabilizing water level
- Significant impact on interests of landowners and other stakeholders (purchase or paying compensations)
- Technical restoration measures well known and tested
- Removal of woody overgrowth and maintaining of open structure through grazing
- Overgrazing is a problem in some countries
- Controlling the load of nutrients and chemical pollution is a prerequisite to achieving FCS –this calls for links to river basin management plans (WFD) and nutrient directives
- Invasive alien species are a challenge in both wetlands, wet forest habitats and rivers& lakes
- Active involvement of stakeholders is necessary for acceptance of changes, maintaining results and avoiding negative impacts (fishing, grazing, hunting)
- Connectivity is important for water-related habitats, management measures should reduce/eliminate fragmentation
- Transboundary cooperation may be of paramount importance for the condition of wetlands across national borders.

Mr Jepsen stressed the importance of synergies with other national and international policies and obligations, especially the EU Water Framework Directive, the importance of stakeholder involvement, networking and communication as well as tackling invasive species.

2.3.3 Identified opportunities for cooperative action: recommendations and commitments

Table 18: Actions suggested by the wetlands discussion group

TOPIC	ACTION	OUTPUTS / MECHANISMS	WHO	WHEN
Policy integration Guidance and incentives	To have a guidance on the integration of Water Framework Directive (WFD), Nature Directives and Floods Directive	Short explanation of overlapping articles with good examples from MSs (FAQs from EC exists already http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/FAQ-FD%20final.pdf)	European Commission with all sectors and Member States (national + regional level) with consideration to set up an EU	As soon as possible

TOPIC	ACTION	OUTPUTS / MECHANISMS	WHO	WHEN
	(Nitrates Directive)		Working Group	
	Translate the guidance into "simple language" for public and other stakeholders	Consultation process with stakeholders and documents in national languages	Member States with stakeholders	As soon as the guidance is available
	Motivate sectors to integrate Nature Directives (agriculture, energy, forestry, tourism, transport, fisheries)	Incentives given on EU funding schemes 1. Multiannual Financial Framework Review 2017 to restructure the funds 2. Not to give support for activities with negative impacts on environment (how to set criteria, measures and who will decide on what basis)	European Commission with European Parliament and the Council- indirectly NGOs and other stakeholders to drive the process	Before 2017
Harmful subsidies Flexible, sustainable CAP	Not to have harmful subsidies and have environmental result based, WFD integrated CAP with more incentives for environmentally positive action	Reviewing CAP in 2017 - flexible, sustainable, environment result based CAP - to be site-specific, have more capacities and resources on the advisory system to farmers on how to implement what measures To achieve sustainable and environmental-friendly CAP - provide evidence and make alliance with stakeholders (small scale farmers, health and youth sectors, tourism) water)	European Commission, European Parliament, Council and MSs European Commission to collect cases from MSs and other stakeholders Lobby group (NGOs) and MSs to advocate for greener CAP	Before 2017
Science coordination and data sharing common platform	Coordination of sharing knowledge and methodology	To have a database and platform (or link it to existing Natura 2000 communication platform) to find and liaise data at different levels and connect managers and science Formal group of identified expert from different levels Online, physical meetings of the formal groups	Scientific societies, Natura 2000 managers, NGOs driven by European Commission	ASAP
Hydromorphology, water	Improvement of hydromorph-ology by	Integration of e-flow into Nature Directives CAP subsidies to be rethought, develop more integrated land use management (buffer zones	EC with MSs and stakeholders Coordination	As soon as Possible

TOPIC	ACTION	OUTPUTS / MECHANISMS	WHO	WHEN
quality and habitat Integration	integration of WFD and Nature Directives and improving monitoring Water quality improvement Habitat fragmentation	and rivers, drainage removal) Integrated planning (rivers and floodplains to be considered together and integrated into spatial planning) Define possibilities of reconnection Small hydropower plants to be restricted	between DG Agri and DG Envi Regional and national actors (spatial planners, municipalities)	During RBMP planning
IAS and restoration Guidance and best practice	Invasive alien species River restoration	EU IAS manual on implementation and specific financing Target setting and improved coordination by MSs and specific focus on IAS on N2000 sites interdisciplinary cooperation with water and agriculture Provide restoration best practices (e.g. on profit-making restoration) and shift to integrated landscape planning	Cooperation EU and national level with users and beneficiaries	ASAP
Pollution Data sharing and inclusion	Pollution	Sharing data on pollution (Rhone, Rhine, Danube) Better use of Green Infrastructure Identify pollution source and close the loops	Directorates conventions, strategies (Ramsar, Danube Strategy), etc. related to rivers and MONERIS, ICPDR and other stakeholders (industry, science, farmers) MSs and regional/local level Stakeholders	ASAP
Improving management planning Integrative thinking	Guidelines on improving managements of mires and bogs	Member States to deliver case studies disseminated by Natura 2000 Communication Platform and endorsed by the Management Group on how resilient thinking can be taken into account	MSs	2016
Limited integration of	Integration of WFD and mire and bogs status	Discussions of management integration to WFD through national or regional workshops Sharing and disseminating good practices in	MSs and water and nature conservation	2015/ 2016

TOPIC	ACTION	OUTPUTS / MECHANISMS	WHO	WHEN
directive Integration and knowledge sharing		hydromorphology among stakeholders -e.g. SER website of cases to be integrated into Natura 2000 platform and LFIE platform	managers NGOs to take part and organise a meeting Site planners are informed by consultants and EC	2016
Pollution Involvement of farmers	Links to farmers	Local initiatives -farmers and conservationists to talk together -best practices presented and disseminated	Have a specific project NGOs/MSs	As soon as possible
CAP Information sharing	Explore opportunities to have flexible approach for peatland management and provide recommendations for CAP	Hydrological integration to CAP (not only mowing, but also other peatland measures)	EC with good examples provided by MSs and stakeholders	As soon as possible
Climate change issues Exploration of integration	Explore possible links with Natura 2000 and rewetting peat bogs	If there are links-compile a report for recommendations	EC and consultant with cases provided by MSs and stakeholders	
Main issues	Policy integration CAP review Science -data sharing	Workshop to address policy integration with an outcome of a brief guidance document bringing together water + nature sector issues showcasing good examples Initiation of an (online) platform (or exploration of ways using already existing processes and platforms) to initiate discussions between water and nature sectors Have knowledge markets/events on more specific issues to share knowledge	NGOs and MSs (Meetings suggested by Poland in 2016 and Hungary - October 6-7) MSs (Visegrad 4, Nature/Water/ Marine Directors meeting) and NGOs and MSs (Czech Republic)	2015 2015 2016

2.4 Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea grassland heaths and scrub habitats

2.4.1 Selected habitats

The grassland, heath and scrub habitats selected for priority consideration in this process are listed in Table 19.

Table 19: Grassland, heath and scrub habitats selected for priority consideration

NATURA 2000 CODE	NAME
1340	Inland salt meadows
1530	Pannonic salt steppes and salt marshes
2330	Inland dunes with open Corynephorus and Agrostis grasslands
2340	Pannonic inland dunes
4030	European dry heaths
40A0	Subcontinental peri-Pannonic scrub
40C0	Ponto-Sarmatic deciduous thickets
5130	Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands
6110	Rupicolous calcareous or basophilic grasslands of the Alysso-Sedion albi
6120	Xeric sand calcareous grasslands
6210	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites)
6230	Species-rich Nardus grasslands, on silicious substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas in Continental Europe)
6240	Sub-Pannonic steppic grasslands
6250	Pannonic loess steppic grasslands
6260	Pannonic sand steppes
62C0	Ponto-Sarmatic steppes
6410	Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae)
6420	Mediterranean tall humid grasslands of the Molinio-Holoschoenion
6430	Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels
6440	Alluvial meadows of river valleys of the Cnidion dubii
6510	Lowland hay meadows (Alopecurus pratensis, Sanguisorba officinalis)
6520	Mountain hay meadows

2.4.2 Introductory case study presentations

A report from the LIFE Platform meeting (27-28 May 2015, Sighișoara, Romania) and two case studies were presented to give some food for thought for the following discussions. The power point presentations are available on the Communication Platform[6].

Firstly, **Ms Anne Burrill** from the European Commission presented on Management of grassland habitats in Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea biogeographical regions – lessons from LIFE.

The platform meeting brought together representatives from various LIFE projects in the Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea biogeographical regions to discuss issues of common concern, and in particular to draw some lessons. Some of the main issues for grasslands discussed during the meeting included: fragmentation, stakeholder involvement, forest management, funding, intensification, abandonment, invasive alien species, overgrazing, CAP reform, hydrology change / drainage, renewable energy, and access to knowledge.

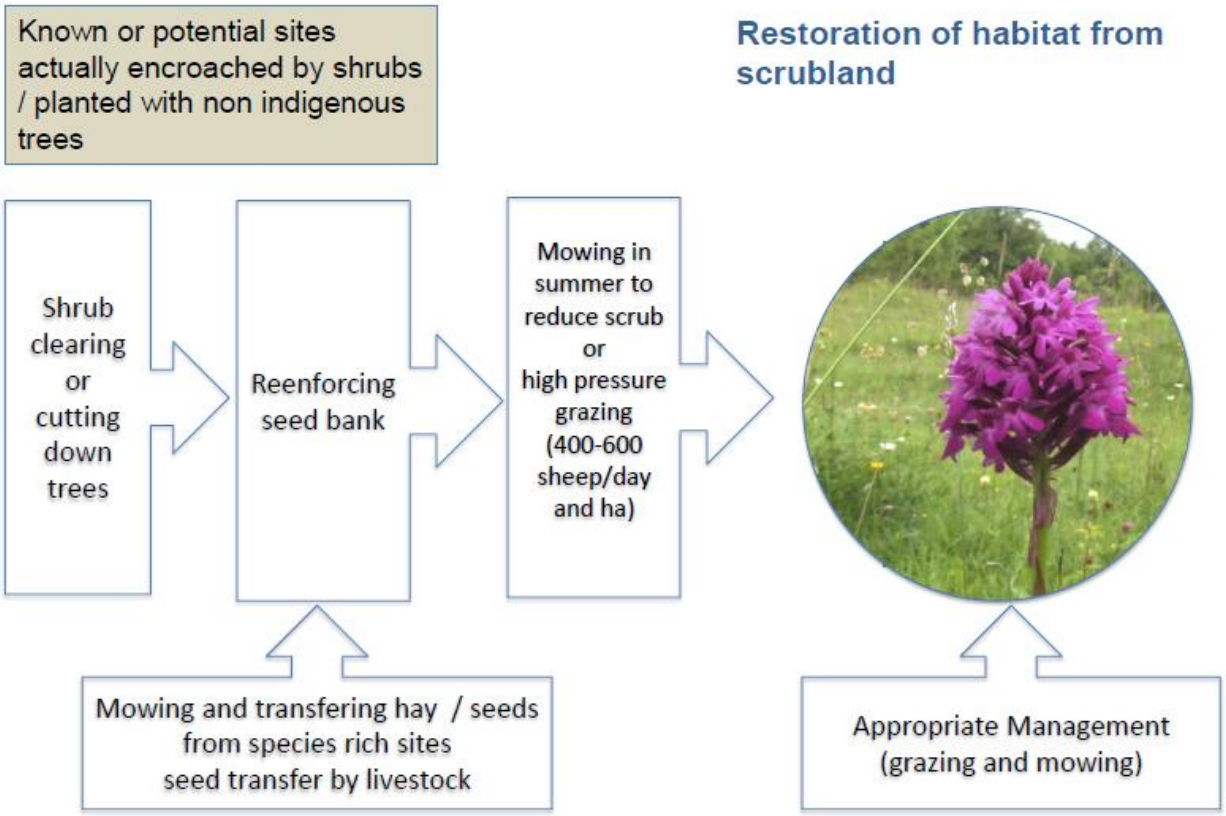
Take away messages for successful conservation management projects from the platform meeting for the seminar included the importance of speaking to and involving stakeholders on the ground, the benefits (in some cases) to organize stakeholder involvement through the setting up of steering committees, the (financial) opportunities offered by branding and marketing of local and organic products. Regarding funding, the recommendations focused on diversification (of co-funding opportunities for LIFE projects) and cooperation (involving new partners). Securing a good rural development plan (RDP) could help. In response to the abandonment and under grazing participants advanced that new markets for grazing products (meat, wool) should be opened up, while overgrazing could be reduced through a payment scheme to reduce sheep density. Regarding CAP reform, the evidence from peer-reviewed research into the benefits of small scale (organic) farming in terms of productivity and biodiversity could be further disseminated and used in campaigns. In support of any conservation action, it was found very useful to ensure a flexible toolbox of measures.

The second presentation was conducted by **Mr Georges Moes** from Natur&Emwelt, on LIFE Orchis – Restoration of calcareous grassland in Eastern Luxembourg: Practical approaches.

This presentation introduced the workshop participants to a newly launched LIFE project, started in September 2014, aiming at saving the existing sites, improving their conservation state and restoring historically known or potential sites of calcareous grassland (6210) and juniper-formations (5130). A geological and historic approach was chosen to identify the priority areas for conservation and restoration. It showed that historically the most important sites for orchids occurred at specific geological transitional locations on Keuper Marl, Dolomitic Limestone and surface mining on Dogger. Field trials were also carried out to assess the most appropriate grazing regime on the different geological substrates, showing for example that cattle trampling degraded the Keuper Marl and that sheep grazing was therefore much more appropriate. Scientific support was also sought to try and unravel the unexplained death of Juniper trees at various locations. The sites on Dolomitic Limestone presented

[6] http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/platform/events/events-upcoming/145_continental_kickoff_seminar_en.htm

specific challenges related to the steep slopes and the restoration of grasslands on abandoned vineyards. Some preliminary recommendations from the project regarding the restoration of recently abandoned grasslands: this required a first phase of scrub removal or high pressure grazing (400-600 sheep / day and Ha) followed by a conservation grazing regime of 200 - 400 sheep / day and Ha. Where the historic sites had been abandoned for longer periods and the land use had been changed, the restoration process was more complex, involving a first phase of wood and scrub removal, followed by an action to reinforce the seed bank (by spreading hay from other species rich sites), before summer mowing to reduce scrub growth. Only then could a conservation management grazing and mowing regime be started.



The potential sites for restoration also include sites that have been subjected to intensive land use and where the soil is too rich in nutrients to support species-rich grassland. Here another approach is needed. Extensification of land use is required that should be supported by biodiversity contracts. This should go hand in hand with intensive mowing and extracting the hay to mine the phosphorous from the soil. Then the phases of restoring the seed bank and introducing appropriate conservation management can be applied.

Lastly, **Mr Michael Hošek** from EUROPARC Federation / Krkonoše National Park talked about Life for the Krkonoše Mountains' meadows? LIFE Corcontica!

This Life project runs from 2012 to 2018 in the highest mountains of the Czech Republic in the Krkonoše National Park and aims to maintain or improve a quality of traditionally used mountain meadows. Actions to achieve this goal focus on restoring 29 enclaves of meadows (species composition as well as structure) on an area of 425 ha (habitat type 6230*: 215 ha; 6520: 179 ha; 6510: 31 ha). In addition farm plans (for

above mentioned habitats) are developed introducing suitable management methods for stable or increasing representation of the target species.

Appropriate conservation measures are identified and implemented by applying the adaptive management approach. In the selected grassland enclaves these activities include deforestation, cutting and spraying of *Rumex alpinus*, water regime restoration, and reintroducing appropriate grazing and mowing regimes.

Thus far, in spite of the many positive results, the project has also generated a number of questions and issues, such as "how to keep the adaptive management approach when project is finished?" There is also a problem of capacity to keep the monitoring, the planning of specific management activities, etc. Another issue highlighted by the project team relates to the definition and interpretation of FCS. There is a difficulty to specify measurable reference values of the FCS for each habitat. Finally it is impossible to influence (or modify) agriculture subsidies (often harming the nature) – the main source of finances for farmers. The current scheme of subsidies does not recognize production meadows apart from semi-natural meadows. Historically, mowing was the main type of management, currently it is substituted by grazing (because of finances).

2.4.3 Pressures and problems

Existing pressures on the selected habitats were discussed on the basis of the expert consultation outcomes presented in the Seminar Input Document (SID)[7]. In terms of focusing the discussion on conservation planning and management, the participants thought it would be useful to distinguish broad classes of pressures and types of grassland.

Two main categories of pressures

1. Those you cannot do anything about (succession, IAS)
2. Human induced processes.

Two main categories of grasslands (from management point of view)

1. Those with economic value / production (intensification is a pressure here)

[7]http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/platform/documents/continental_seminar/continental_pannonian_black_sea_and_steppic_seminar_input_document_20150612_en.pdf

2. Those without economic value / production (succession is a pressure here).

Each of these combinations of categories would require specific responses in terms of conservation and management. In terms of specific pressures, the following were identified: inappropriate management measures (e.g. inappropriate mowing / grazing), natural succession, nutrient inputs, hydrological modification (too late in many cases), urbanisation (and in particular the cumulative effects of urban sprawl), damage by game. Participants agreed that from their point of view the pressures caused by invasive alien species were not as important as reflected in the SID.

On-site management responses to these pressures were discussed and it was agreed that much is known about potential solutions. However, there are barriers that stand in the way of applying the most appropriate management responses. These were identified and discussed in the following round of discussions.

2.4.4 Barriers

The identified barriers to the implementation of appropriate management measures for grasslands, heaths and scrubs referred to aspects of the common agricultural policy, stakeholder issues, lack of monitoring, lack of political will and contradictions between laws, lack of flexibility with regard to management options (especially in relation to AES, lack of market and demand for products from nature friendly farming, lack of policy and rules for habitat management outside the Natura 2000 network, lack of tools to assess and fight cumulative effects in appropriate assessment and finally issues related to sheep and predators. From the overall list of barriers four were selected by the group for the next step (*Finding solutions and planning for action*):

- Stakeholder issues (awareness, knowledge, involvement, attitude)

  An active and positive involvement of stakeholders is essential to achieve effective, long term and sustainable conservation of grasslands. However, many barriers stand in the way of such a positive stakeholder involvement. Much of it boils down to errors in communication, lack of awareness and lack of mutual understanding between representatives of sectorial interests and the conservation community.

- Lack of long term monitoring

  Long term monitoring is an essential part of the adaptive conservation management cycle, which itself is a prerequisite to be able to adapt to the variation in and unpredictability in natures cycles. Lack of monitoring is therefore a major barrier to effective and dynamic management of grasslands and other habitats. Operating in a European context and contributing to national and EU conservation objectives, it is also essential to be clear about common conservation objectives and therefore harmonise some of the monitoring approaches. Even the most basic monitoring requires significant inputs in terms of labour and therefore the most efficient methods should be promoted and shared.

- Lack of flexibility with regard to management

The problem here is that in many countries, conservation management rules and regulations land users have to abide to in order to receive payments from agri-environmental schemes are often very simple and strict (no flexibility in the dates and very little in the means/ways of action). This rigidity in the rules and their strict control, although more easy to administer, hampers the application of dynamic management measures more in harmony with the variability and unpredictability of natural processes.

- Lack of market, offer / demand, marketing

The lack of markets to absorb local products produced in nature friendly ways result in a frequent mismatch between offer and demand, and the lack of marketing skills among conservationists and land managers and users reduces the options for conservation management. Identifying new markets, or producing and marketing new products resulting from conservation management practices, (e.g. meat from sheep and cattle grazing in nature reserves) can help find solutions for this conundrum.

2.4.5 Finding solutions and planning for action

A so-called carousel[8] was organised to harvest the participants' ideas for solutions to the four barriers to appropriate grassland management. This was followed by work in break out groups to develop action-planning schemes for selected solutions.

Inadequate stakeholder involvement (awareness, knowledge, involvement, attitude)

Proposed solutions focused on the need for flexibility and inclusiveness in the approach of stakeholders and the need to ensure regular contacts while taking into account economic aspects of nature conservation in the communication. Suggested actions to contribute to this included the development of a course on communication skills for conservation experts, also building on existing resources and knowledge such as *Communicating Nature Conservation*[9]. In addition, actions to provide positive feedback to stakeholders were seen as holding a great potential in terms of creating a more positive attitude towards grasslands conservation.

TOPIC	ACTION	OUTPUTS / MECHANISMS	WHO	WHEN
Inadequate stakeholder involvement (awareness, knowledge,	To establish a course on communication skills for nature conservation experts	Training courses (good example from Croatia), use already existing examples	ECNC / ATEN, together with MS	2016: different places able to share experience

[8] In this method the group is divided into four subgroups. One participant is appointed to each of the four themes. Each subgroup starts with one of the four themes and after about 5 minutes all groups move on to the next theme and comment on the work of the previous group and add ideas. This process continues until all groups have addressed all themes or questions.

[9] http://www.ecnc.org/publications/technicalreports/communicating-nature-conservation/

TOPIC	ACTION	OUTPUTS / MECHANISMS	WHO	WHEN
involvement, attitude)". Increasing cooperation and mutual understanding between stakeholders thanks to communication	To exchange best practices on how to involve stakeholders	EU level conference	Consortium in close cooperation with Member States	2016
	To share best practices from EU to local level	Stakeholder communication principles and methods	Umbrella organisations	

Lack of long-term monitoring

Solutions to lack of long-term monitoring should focus on more harmonized and efficient (in terms of time and money) methodologies. Suggested actions included the collaborative development of simple and standard methods for monitoring and improving the communication and mutual understanding between scientists (among whom university members) and practitioners.

TOPIC	ACTION	OUTPUTS / MECHANISMS	WHO	WHEN
Lack of long term monitoring of management Appropriate monitoring system of management	Establishment of methodologies in relation to precise needs	Methodologies (objectives and details) References of time, price List of indicators	Experts Nature conservation authorities and land practitioners Experts	A.s.a.p.
	Incorporating the monitoring into the adaptive management cycles	Monitoring included in planning Conservation evidence	Nature conservation authorities Experts	After building capacity
	Building capacity for monitoring	Data repository, financing, human resources	Central institution	After establishment of the methodologies

Lack of flexibility with regard to management (in particular agri-environmental schemes

Participants agreed that there is an urgent need for more flexibility in time and space with regards to the conservation measures that are set up to allow land managers and owners to benefit from the financial support under the agri-environmental schemes (AES). Nowadays, in many places, very strict rules with no ecological foundation are often applied, and therefore the effectiveness of these measures is often very much reduced, or the measures can even have negative effects. The rules to receive payments from AES

should be more flexible in order to better reflect the unpredictable and heterogeneous essence of nature (e.g. droughts or heavy rains, requiring a change in the dates of mowing). Discussions highlighted that the rules underpinning AES payments differed quite substantially from Member State to Member State. Actions to improve the situation could therefore focus on collecting and making available examples of best practice from the EU and evaluating the best elements of these different approaches and disseminating them to the right audiences.

TOPIC	ACTION	OUTPUTS / MECHANISMS	WHO	WHEN
Lack of flexibility in management (esp. in relation to AES) (I) Finding out best practices in AES	Planning a structured survey	Pilot Common format Work plan		Mid 2016
	Develop database Conduct survey Compile final report	Database of best and worst practices (including top 10) Final report		Mid 2017
	Input from Member States description of best practices in AES for Natura 2000 species and habitats	National reports	Member States Natura 2000 responsible bodies and NGOs	Mid 2017
	Gap analysis between AES & Natura 2000 needs			
	Negotiations with MS to improve application of most appropriate AES	Improved national AES systems	DG ENV & DG Agri	End 2018

Lack of market, offer / demand, marketing

Participants recognised that solutions for aligning offer and demand for products from nature friendly farming were very specific on the local and regional realities. Whereas in some areas, local demand could be increased through a well thought and targeted marketing strategy, in other situations the solution should be looked for in identifying new markets for these niche products. Selling such products thus requires a customised approach adapted to the reality of each region. As a common approach to better marketing is clearly not an option, a solution should be looked for in the exchange of best practice, starting with the collection of best practice in the field of marketing and sale of products from nature friendly farming.

TOPIC	ACTION	OUTPUTS / MECHANISMS	WHO	WHEN
Lack of marketing of products. Share best practice	Create a database of best practice	Best practice examples and guidelines	Proposal for LIFE Communicatio n project	
		Developing a WIKI type collaborative exchange platform		

3 Closing plenary session

The presentations of the four habitat working group results were followed by a presentation by **Mr Mark Snethlage** on the Natura 2000 Communication Platform and its features (newly developed to aid best practice sharing and knowledge exchange), concluding remarks from **Mr Neil McIntosh,** the lead coordinator of the process, comments from **Mr Francois Kremer** and a closing address from **Mr Camille Gira**.

The organisers thanked all delegates for their active participation and valuable contributions during this short but intensive Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea Kick-off Seminar. The many results of the working group discussions presented during the closing session provide the basis to develop some very promising follow-up actions. The European Commission and the contractor supporting the Natura 2000 Biogeographical Process play a coordinating and supporting role for these follow-up actions, but the initiative clearly resides with the site, local, regional and member state level actors. The Commission has initiated and supported the Natura 2000 New Biogeographical Process to help the Member States in their duty to implement the Nature Directives. In addition, the European Commission underlines the fact that there are various types of funds available to carry out projects and activities in relation to the implementation of the Nature Directives, in particular, the structural funds are available to be used by Member States and specific actions and strategic objectives relate to nature and environment and nature protection. The delegates were encouraged to remain in contact, to extend the network to also

include their colleagues and to take forward the many interesting ideas that had been discussed during the Seminar.

4 Annexes

4.1 Programme of the Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea Kick-off Seminar

Continental, Pannonian, Black Sea & Steppic Natura 2000 Seminar – draft programme

DAY 0: 28 June 2015

- Arrival of participants

(Note that at 19.30, there will be a briefing meeting for Habitat Group Chairs, Facilitators and other key actors. This meeting will take place in the Parc Alvisse Hotel, in the Ansembourg Room.)

DAY 1: Monday, 29th June 2015

NOTE THAT ALL TIMINGS WITHIN THE PROGRAMME ARE INDICATIVE ONLY.

Time	***Activity***	***Objectives & outcomes***	***Key features of the various sessions***
08.30 to 09.30		*Registration of participants*	*Participants will receive their name badge and a Seminar pack.*
09.30 to 10.45	Welcome & introductions ***Target outcome: Clear understanding amongst participants about expectations from the Kick-off Seminar, in its context as a continuing process.***	***Official welcome & introductory statements*** • *Mr Camille Gira, Secretary of State for Sustainable Development & Infrastructures, Luxembourg.* • *Mr François Kremer, Policy Coordinator Natura 2000, European Commission, DG Environment.* ***The Natura 2000 Biogeographical Seminar Process in its strategic context*** • *Commission representative* ***Summary presentation of the conservation status, significant issues (threats & trends) and management responses*** • *Mrs Zelmira Gaudillat, European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity (ETC-BD)* ***Overview of the Programme & the 4 Habitat Working Groups' – introduction to the Chairs & Facilitators & expected outcomes from the Seminar*** • *Mr Neil McIntosh, ECNC* ***Introduction to the site visits*** • *Host representatives, Luxembourg*	*Present the Seminar and its context, along with the approach and methods to be used – the Continental, Pannonian, Black Sea & Steppic Biogeographical Region Kick off Seminar:* o *Is a starting point in a continuing, long-term process focusing on practical management techniques for specific habitats (and species);* o *Supports stakeholders to identify common priorities and shared interests;* o *Aims to clarify the scope for collaborative and cooperative actions, and generate concrete outcomes with confirmed actors, where possible;* o *Works (together with Chairs and Facilitators) to develop participative and constructive dialogue, encouraging participants to share their experiences and 'real life' examples.* • *Coastal Habitats – Peder Agger (DK)* • *Wetlands, Rivers & Lakes – Ms Jana Durkosova (SK)* • *Grasslands, Heaths & Scrubs – Ms Sophie Ouzet (FR)* • *Woodland & Forests – Mr Frank Wolff (LU)*
11.00	***Site visits*** *Where are we now and where do we need to be?*	• *Departure from Hotel Parc Alvisse by coach* • ***PLEASE BRING WATER, SUNSCREEN AND SUITABLE OUTDOOR CLOTHING & FOOTWARE. ALSO, PARTICIPANTS SHOULD BRING THEIR CAMERAS AND BINOCULARS.***	*The primary purpose here is to provide a benchmark of several priority habitats as a basis for discussions in the group sessions. The site visits will be used to enable participants to network and discuss the condition of priority habitats in their countries "in the field".*
11.00 to 19.00 approx	***Site visits*** *(Please note that details of timing vary according to the duration of each site visit)* *Three site visits are planned as an integral part of the programme and participants have been invited to indicate their first and second choices – note that, within the limits of capacity, we will do our best to ensure that each participant's*		

	'first choice' is granted! *The site visits provide participants with an opportunity to see 'on the ground' the management practices and approaches being applied in different Natura 2000 sites. During the site visits, experts & guides will provide an overview of the current status and condition of selected priority Continental habitats and explain the features and management regimes. However, this is also an opportunity for participants to share experiences about related issues and management approaches in their countries.* *The site visits are:* ***Visit 1**: To the Northern part of Luxembourg, to the **Mëllerdall and Our Valley (Luxembourg)** to be exact, which provides an opportunity to see the captive breeding station of the freshwater pearl mussel and the river mussel as well as the Our River Valley .Furthermore, this visit will include interesting forest sites in the "Little Switzerland" of Luxembourg, notably the Mullerthal. This visit is likely to appeal to those in the following habitat groups - Rivers, Lakes & Wetlands; and, Woodland & Forests.* ***Visit 2**: To the Southern part of Luxembourg (**Haff Réimech**) for wetlands sites, combined with a field visit to the **Sierck region (France)** to see dry grasslands sites. This visit is likely to appeal to those in the following habitat groups – Rivers, Lakes & Wetlands; and, Grasslands, Heaths & Scrubs.* ***Visit 3:** To the **Prenzebierg-Giele-Botter (Luxembourg) and La Praille (Belgium**), a site visit focusing on dry meadows in a unique landscape resulting from open pit land mining in the southern part of Luxembourg combined with a field visit to Belgium to some of the most valuable wet grasslands known in Belgium. This visit is likely to appeal to those in the following habitat groups – Grasslands, Heaths & Scrubs.* *More information is available on the Natura 2000 Platform.*

DAY 2: Tuesday, 30th June 2015 – Habitat Groups

Time	*Activity*	*Objectives & outcomes*	*Description*
09.00 to 09.30		• *Reflections on Day 1 as a framework for the Working Group sessions*	
09.30 to 11.00	*Habitat Groups: session 1* *"Where are we now?"* ***The aim of this session is to develop shared understanding of the 'bigger picture' based on experience at regional, national & local levels.***	• *To allow group participants to meet & introduce themselves.* • *To grow understanding about the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy targets to be reached and specific implications arising for their habitat.* • *To share practical habitat management experiences and identify:* • *What works?* • *Where are the challenges, issues or problems?* *Planned outcomes:* • *To allow participants to develop their ideas about how the Natura 2000 biogeographical process can help them to achieve their priorities for their habitats.* • *To begin to sharpen focus on the practical habitat management issues, possible solutions and proposed actions.*	*The key questions to discuss here, per habitat group, are:* *1. What is the favourable conservation status of each habitat?* *2. Where are we now in relation to achieving the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy targets?* *Each habitat group will benefit from case study presentations (15 minutes max). These have been pre-identified **based on specific Natura 2000 sites or the status of habitats according to their experience at national/ transnational levels.*** *All delegates are invited to come prepared, to participate actively in discussions and to share information & experiences about their habitats – this may include highlight gaps in knowledge and, collectively, contribute to the identification of common issues/ problems, shared priorities, scope for solutions and possible collaborative actions.*
	Session 1 - Case Study Presentations per Habitat Group ***COASTAL: Chair Mr Peder Agger (DK)**; facilitator, Malgorzata Siuta (CEEweb)* • *Maria Sandell: The SandLife Project: Restoring habitats on sandy soils in southern Sweden (Sweden)* • *Ivan Kambourov: title to be confirmed (Bulgaria)* ***GRASSLANDS, HEATHS & SCRUBS: Chair Ms Sophie Ouzet (FR)**; facilitator Mark Snethlage (ECNC)* • *Anne Burrill: Report of the LIFE Platform meeting* • *Georges Moes: The LIFE ORCHIS Project (Luxembourg)* • *Michael Hošek: The LIFE CORCORTICA project (Czech Republic)* ***WETLANDS, RIVERS & LAKES: Chair Ms Jana Durkosova (SK)**; facilitator, Agnes Zolyomi (CEEweb)* • *Bent Jepsen: Report of the LIFE Platform meeting* • *Rossano Bolpagni: the importance of being natural: Role of wetland type on the maintenance of riverine vegetation (Italy)*		

	• *Wiktor Kotowski: Applying resilience-thinking to fen conservation and restoration: can we predict long-term effects of current strategies?* ***WOODLAND & FORESTS: Chair Mr Frank Wolff (LU)**; facilitator, Paulo Castro (EUROPARC)* • *Iovu-Adrian Biris: Report of the LIFE Platform meeting* • *Csaba Németh: Reconstruction of forest-habitats in the Natura 2000 areas of Vas County – Hungary*		
11.00 to 11.30		Coffee break	

DAY 2: Tuesday, 30th June 2015 – Habitat Groups continued			
11.30 to 13.00	<u>*Habitat Groups: session 2*</u> *"What needs to be done?"* ***Continuing from the previous session, grow understanding of how the Natura 2000 Biogeographical process can be useful for and used by participants to achieve shared interest and priorities. Start to focus on the scope for collaborative working and cooperative actions that can be usefully developed through the process.***	*What needs to change, what can be improved, and what new actions can be developed?* • *Refer to the Habitat Group section in the Seminar Document and the previous sessions' discussions, to start to prioritise issues and identify practical solutions.* • *To share practical habitat management experiences and identify:* • *What works?* • *Where are the challenges, issues or problems?* • *To propose solutions where there is consensus about the need for practical habitat management actions, as well as common understanding about the steps that can be taken.* • *To develop solutions that evidence collaboration and cooperation between stakeholders – all inputs from stakeholders should be justified in terms of their contribution to achieving progress towards the important strategic targets for their habitats.* *Planned outcomes:* • *To begin to develop a level of consensus about common priorities and shared interests that can or need to be addressed, relevant for each habitat group, to ensure progress towards achievement of the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy targets.* • *To identify gaps to be prioritised for future consideration: equally, to note any differences of opinion that may exist.*	*The main purpose of this session is to discuss participants' examples and experiences of current joint-working approaches they are aware of and know to work; alternatively, where there would be value and need to develop new joint working. Reflecting also on the case study presentations, basically, two questions are posed here:* • *What are the problems?* • *Where is there scope for useful collaboration?* *Ideas from current or proposals for planned projects will be shared. Examples about existing joint-working focussing on practical management knowledge sharing will be discussed – for example, strategic level initiatives (such as guidelines/ advice etc.), and policy-related initiatives, but the focus should remain on practical management collaboration opportunities.* *Areas where there are recognised gaps in know-how should be identified and discussed in terms of what practical steps can be developed to address these gaps.*
13.00 to 14.30		Lunch	
14.30 to 15.45	<u>*Habitat Groups: session 3*</u> *"Where do we need to go?"* ***The aim of this session is to plan desired outcomes & define cooperation or collaboration objectives.***	*To begin to focus discussions and develop agreement about the scope for collaboration and cooperation to take forward common interests and shared priorities, relevant to their habitat group.* • *To agree (realistic & measurable) objectives that can be achieved appropriate for cooperation and collaboration – consider who will be involved, how they could work & what they could do/ contribute.*	*Building on the previous sessions, Group participants will be able to discuss (in some detail) solutions, possible actions and proposed first steps required to take forward agreed, common priorities.*
15.45 to 16.00		Coffee break	
16.00 to 17.30	<u>*Habitat Groups: session 4*</u> *Planning for action*	• *To work together to seek commitments from within the group (where possible) to achieve the outcomes.* • *To develop a proposed action plan for collaboration and cooperation within the Mediterranean region in terms of what, where & when.* • *To identify and select short-term actions (coming months) and longer term actions (future years).* • *To agree and propose tangible priority actions, which need to be taken, where possible including by whom and when.*	*This session will be used to sum up the key points arising from the day's discussions, especially to capture the common priorities and shared interests where it is agreed there would be most value in developing further cooperation. Focus will be given to specific actions that aim to improve management practice and quality: also, there will be scope to include attention for relevant, identified cross-cutting issues, such as stakeholder engagement practices, communication & outreach, mitigation of and adaptation for*

			climate change impacts etc.
17.30 to 18.00		*Free time/ networking*	

DAY 2: Tuesday, 30th June 2015 – Knowledge Market			
18.00 to 21.00	*Knowledge Market*	*The Knowledge Market will be officially opened by:* • *Mr Camille Gira, Secretary of State for Sustainable Development & Infrastructures, Luxembourg; and,* • *Mrs Pia Bucella, Director Natural Capital, European Commission.* *Following the official opening, a buffet and drinks reception will be served.* *This is a dynamic and interactive session designed to enable participants to network and enter into bilateral discussions. Participants will be able to walk round and gather information from diverse projects and initiatives presented at 'market stalls', where materials and best practice examples will be displayed.* *Representatives from local stakeholder organisations will also be invited to this session.*	*Further details are provided below.*

The Knowledge Market

The "Knowledge Market" offers the possibility for Member State and stakeholder representatives to present best practice examples from nature protection activities with a specific focus on Natura 2000. This can include: presentation of management plans; ongoing or concluded LIFE projects; stakeholder integration activities; regional, national or local initiatives for Natura 2000; display of posters, maps and other relevant materials; dissemination of guidance, information resources or other literature etc. The aim is to share news about those activities and initiatives which target improving the quality and practices of nature conservation in Natura 2000 areas, or the wider landscape.

The Knowledge Market is designed to stimulate discussion between Seminar participants, share and gather information, and to provide useful inputs for further projects, collaborations and co-operations. This is an informal interactive information gathering opportunity – the Knowledge Market is not a session in plenary - it works one-to-one or in small groups, as participants move around to gather and share information. Most importantly, the Knowledge Market contributor should be able to comment about the project, the work or activities and be prepared to discuss with interested experts from other Member States or stakeholder organisations.

Participants must have registered in advance in order to facilitate planning and preparations. They will have provided information material about (planned, ongoing or concluded) relevant Natura 2000 projects or related work.

If you have registered and have not already done so, please let us know your display plans (what materials you propose to bring) and some details about what you wish to share with Seminar participants. Tables, panels and WIFI will be at your disposal to display publications, posters and other literature – for any PowerPoint presentations and/or websites you wish to share, participants should bring their own laptop.

DAY 3: Wednesday, 1st July 2015

Note: 08.00 to 09.00 – Habitat Group Chairs and Facilitators will finalise their group presentations for the plenary session on Day 3.

Time	*Activity*	*Objectives & outcomes*	*Description*
09.15 to 09.30		*Recap on Day 2 & introduction to Day 3*	
09.30 to 11.00	*Habitat Groups – feedback*	• *Presentations from each of the Habitat Groups;* • *Plenary discussion about results* • *Confirmation of proposed recommendations.*	*Each Habitat Group will present an overview of the key points discussed on Day 2 and the outcomes achieved and agreed by group participants. Each Group will have been asked to propose 3 priority Seminar follow-up actions and to signal commitments to take forward these actions. The presentations will be made by the Habitat Group Chairs, supported by their facilitator.*
11.00 to 11.30		Coffee break	
11.30 to 12.30	*Continental, Pannonian, Black Sea & Steppic Kick-off Seminar: Closing session*	• *A dedicated plenary session to summarise outcomes and agreed, common priorities.* • *To confirm results and concrete actions identified during the Seminar;* • *To plan and confirm timescales for next steps.* *The note of thanks and closing remarks for the Continental, Pannonian, Steppic & Black Sea Kick-Off Seminar will be provided by:* • *Mr Camille Gira, Secretary of State for Sustainable Development & Infrastructures, Luxembourg.* • *Mr François Kremer, Policy Coordinator Natura 2000, European Commission, DG Environment.*	*Note that any concrete actions deriving from cross cutting issues may also be discussed within habitat working groups. Reflecting levels of interest and priority, the aim will be to firm up actions proposed for any cross cutting issues of common / shared interest and avoid general discussion – only those cross cutting issues with potential to be covered by the actors of the Natura 2000 Biogeographical Process in collaboration should be captured.*
12.30 to 13.00		Departures	

4.2 List of participants of the Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea Kick-off Seminar

Name	Function	Organisation	Country	Email
COASTAL				
Mr Peder Agger	Member of the Planning Board	The Danish Society for Nature Conservation National Office	Denmark	peder@dn.dk; pa@ruc.dk
Ms Lora Dimitrova	Expert	Ministry of Environment and Water of Bulgaria	Bulgaria	ldimitrova@moew.government.bg
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4.3 List of organisations and projects presented at the Information Market

The "Knowledge Market" offered the possibility for Member State and stakeholder representatives to present best practice examples from nature protection activities with a specific focus on Natura 2000. This included: presentation of management plans; ongoing or concluded LIFE projects; stakeholder integration activities; regional, national or local initiatives for Natura 2000; display of posters, maps and other relevant materials; dissemination of guidance, information resources or other literature; and, display of posters. The aim was to share news about those activities and initiatives which target improving the quality and practices of nature conservation in Natura 2000 areas, or the wider landscape. This interactive session was designed to stimulate discussion between Seminar participants, share and gather information, and to provide useful inputs for further projects, collaborations and co-operations.

European Landowners' Organisation, Belgium
Pilot Twinning project; 3water (www.3water.eu); Hercules FP7 (www.hercules-landscapes.eu); Wildlife Estate Label (www.wildlife-estates.eu); EU Tree of the Year, Belgium.
Presented by: Ms Marie Alice Budniok

Natagora, Belgium
Priority actions for grasslands and meadows in Lorraine and the southern Ardennes, Belgium.
Presented by: Dr Ir. Xavier Janssens

Public Service of Wallonia / DEMNA, Belgium
Publications of Natagriwal, Belgium.
Presented by: Ir Lionel Wibail

Department for Agricultural and Environmental Research, Walloon Region, Belgium
Restoration of calcareous grasslands from afforested stands & Restoration of Juniper populations in calcareous grasslands, Belgium.
Presented by: Mr Louis-Marie Delescaille

Krkonoše Mts National Park, Czech Republic
A hundred times nothing killed the donkey.
Presented by: Mr Stanislav Březina & Mr Michael Hošek

Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic
Steppes of the Louny Region: management results in habitat 6210 and changes in population size of the European ground squirrel, Czech Republic.
Presented by: Dr Jana Ptáčková

Danish Nature Agency, Denmark
Rewetting peatlands: case in Lille Vildmose, Denmark.
Presented by: Mr Lars Dinesen

National Museum of Natural History of France
Assessing the conservation status of habitats in French Natura 2000 sites: a method for calcareous grassland and hay meadows, France.
Presented by: Ms Lise Maciejewski

Ministry of Ecology, Energy and Sustainable Development, France
Cahier habitat, France.
Presented by: Mr Bastien Coignon

Conservatoire d'espaces naturels de Franche-Comté, France
LIFE Jura peatlands programme, France
Presented by: Ms Emilie Calvar

French Ministry of Ecology, Regional Directorate of Lorraine, France & Parc naturel régional des Ballons des Vosges, France & Parc naturel régional de Lorraine, France
Sharing knowledge about Natura 2000 in Lorraine, France.
Presented by: Ms Sophie Ouzet & Mr Jacky Véret & Mr Mathieu Junger

Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, Germany
Various publications of the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation with regard to habitat type (and associated species) management, Germany.
Presented by: Dr Axel Buschmann

CEEweb for Biodiversity, Hungary
CEEweb and the Natura 2000 Working Group, Hungary.
Presented by: Ms Malgorzata Siuta

Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Conservation Department, Natura 2000 Unit, Hungary
Hungarian Natura 2000 best practices.
Presented by: Mr Andras Schmidt

WWF Hungary
Integrated solution for local floodplain reconstruction, IAS elimination and biomass production for energetic use, Hungary.
Presented by: Ms Katalin Sipos

Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary
Multipurpose assessment serving forest biodiversity conservation in the Carpathian region of Hungary.
Presented by: Dr Tibor Standovár

Őrség National Park Directorate, Hungary
Reconstruction of forest habitats in the protected areas of Vas County in Western Hungary.
Presented by: Dr Csaba Németh

Fertő-Hanság National Park Directorate, Hungary
Managing sites for Maculinea butterflies, Coenonympha oedippus and other related invertebrate species in NW-Hungary
Presented by: Mr András Ambrus

Parma University, Italy
The evolution mechanisms and ecological determinants of aquatic and amphibian vegetation (habitat codes: 3140, 3150, 3270), Italy.
Presented by: Dr Rossano Bolpagni

Università degli Studi di Padova, Italy
The role of forest management in conservation of the structures and functions of habitats of European Union interest in northeast Italy.
Presented by: Dr Tommaso Sitzia

SICONA, Luxembourg
Contribution from local authorities to the implementation of Natura 2000, Luxembourg.
Presented by: Mr Yves Schaack

Luxembourg National Museum of Natural History, Luxembourg
Ecology and conservation of Arnica montana, Luxembourg
Presented by: Dr Guy Colling

Forest and Nature Agency, Luxembourg
Label 'Naturschutzfleesch'-a label of beef from extensive, year-round grazing project in high-nature value farmland in Luxembourg).
Presented by: Mr Frank Wolff

natur&ëmwelt Fondation Hëllef fir d'Natur
LIFE Eislek restoration of wetlands and associated endangered species, Luxembourg
Presented by: Ms Michelle Clemens

natur&ëmwelt Fondation Hëllef fir d'Natur, Luxembourg
LIFE ORCHIS Restoration of calcareous grassland in eastern Luxembourg
Presented by: Dipl. Ing. Georges Moes

natur&ëmwelt Fondation Hëllef fir d'Natur, Luxembourg
The hard LIFE of our freshwater molluscs, Luxembourg
Presented by: Dr Frankie Thielen

Eurosite, the Netherlands
Eurosite Twinning, a tool to share knowledge on the management of Natura 2000 sites
Presented by: Dr Jaume Tormo

University of Warsaw, Faculty of Biology, Poland
Applying resilience thinking to fen conservation and restoration: can we predict long-term effects of current strategies? Poland
Presented by: Dr Wiktor Kotowski

ADEPT Biodiversity conservation and community development in Transylvania (Natura 2000 Award winner 2014), Romania

Environmental restoration and support of natural processes in the forests and eutrophic marshes from Prejmer and Harman, Romania

DAPHNE -Institute of Applied Ecology, Slovakia
Restoration and management of non-forest habitats in Slovakia
Presented by: Dr Viera Šefferová Stanová

Hydrology and River Morphology Department, Slovakia
Floodplain and wetland restoration along the Danube and the Morava Rivers, Slovakia
Presented by: Ing. Katarina Holubova, PhD

CEEweb for Biodiversity, Slovakia
Restoration and management of the Danube River floodplains and grassland habitats in Slovakia
Presented by: Dr Lubomira Vavrova

County Administrative Board of Skåne, Sweden
Sand Life -restoration of sandy habitats in southern Sweden
Presented by: Dr Maria Sandell