Natura 2000 Biogeographical Process

# Natura 2000 seminar for the Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea regions

**Strasbourg, 16 – 18 October 2018**

# INPUT DOCUMENT

2nd Natura 2000 seminar for the Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea (CPSBS) regions
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**Event**: For more information on this seminar, see the Natura 2000 Communication Platform: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/platform/events/continental_pannonian_steppic_and_black_sea_regions_seminar_en.htm

Relevant documents can be found here:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/platform/knowledge_base/141_continental_region_en.htm

# Contents

## 1. Introduction to the Natura 2000 biogeographical process and the Natura 2000 seminars

The Natura 2000 biogeographical process has been launched in 2011 by the European Commission. The objective of the process is to promote knowledge exchange, networking and cooperation on Natura 2000 related issues at biogeographical region level. The process is fuelled by so-called Natura 2000 seminars, by a Networking Programme consisting of the organisation of workshops, events or meetings relevant to the objective of the process as well as by other related actions.

Assuming that Member States in a given region are facing similar challenges in the management of Natura 2000 sites, habitats and species, the Natura 2000 seminars intend to stimulate transnational exchanges and promote a coherent management of Natura 2000 at biogeographical region level.

As the responsibility for implementing Natura 2000 lies with the Member States, the seminars create an opportunity for these key actors to exchange of information at biogeographical level. In addition, they also stimulate discussions with and involvement of other key stakeholders and expert networks, including NGOs.

The strategic orientation of the process is evolving over time. Recently, a Fitness Check evaluation of the EU Nature Directives demonstrated that the effectiveness of the Directives has been constrained by a lack and an insufficient focus of the funding, by limited stakeholder awareness and cooperation, as well as by knowledge gaps. The evaluation also highlighted the need to put in place more effective conservation systems, with a view to achieving the Directives' objectives, having full regard to the socio-economic context in which the Directives operate.

On that basis, the Commission proposed to refocus the Natura 2000 Process. The refocussed process should promote in particular the best practices in conservation management, seizing funding opportunities and stakeholder involvement. It should also deliver strengthened cooperation and exchange of experience on common challenges, including those related to the specific socio-economic context and to cross-border issues, identify key priorities for common actions, and agree on a biogeographical-level roadmap for these actions.

The Natura 2000 seminars provide the main orientations and contents of these roadmaps, which also contain the elements of the Networking Programme and are to be understood as dynamic work plans that are continuously updated and can integrate new actions and projects relating to the objective of the Biogeographical process.

As part of the overall Biogeographical process, the Natura 2000 Platform was established as a horizontal online tool that supports the process in all regions and disseminates information, to all stakeholders involved.

## 2. A Natura 2000 seminar covering four biogeographical regions

The current Natura 2000 seminar involves four distinct biogeographical regions (Continental Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea biogeographical regions – called "CPSBS regions" hereafter), covering 16 Member States in one third of the European Union land territory.

Whereas the Continental biogeographic region covers 13 different Member States, the Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea regions only cover one or few Member States each, and each of these regions only covers a small share of the EU area (Table 1).

Given these circumstances, it was decided to cover the four biogeographic regions together in one single seminar setting.

*Table 1: Countries and area of the 4 biogeographical regions*

| Biogeographical region | Countries | Area (% of EU-territory) |
|---|---|---|
| **Continental** | Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Slovenia | 29.3 |
| **Pannonian** | Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia | 3.0 |
| **Steppic** | Romania | 0.9 |
| **Black Sea** | Bulgaria, Romania | 0.3 |

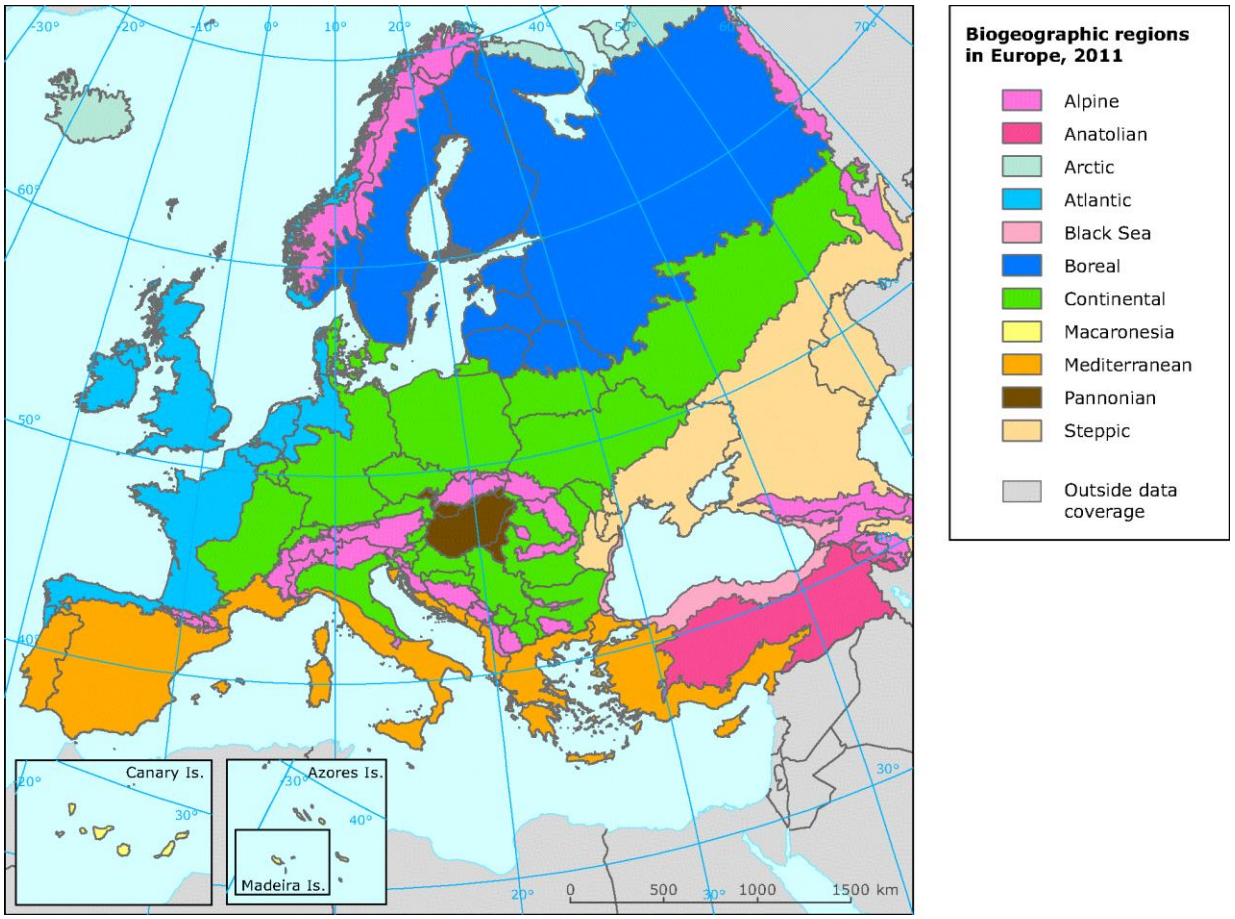


*Figure 1: Biogeographical regions in Europe (source: EEA)*

## 3. The biogeographical process in the CPSBS regions

The Kick-off seminar for the Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea regions took place in Luxembourg from 29th June to 1st July 2015, hosted by the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg, in close cooperation with the European Commission. The Seminar was attended by 115 delegates from all EU Member States in the CPSBS regions. The seminar was preceded by preparatory workshops for these regions, including a LIFE platform meeting.

The Kick-off Seminar was organised in four Habitat Working Groups: Coastal habitats; Wetlands, Rivers & Lakes; Grasslands, Heaths & Scrubs; and Woodland and Forests. Each of the working groups reviewed introductory case study presentations, identified the common issues, pressures and threats to the habitat group, discussed each pressure and threat separately and proposed management requirements and solutions. Each group has identified opportunities for cooperative action, recommendations and commitments to address the conservation of the main Habitats Directive Annex I habitats of the Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea biogeographical regions.

Based on these results, the follow-up actions addressing the need for knowledge exchange on the key issues for the Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea biogeographical regions have now been compiled into a roadmap which is provided in **Annex 1** of the present document.

In addition to this roadmap, the follow-up and networking events organized after the Kick-off Seminar and relevant for the Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea regions are listed in **Annex 2**.

## 4. The four themes selected for the second Natura 2000 seminar for the CPSBS regions

The second Natura 2000 seminar is focusing on four major themes, which have been explored through a pre-seminar expert consultation. Each of these four themes is of common interest for the Member States, offering opportunities for further exchanges and strengthening of trans-national cooperation around Natura 2000.

The following 3 themes have been identified during a preparatory meeting of the Steering Committee for the CPSBS seminar, which took place on 28th of February 2018:

- Improving coherence between (a) site-level conservation objectives and (b) biogeographical level conservation targets and priorities
- Dealing with problems arising from differences between Member States in defining certain habitat types
- Integrated management / Implementation problems related to management

Following an additional round of consultation with DG. ENV, a fourth theme was developed:

- Selecting biogeographical level conservation priorities and measures.

This theme has been added to respond to the need identified in the Nature Fitness check to improve the focus of the available EU funding on priority conservation measures.

Each of these 4 themes is described in further detail hereafter. These elements are the starting point of the group discussions, which especially aim to renew the roadmap with concrete follow-up events and actions to be implemented in the months and years after the seminar.The resulting dynamic roadmap will be included in the seminar report.

# 5. Background information and issues for consideration in relation to the four selected themes

## 5.1. Theme 1: Linking site-level objectives, regional/national-level objectives and favourable reference values

### *5.1.1. Context*

The Habitats Directive requires setting conservation objectives at the site level for the species and/or habitat types for which a site has been designated, in order to contribute to maintaining or reaching favourable conservation status at the national, the biogeographical or the European level.

Where a Member State has decided to set conservation objectives at the higher geographical level, the targets for achieving favourable conservation status could be defined at national, regional or biogeographical levels within the Member State or at an even broader level (biogeographical or EU). (*Commission note on the setting conservation objectives for Natura 2000 sites, 2012*). By assessing the contribution of Natura 2000 sites to the national Conservation Status, the relation with Art 17 reporting becomes clearer. The possibility to set conservation objectives at the higher geographical level should not be confused with the setting of conservation or restoration priorities as part of the PAF- process. This theme discusses the approach for setting objectives at different levels. Figure 2 provides a hypothetical example of a species that occurs in two Member States and for which both Member States have set conservation objectives.

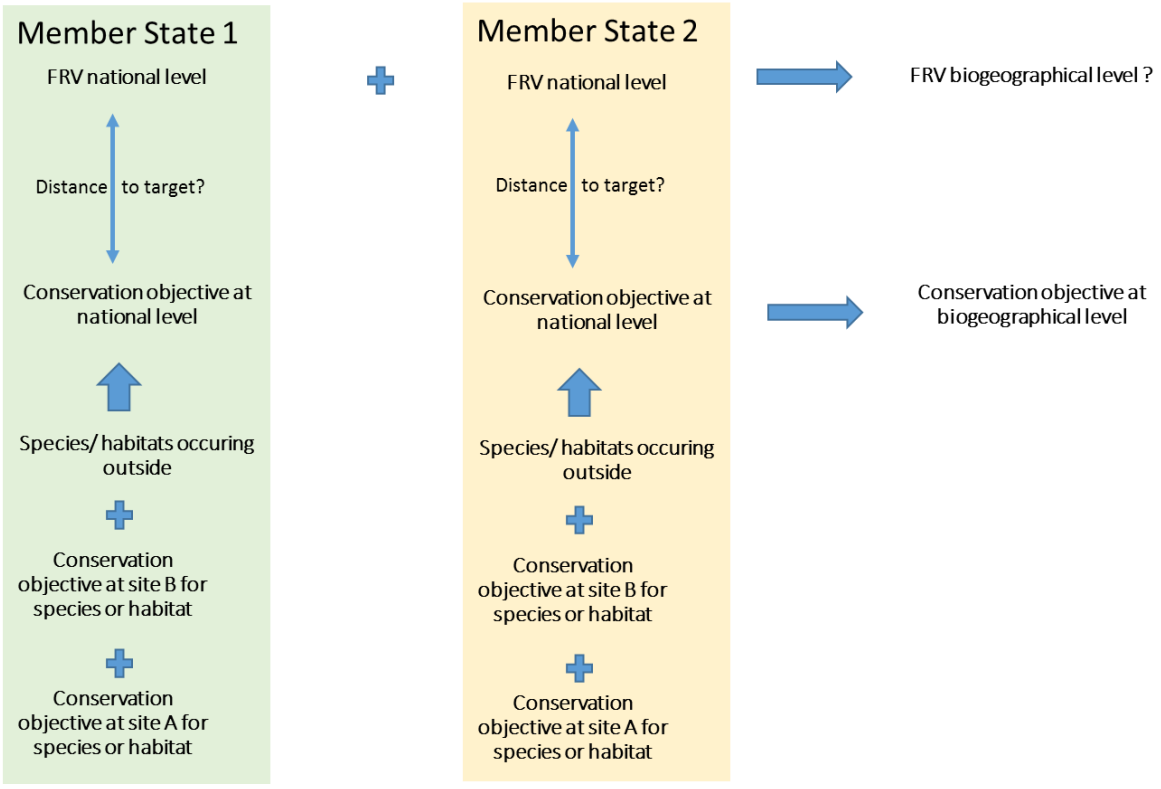


*Figure 2: Setting Conservation Objectives andFfavourable Reference Values at regional and national levels*

The Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea biogeographical regions involve a large number of Member States (16 in total) and cover approximately 30% of the EU. There are at present significant differences in terms of progress of these Member States for setting conservation objectives. Some Member States have completed the process of setting site objectives and are considering whether to also introduce national or regional objectives. Others are only beginning to develop conservation objectives for their sites. In many instances, the conservation objectives at site or national level are defined in terms of improvement of the status of existing habitats (which practically often means improvement of its structure and functions), whereas genuine increases of habitat areas or distribution ranges are considered less frequently. For those species for which it is difficult or impossible to provide reliable population size data (notably invertebrates) conservation objectives may only be expressed in terms of habitat quality and availability, and not in terms of population numbers to be reached. For these species FRVs are often expressed as number of localities or equivalent objectives to be reached. Even if Member States have set higher level conservation objectives, the relationship between these objectives and the Favourable Reference Values (FRVs) is not always straightforward.

In addition, defining the conservation objectives and FRVs for some habitat types and species is challenging, particularly when a country only covers margins of the distribution range of a habitat or species. This "bordering" effect, together with potential impacts on- and evolutions in the populations in neighbouring countries, may require further discussions on the conservation objectives and FRVs to be developed between Member States.

#### *5.1.2. Objectives of the thematic session*

- Review the different approaches followed by the Member States to develop regional/ national conservation objectives or conservation objectives at the biogeographical level within the MS;
- Identify the best practices and effective approaches for establishing the link between site-level objectives and the regional/national-level objectives, including relationships between these objectives and the Favourable Reference Values (FRVs);
- Identify cooperative actions between Member States for the habitats and species which require conservation efforts at the biogeographical level.

#### *5.1.3. Common issues, challenges and examples for national approaches*

Some respondents in the pre-seminar expert consultations state that the process of Prioritised Action Framework (PAF) elaboration (presently PAF 2014-2020) not only involves setting national conservation priorities but also setting national conservation objectives. The practices and approaches related to the PAF, and the prioritization of conservation measures and funding, are discussed in Theme 4.

Currently, there is no information about Member States in the Continental region that have set up a mechanism to develop regional conservation objectives based on a systematic review of site level objectives and habitat/ population estimates outside of the network.

In France, the conservation objectives are established at site level and described in one document, the site management plan (DOCOB), which is discussed by the site steering committee and approved by the national authority (at regional level). In the coming years a compilation of these conservation objectives will be uploaded in the new management database "Système d'information natura 2000 (SIN2)". This will provide insights in the combined conservation objectives set for the Natura 2000 sites.

In 2017 the Bulgarian MOEW has developed a Natura 2000 network management approach, which establishes four levels of conservation objectives: (i) national biogeographical level; (ii) Natura 2000 network level, (iii) site level and (iv) local level within the site (specific territories, e.g. species localities).

The other countries report that the conservation objectives are being defined on site-level, having in mind the threat status of species at the national level and the conservation status at national biogeographical level, as reported according to Art. 17 of HD/ Art. 12 of Bird Directive.

According to most of the interviewed experts in the Continental/Pannonian/Steppic/Black sea region, the FRVs, where defined, are so far used only for their primary purpose, related to the Art. 17 reporting and there is no direct link to the conservation objectives for the network or at site level. France has reported on ongoing development of a methodological guide to help the managers to assess the conservation status of habitats, which considers the FRVs.

#### *5.1.4. Opportunities for cooperative work and follow-up*

Questions that could be addressed in the working group session:

- What knowledge can we derive from the different approaches that Member States follow to develop regional, national or broader level conservation objectives within their territory? What additional cooperative projects on this subject can we identify as needed? Although not required by the Directive, several Member States have developed regional or national conservation objectives or national biogeographical objectives/ targets to assess the contribution of individual sites. Particularly interesting is how to deal with species and habitats which are not 100 % covered by the network.
- Is there a need for setting conservation objectives at a broader geographical level? What steps should be taken to establish links between site, regional, national and biogeographical level targets? Which cooperative action could help achieve this? These questions could be discussed bearing in mind that for some species and habitats it is more meaningful to determine FRVs at biogeographical level. This is particularly the case at the edge of the distribution range of a given species or habitat, or if species are wide ranging.

The discussion at the Seminar could result in:

- A comparison of existing approaches between the MSs that have already elaborated procedures and practices for setting conservation objectives at different levels.
- The identification of a best approach or practice that can be recommended to MSs that did not yet set conservation objectives at national, regional or site level or that might wish to improve their procedures.
- The identification of "Twinning" initiatives, between MSs with much experience and those that are still in a learning process.
- A recommendation for establishing a concrete process of co-operation between interested MS on how to deal with "rare" species/habitats that occur on the border of their range in the respective Member States. This would include a selection of species and habitats over the MSs for which species have most problems, and good practices and examples could be discussed at the seminar or networking events.

#### *5.1.5. Cases and best practices – additional references*

**Slovenian Natura 2000 Management programme for the period 2014-2020**

The present Slovenian Natura 2000 Management programme was developed in the period 2013-2014 in the frame of the LIFE11 NAT/SI/000880 project. The management programme defines in detail conservation objectives and measures at Natura sites, and also the sectors and operators responsible for the implementation of conservation measures.

General conservation objectives at national level are determined by the Decree on Natura 2000 areas in Slovenia, they apply to Natura sites and are uniform for the entire area. The management programme determines detailed conservation objectives, which generally refer to each species or habitat type at each Natura 2000 site. Detailed conservation objectives are determined on the basis of the Favourable reference values and the assessment of the conservation status.

Furthermore, the Programme facilitates horizontal connections of Natura 2000 with strategic plans and development programmes. In addition, the management programme determines priority projects taking into account the economic, social, cultural and demographic characteristics, and sustainable development principles.

For more information: http://www.natura2000.si/en/life-management/results/

## 5.2. Theme 2: Identifying and solving issues in relation to habitat type definitions

### *5.2.1. Context*

When the Habitats Directive was adopted in 1992, annex I listed 170 habitat types, and following the enlargement of the EU to 27 member states this has increased to 231 habitat types (Evans, 2010). The first lists of habitats was based on the CORINE biotope classification. Later the Interpretation Manual was produced by the EC in association with experts from the member states, and it has been updated since (EC, 2013). The habitat types definition in the Interpretation Manual is based on both the CORINE biotope and Palearctic classification.

The descriptions of the habitat types in the EU Interpretation Manual are mostly very short, only available in English and have to cover often a wide range of variations. This led Member States to producing their own handbooks (Evans, 2010). In most countries, the national handbooks or guidance documents use a phytosociological framework, which can help compare the interpretations by the different MSs. However, a proper comparison of the definition and interpretation of habitat types between EU member states is often complicated because of the absence of an easily accessible database with all national/regional definitions/interpretations and of translations.

The problems the MSs encounter regarding the definition of habitat types have been partly addressed by Evans (2006), but there are some remaining issues, such as habitat types that occur in a different biogeographical region (lacking on the present list), overlapping habitat types (partly due to scale differences) and habitat types that do not really fit to the ones on the list. This has consequences for the mapping and monitoring of habitat types (e.g. by field detection) as well.

The Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea biogeographical regions together cover over a quarter of the European Union. They contain a variety of habitat types, that are interpreted differently by the 16 Member States concerned. Language issues currently hamper a comparison between those different interpretations of habitat types, which is required for a proper aggregation of data and information on habitat types from national level (e.g. the article 17 reports) to biogeographical level. It is also essential to exchange knowledge and experiences at the biogeographical level on e.g. the evaluation of effects of conservation measures or to define favorable reference values.

### *5.2.2. Common issues, challenges and approaches*

Habitat interpretation is an issue which has been raised in every seminar of the Biogeographical process. The differences in definitions/interpretations result in the risk of some habitat types not being included in the conservation targets of some Natura 2000 sites and respectively not to be managed properly.

The broad/flexible interpretation of habitat definitions may result in insufficient conservation of some habitat types with limited range and area. Merging with more widespread habitat types has an influence on the evaluation of conservation status of the habitat types as well as on the Art. 17 reporting. Even at national level the experts not always reach consensus on the interpretation.

At the same time, several of the experts recognize the significant risks associated with potential revision of habitat definitions, which may result in re-shaping site boundaries with all the conservation and socio-economic consequences.

At bilateral level, some MSs have initiated consultations to coordinate the conservation measures for the habitat types, for which different national interpretations are observed. This approach is related mainly to site management and does not require revision/unification of the habitat type interpretations.

#### *5.2.3. Regional differences in habitat interpretation, geographical variability*

The pre-seminar expert consultations have identified the following habitat-specific issues:

- Problems with the definition of habitat type 6230* Species-rich *Nardus* grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas, in Continental Europe), as reported by France. The problem is more visible at the Eastern part of the border with Spain for the Alpine region. In Spain the habitat is considered not to be present due to the absence of *Nardus*, while in France the experts base the assessment on the whole association and define presence of the habitat. This question might occur also in the continental region.
- 9130 *Asperulo-Fagetum* beech forests in France: *Fagus sylvatica* or *Fagus-Quercus* forest types sometimes appear as *Quercus* stands due to forest management. Probably it could be solved by defining a minimum threshold of *Fagus* trees to consider that the habitat occurs.
- Another issue has been reported in regard of 91H0: ongoing discussions about its occurrence in South-Eastern France, in the MED biogeographical region, close to the Italian border. It corresponds to the *Orno-Quercetum pubescens* which corresponds partly to one of the Palearctic codes indicated by EUR 28 for this habitat: 41.7374. The description and species listed in EUR 28 are also suitable for the French stands of the *Orno-Quercetum*, but another Palearctic code suits beter: 41.731 Northern Italic *Quercus pubescens* forest, this code is devoid of phytosociological correspondences. It is not clear to what extent the biogeographical indication (“Pannonic”) in the title limits (or not) the definition of the habitat, as France is far from the Pannonian region; There is a difference with other countries: this type of forest occurs in France in the Mediterranean biogeographical region close to Italy, the same type of forest is coded in Italy under 91AA (*Eastern white oak woods) which is considered not present in France. In Italy, other types of forest are coded under 91H0, they occur in the north-Eastern part of the country.

- Unclear biogeographical range of the habitat 9260 and terminological issues are reported in France: it is not clear whether the habitat is strictly limited (or not) to the Mediterranean biogeographical region. In France, it was previously indicated in other regions, but these occurrences were deleted in the Standard Data Forms, whereas it has been considered present in neighbouring countries in other biogeographical regions: for example, Atlantic in Spain and Continental in Italy. There is a problem to define the word "sub-Mediterranean" in the description of the habitat given by EUR 28.
- The identification of the habitat 9410 is partly based on the dominance of a species (*Picea abies* or *P. orientalis*). Under the same ecological conditions also occurs *Abies alba* dominated forests, with some *Picea abies* trees. It is not clear whether they can be coded under 9410 as it is the case in France (Vosges, Jura, Southern Alps) and in some German Länder. If not, how can we define a minimum threshold of *Picea abies* trees with an ecological significance? If yes, can we also code under this habitat *Abies alba* forests which occur in the same ecological conditions (same phytosociological alliance) but are naturally devoid of *Picea*? (in the natural range of *Picea abies*, as in the Vosges and the Jura, or out, as in the Massif central)
- The gallery woodlands along the rivers that run from Western Romania into Hungary are categorised as 92A0 in Romania, but 91E0 in Hungary. However, this is not known to cause major problems in implementation (Reported by HU).
- The Czech Republic has reported methodological difficulties in the definition of lichen-rich pine forests (91T0), where the actual ratio of lichen coverage is the crucial issue in definition of this habitat type among MSs.
- A problem with identification of habitat 3130 ("Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the *Littorelletea uniflorae* and/or of the *Isoeto-Nanojuncetea*") was reported by Bulgaria because of scientific disagreements between different categories of scientists. Another habitat type causing debates at national level is 1140, for which an interpretation was used by the expert preparing the Art. 17 report which differed from the one used by the experts preparing the report under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.
- Uncertainties about the definitions of habitat types 3220, 3240, 3260 and 3270 are reported by Germany. Uncertainty in which degree habitat type 5130 should be covered by Juniperus communis and whether the low density/coverage could be sign of degradation.

#### *5.2.4. Opportunities for cooperative work and follow-up*

The discussion at the Seminar should be focused on the formulation of common solutions and coordination actions rather than on solving and/or clarifying habitat classes, considering the expected audience, composed more of policy makers, managers and practitioners, responsible for the Natura 2000 network.

Nevertheless, a number of concrete cooperative actions could be identified at different levels to improve coherence and comparability between the definitions and/or interpretations of habitat types used in the biogeographical regions concerned. Some possible solutions have already been identified during the Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea Region Steering Committee meeting on 28th February 2018 and the pre-seminar consultation process:

- The identification of those definitions and/or interpretations of habitat types in the Member States (and/or regional authorities) in the biogeographical regions concerned that are most problematic and of need to be addressed through cooperative action;
- The establishment of a database of national handbooks / guidelines on habitat definitions and interpretations;
- Making available and accessible relevant national or regional key documents in common language (e.g. English) by the respective Member States or authorities;
- Improving the interpretation of some definitions, taking into account for instance that some habitats ranging over a large part of the EU may have very different appearances in different parts of the Union

#### *5.2.5. Cases and best practices – additional references*

***Updating interpretations of habitats of Community interest in France***

At the end of 2014, a working group was set up, under the supervision of the Ministry of Ecological and Solidarity Transition (MTES), to clarify and update interpretations of terrestrial habitats of Community interest for France. Coordinated by the UMS Natural Heritage, it brings together experts involved in writing the Cahiers d'Habitats (Habitats interpretation guide, Bensettiti et al., 2001-2005) and experts from the National Botanical Conservatories (CBN). A hundred habitats have to bebeen reviewed.

The results and conclusions from this work conclusions are the establishment of methodological principles and an update of the interpretations of the Cahiers d'Habitats, and they refer to the national level. The revisions are published in the form of a synthesis document, the first version of which deals with 35 habitats of Community interest, mainly coastal and freshwater habitats (Gaudillat *et al.*, 2018[1]). This work will be used as a basis for the updating of the generic sheets of the Cahiers d'Habitats which starts in 2018.

[1] http://spn.mnhn.fr/spn_rapports/archivage_rapports/2018/SPN%202017%20-%20104%20-%20Bilan_synthetique_interpretations_HIC_mars_2018.pdf

## 5.3. Theme 3: Better involving local land managers through integrated site management

### *5.3.1. Context*

The management of Natura 2000 is a complex issue. It involves various groups of stakeholders, with different interests, socio-economic needs and uneven understanding how to integrate the nature conservation in their daily land-use practices.

Some of the common factors which play a role in achieving integrated management are:

- the views and concerns of private owners with regard to site management;
- the (pro-active) involvement of private owners in the development of management plans;
- the availability of and access to public funding schemes and other incentives.

At the same time, there are significant differences across EU Member States in the economic situation of the forestry and agricultural sector, as well as different traditions in land use and management. This results in different Natura 2000 site management practices in the Member States and difficulty to identify common “best practices”.

The LIFE programme provides a very important contribution with regard to integrated site management, various LIFE projects work with different sectors (agriculture, forestry), they have a focus on outreach, communication with stakeholders and communities. Experiences from LIFE are therefore very valuable and should be shared wider, for learning purposes and exchange.

Recent studies carried out for the European Commission as well as exchanges with international partners, have shown that the use of specific advisory tools aimed at promoting private land conservation (e.g. through covenants, conservation easements, private protected areas, fiscal benefits, etc.) has considerable potential to contribute to the overall targets set by EU nature legislation and biodiversity policy. As a large share of the Natura 2000 network is privately owned, an increased involvement of private owners is essential for successful management of the network. The studies carried out clearly show that these tools are so far only used to a limited extent in most Member States, they are very heterogeneous and poorly known.

### *5.3.2. Objectives of the thematic session*

- To identify the best practices for pro-active involvement of private agricultural and forest owners in the development and implementation of integrated management instruments for Natura 2000; build in particular further on LIFE experiences;
- To identify the main barriers preventing pro-active participation and involvement and provide solutions to them;
- To review the approaches of different Member States to ensure that available financing schemes are effectively used by private owners
- To identify cooperative actions to ensure improved stakeholder involvement in management.

### *5.3.3. Common issues, challenges and approaches*

All Member States have identified the advantages of involving the stakeholders in Natura 2000 management and they have developed certain approaches in this respect. The respondents in the expert consultations have identified various **examples of national approaches** to ensure integrated management at different levels:

France has introduced the integrated management approach in the development and implementation of the management plans (DOCOB), which are built, discussed, and approved at site scale by the site "steering committee" named COPIL. The COPIL is constituted by representatives of the State, owners and stakeholders of the site.

In 2018 Luxembourg has started the initiative "Comités de Pilotage Natura 2000" (steering committees for Natura 2000), similar to France, involving the different stakeholders including the land owners and users.

In Czech Republic, the Nature Conservation Agency uses active communication and discussions including e.g. the agency responsible for finances (e.g. Rural Development Programme), providing examples of best practice in sites and also using principles of "common action". The communication between (regional) site managers and land owners and users about proper forms of management is common practice, including providing financial resources for management. Seminars and other information and education events are held.

As new EU Member State, Croatia has been working for more than a decade on integrated management of Natura 2000 based on a participatory planning approach, used in national Protected Areas. Public Institutions that manage Protected Areas and Natura 2000 sites in Croatia have been involving the local community in management, mostly through workshops that allow them to participate in the planning of joint activities and later monitoring their efficiency.

In Hungary, local stakeholders are involved in the process of elaboration of (non-binding) Natura 2000 site management plans. National park directorates (NPDs) lease out some of the land in state ownership and managed by the NPDs to farmers and identify the necessary measures in the contracts. Compulsory management restrictions (minimum level) are laid down in legislation for Natura 2000 grassland and for Natura 2000 forests. These restrictions are coupled with a compensation scheme. Voluntary management restrictions (higher level) are available in HNVF sites, which significantly overlap with the Natura 2000 network.

In Bulgaria the Guidelines on Mainstreaming Environmental Policy and Climate Change Policy into European Structural and Investment Funds is an example of a policy, at national level, which provides the horizontal integration of environmental requirements, including Natura 2000 into the other sectors.

During the pre-seminar expert consultations, the following **barriers** to the pro-active participation and involvement of land owners and users in Natura 2000 site management have been identified:

- Conservation is generally understood as a limitation for land users;
- The relation to the land, stewardship or connectedness, differs in countries: in some (mainly in Central and Eastern Europe), the land is mostly leased, managed for profit which differs e.g. from old cultural landscapes where farmers have a long tradition in use;
- Insufficient stakeholders' involvement in the site designation has resulted in distrust that needs to be restored over time;
- Insufficient capacity of the national Natura 2000 competent authorities and lack of nature conservation expertise of agricultural consultants/advisors and authorities supervising subsidies;
- Ineffective communication, including a focus on the restrictions or use of scientific/ technical language, which is not appreciated by the general audience;
- Landowners and users lack relevant information on the possibilities of funding activities that could help Natura 2000 site management as well as their own land use.

With regard to the **best practices**, all respondents in expert consultations have mentioned that the land owners and users should be involved in development and implementation of management plans from the early stages. The form of this involvement may vary between the Member states, from thematic focus groups to formalized site management committees.

Some experts mention also that the stakeholders should participate in the process of decision making at site level in order to mitigate conflicts and ensure ownership of conservation and maintenance measures.

Communication should be focused on more practical solutions and examples of existing good practices and business models, presenting Natura 2000 as an opportunity rather than focussing on restrictions or common statements without practical meaning to the people.

#### *5.3.4. Opportunities for cooperative work and follow-up*

The discussion at the Seminar could result in the identification of proposals for concrete cooperative action to be included in the roadmap. Such action could include for example the organisation of multi-stakeholder workshop(s) to discuss and agree on recommendations for integrated management of Natura 2000 sites, bi- or multilateral site visits with discussion of concrete positive and negative examples of stakeholder involvement or conflicts and their eventual solutions, the development of communication instruments or events promoting the integrated management of Natura 2000 sites and pro-active stakeholder involvement.

A possible concrete follow-up from the seminar could be achieved in the form of more active cooperation between the Member States in making all relevant national and regional handbooks and guidance reports on integrated Natura 2000 management and pro-active stakeholder involvement

available on the Natura 2000 Communication Platform, as well as examples of best practice from the different MS.

#### *5.3.5. Cases and best practices – additional references*

**LandLIFE Project LIFE10 INF/ES/000540**

LandLife aims to communicate the value of land stewardship as an effective and successful tool for nature and biodiversity conservation. Geographical scope is primarily the Western Mediterranean Arch, but the aim of the project is to go beyond that and reach out to wider Europe. (https://www.landstewardship.eu/)

**Land is forever Project (Preparatory LIFE project)**

Land is forever aims to improve private landowners' knowledge and use of innovative tools aimed at promoting private land conservation (e.g. through safe harbour agreements, covenants, conservation easements, private protected areas, fiscal benefits, land swaps, etc.) as well as to the development and expansion of these tools in the EU. http://www.europeanlandowners.org/projects/land-is-for-ever.

For additional information on Best practices as provided during the expert consultation please consult Annex 3.

### 5.4. Theme 4: Selecting biogeographical level conservation priorities and measures

#### *5.4.1. Context*

For certain species and habitat types there is a higher urgency to improve/restore their conservation status. While relevant information is available (EU, national and regional Red Lists, Article 17 data, Article 12 data for bird species, etc.), there is currently no agreed approach for identifying priorities and associated measures at EU or biogeographical region level, nor is there any clear mechanism for agreeing on such priorities, nor is there any process to follow-up on their implementation.

In the frame of the first Natura 2000 seminars (2013-2017), biogeographical region level priorities had already been identified for habitat types in the Continental/ Pannonian/ Steppic/ Black Sea, on the basis of a limited number of criteria. This exercise, which had initially lead to the identification of a high number of habitat types for priority consideration (largely based on their unfavourable conservation status), could be further refined to a new list of habitats that are in most urgent need for improvement/restoration. Furthermore, there is an opportunity and a need to extend this prioritisation exercise to species, including bird species.

In the frame of the 6-yearly update of the reporting on status and trends of species and habitats, Member States will soon (2019) provide updates on the state of nature. Together with other relevant

data sources, this up-to-date information could be used for establishing, ahead of the next MFF, a list of biogeographical region-level priorities for actions to be implemented during the period 2021-2027.

Whereas such a prioritization exercise would obviously need to make use of the available data on the status and trends of habitats and species as described above, other criteria (whether scientific, ecological, social or economic) may also deserve consideration in this exercise.

The discussions on prioritization approaches during the first seminars has not been followed-up enough by concrete and specific actions. Accordingly, no incentives have been generated which would have allowed Member States to focus on these priorities when implementing the EU Nature Directives. In the frame of the upcoming second round of seminars, there is an opportunity to bridge this gap.

#### *5.4.2. Objectives of the thematic session*

- To discuss possible approaches for selecting biogeographical level priority measures for habitats and species in most urgent need of action, based on the relevant information available at EU, national or regional levels.
- To present and discuss national/regional approaches for the prioritization of conservation actions and how these could be used for biogeographical level prioritization.
- To identify (and possibly agree) on priorities to be followed up in the near future and/or a roadmap towards selecting biogeographical level priorities for the next MFF period

#### *5.4.3. Common issues, challenges and approaches*

During the consultation some general remarks were made. Several experts indicated that they considered prioritization mechanisms as helpful but stressed that they should be non-binding. Also the existing confusion between Member States on habitat definitions might impede this process (see theme 1). In addition, respondents in the pre-seminar expert consultations state that the Prioritised Action Framework (PAF) (presently PAF 2014-2020) lays down national funding priorities based on a standardised method or rationale. Often this is done in a joint process to ensure that all available information is considered.

The existing mechanisms might make the reaching a biogeographical agreement more complex.

To facilitate the discussion on a mechanism or criteria for deciding on biogeographical level conservation priorities and the relevance of such a mechanism or criteria for Member States, some considerations are described below as well as examples of Member States that are already considering some of these during the development of their PAFs:

- New data from the Article 17 reporting have come in and will come in the next period of the Multi Annual Framework. These data provide the latest known information on the conservation status at national and biogeographical level. More importantly, since the last reporting period the data also show uniformly the recent reported trend at national level of a species or habitat (e.g. in the report this is indicated by indicating +, - or = for each

Conservation Assessment). This allows further focus on those habitats and species with an unfavourable conservation status **and** declining trend. Based on the latest Article 17 reporting a review was made of the previously prioritised habitats.[2] For habitat 91E0 (Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior*) this has considerable consequences; it ranked 2nd using 2013 data while it ranked 14th with 2007 data.

- New Red List data are available at EU level or expected in the coming years. In 2016 the Red List of habitats was published. The Red List status at EU28 level might be considered as well in the process of prioritising habitats and species, as each habitat type provides a link to the relevant Annex I habitat. For species the European Red List for birds was published in 2015. Although this information has been fed into the State of the Art- reports assessment on Birds it could be considered as well.
- Change of success/ knowledge of restoration – some experts in the pre-consultation indicate that measures needed to improve the status need to be known, feasible and successful. Member States and experts have knowledge with the success of restoring particular habitats or species and take this into account in their prioritisation. For instance, Hungary already considered this issue in the PAF (2014-2020). The Red List of habitats at EU28 level for instance also indicates the time required for restoring habitats (with or without intervention).
- Costs associated with restoration of specific habitats or species is considered in some Member States. In Poland this issue is considered whilst drafting the PAF for the coming period.
- In the pre-consultation it was also indicated that migrating or transboundary species (e.g. bats, birds, large carnivores, fish) as well as 'transboundary' habitats and associated species (e.g. habitats that are located along river systems and associated species such as pearl mussel, beaver and otter ) or rare species present in a few member states might be prioritised at the biogeographical level as they would depend on joint action for a better conservation status. Many current LIFE projects were mentioned to illustrate this (see paragraph 4.1).
- Additional socio-economic benefits of restoration of specific habitats. Bulgarian experts indicate that the process of priority setting addresses the specific conservation needs related to the conservation status of species and habitats, the pressures and the threats as well as the need for better management of Natura 2000 protected sites. But the process also integrates the socio- economic benefits and the sustainable development, setting strategic priorities to support biodiversity conservation besides the pure conservation priorities described in parts F1 and F2 in the PAF.

[2] The ranking methodology is based on three criteria, i.e.: A. Number of MS where species/habitat types are present. B. Species and habitat types at unfavourable conservation status. C. Trend information (declining trend).

#### *5.4.4. Opportunities for cooperative work and follow-up*

Possible follow-up mechanisms (for discussion):

- Member States are currently working on an update of their PAFs ("Prioritized Action Frameworks"). In the frame of this technical and financial planning exercise, which covers the period of the next Multi-annual financial framework (2021-2027), it is expected that priorities are established for improving the status of certain species and habitats. Any agreed mechanism to establish biogeographical region level conservation priorities could therefore also be considered in this context.
- The next LIFE programme (2021-2027) could also take account of transnational or biogeographical region level priorities, for example through a preferential EU-co-funding rate or through a higher ranking of projects that would fit with an agreed list of priorities.
- For any identified conservation priorities that would require transboundary or transnational implementation approaches, follow-up events could be organised, bringing together the relevant actors for preparing transnational project applications or action plans.

What is new here?

- The approach proposed here would have a clear focus on species and habitats in need of urgent measures for restoration/improvement (as opposed to maintenance measures, which are covered by legal requirements of Art 6.2 of the Habitats Directive and can therefore not be the focus of a voluntary mechanism)
- The prioritization would lead to a limited number of priorities "in most urgent need of action".
- The approach would not only focus on habitats, but also on species (including bird species)
- Initially the focus is on conservation priorities (i.e. species or habitat types), rather than on specific measures.
- The approach differs from the low-hanging fruits approach insofar the focus will be on species and habitats in the worst situation, requiring most urgent actions.
- The approach proposed here offers an opportunity for highlighting the importance of the PAFs. It would therefore benefit from a close involvement of stakeholders involved in compiling the PAFs.

#### *5.4.5. Cases and best practices*

Member States mainly suggested LIFE- projects as examples of transboundary co-operation at the Biogeographical level (see Annex 1). Two Members provided further information on the criteria used for the development of the PAF.

In Hungary, the PAF is elaborated by the ministry responsible for nature conservation, in collaboration with the national park directorates (the regional state nature conservation organisations). This approach was chosen to feed site level information into the national level process. Site level information is obtained from the national park directorates, who manage the Natura 2000 sites on the ground, combined with the information from SDFs.

For additional information on Best practices as provided during the expert consultation please consult Annex 3.

## 6. Additional information, partly derived from expert consultation

### 6.1. Habitats selected for priority consideration in the first seminar

One of the ambitions of the Natura 2000 Biogeographical Process is to reach consensus on species and habitats that require priority consideration for conservation at biogeographical region level. This are the habitats and species in a particularly bad conservation status and/or that require multi-national efforts to ensure their recovery.

In the frame of the first Natura 2000 seminar for the CPSBS regions in 2015, 59 habitats in unfavourable conservation were identified for priority consideration, including: 18 grasslands, 7 mires & bogs, 14 forests, 4 heathlands & scrubs, 9 coastal, 6 freshwater and 1 rocky habitat.

This list resulted from a combination of a ranking of habitat-types (prepared by the European Topic Centre for Biological Diversity) based on main outcomes from the 2001 – 2006 Art 17 reporting round, and on an additional selection made by the CPSBS regions Steering Committee. The rationale of this selection has been described in a pre-scoping document, prepared in December 2014.

As a preparation for the 2nd Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea Seminar, the ETC-BD has developed the document **Supporting elements for the second Natura 2000 seminar for Continental, Pannonian, Black Sea and Steppic regions**[3]. The document gathers a number of elements/ analyses, including the assessment of the 59 previously selected habitat-types. The new reporting information that will result from the 2013-2018 reporting, might lead to new insights on which species and habitats require priority consideration for conservation at the biogeographical level. The document also includes –a so-called list of "Low Hanging Fruits" (LHF) for these regions, that has been established following the methodology that has been discussed in different fora.

Besides the habitats selected for priority consideration, the biogeographical process also takes into consideration the issues related to **species**, particularly those, which require coordinated actions between Member States at biogeographical level.

### 6.2. Identified species and habitats that require coordinated action at biogeographical level

During the pre-seminar consultation process, the following **species**/groups of species have been identified as requiring coordinated action at biogeographical level:

- Most of the migratory bird species;
- Bird species requiring in situ conservation measures e.g. Hazel grouse (*Tetrastes bonasia bonasia*);

3 http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/platform/documents/supporting_elements_for_the_2nd_n2000_seminar_for_the_continental_region.pdf

- Large carnivores e.g. Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*), Grey wolf (*Canis lupus*), Brown bear (*Ursus arctos*). The large carnivores and other mammals require activities that include ensuring habitat connectivity, protection against illegal killing, and monitoring across borders.
- Most of bats species, included in Annex II of HD e.g. *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum; Rhinolophus hipposideros; Barbastella barbastellus; Myotis bechsteinii; Myotis emarginatus; Myotis myotis*;
- Migrating fish species and other aquatic species that require conservation measures at river basin scale, including coordinated management of trans-boundary watercourses; e.g. Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*), European sturgeon (*Huso huso*) or pigo (*Rutilus pigus*). The Pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) is an example for a species that needs change in agricultural practices on the whole watershed;
- Water-dependent mammal species like European beaver and Eurasian otter
- Species with a limited range such as *Onosma tornensis,* that only occurs in a transboundary region between Hungary and Slovakia.

With regard to **habitats**, the experts have identified the following groups of habitats which require special coordinated conservation approaches:

- Riparian habitats that are associated with transboundary rivers (such as 91E0 and 91F0) - threatened by extreme weather events (partly due to climate change) and because they are usually confined to a narrow strip between the river and the dykes, and thus cannot adapt to river morphology changes. They are also threatened by flood prevention measures that often do not consider their conservation value. International cooperation at River basin level could improve their conservation status.
- Rare habitats, which occupy a small area within the given biogeographical region and therefore are sensitive to area decline and degradation, such as coastal dunes and some steppe habitats in Continental and Black Sea regions.

## 7. Useful Literature

Caring together for nature - Manual on land stewardship as a tool to promote social involvement with the natural environment in Europe; Authors: X. Basora, B. Mitchell, C. O'Neill and X. Sabaté (2013)

Commission note on the setting conservation objectives for Natura 2000 sites, EC (2012)

Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea Biogeographical Region - Kick-off Seminar Final Report, EC, ECNC, CEEweb and ILE SAS (2015)

Habitat Conservation Status: Proposed definitions and concepts for assessment at the NATURA 2000 site level; Authors: Maciejewski L. et al. (2016)

Natura 2000 targets document – Summary Setting conservation objectives for the Natura 2000 network in the Netherlands; Author: Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (2006)

Interpreting the habitats of Annex I: past, present and future, Author: D. Evans, (2010)

Supporting elements for the second Natura 2000 seminar for Continental, Pannonian, Black Sea and Steppic regions, M. Aronsson and D. Richard, ETC/BD (2018)

**ANNEXES**

**Annex 1 - CPSBS Biogeographical Roadmap V 0.1 2018**

This version has been compiled on the basis of the results from the first Natura 2000 seminar for the CPSBS regions (2015) and further input from national experts.

The roadmap addresses the conservation of the main Habitats Directive Annex I habitats of the Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea biogeographical region. The issues were previously highlighted in the 1st Natura 2000 Continental biogeographic seminar in 2015.

The roadmap proposes a series of actions which would address the need for knowledge exchange on the key issues already identified for the Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea biogeographical region. For most of these actions the roadmap identifies possible lead bodies and a target timetable. In some cases a lead has been offered, in others a lead has been proposed by the European Commission through the biogeographical process and in others there are suggested lead bodies.

The roadmap acts as an "aide-memoir" to put on record the key issues that have been discussed by practitioners over the last decade and as a stimulus for new activities that could be included in, e.g. LIFE projects, cooperation between research bodies or in funding through Member States conservation bodies.

The roadmap is also a rolling record of activity, listing the development of networks, outputs from events, proposed projects and publications. The roadmap should be updated at milestone intervals such as international conferences. Once the current roadmap is agreed upon in Strasbourg, it is the intention that the experience and results of the Continental roadmap is reported at the 3rd Continental biogeographic seminar in 2018.

| Topic | Action | Description | Timing | Lead | Support | Relevance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Site designation & international cooperation | Designate more transboundary sites | Transboundary management of protected areas leads to knowledge exchange, and active cooperation in site management | ASAP | EC + MSs | | |
| | 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) | ASAP | Bulgaria and Romania | | |

| Topic | Action | Description | Timing | Lead | Support | Relevance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Policy integration Guidance and incentives | To have a guidance on the integration of Water Framework Directive (WFD), Nature Directives and Floods Directive (Nitrates 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) | ASAP | European Commission | all sectors, Member States (national + regional level) with consideration to set up an EU-Working Group | |
| | Translate the guidance into "simple language" for public and other stakeholders | Consultation process with stakeholders and documents in national languages | As soon as the guidance is available | Member States with stakeholders | | |
| | Motivate sectors to integrate Nature Directives (agriculture, energy, forestry, tourism, transport, fisheries) | Incentives given on EU funding schemes<br>1. Multiannual Financial Framework Review 2017 to restructure the funds<br>2. Not to give support for activities with negative impacts on environment (how to set criteria, measures and who will decide on what basis) | Before 2017 | European Commission with European Parliament and the Council | NGOs and other stakeholders to drive the process | |
| | | | | | | |
| 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<br>• Initiation of an (online) platform (or exploration of ways using already existing processes and platforms) to initiate discussions between water and nature sectors<br>• Have knowledge markets/events on more specific issues to share knowledge | 2015<br>2015<br>2016 | NGOs and MSs (Meetings suggested by Poland in 2016 and Hungary - October 6-7)<br>MSs (Visegrad 4, Nature/Water/Marine Directors meeting) and<br>NGOs and MSs (Czech Republic) | | |
| | Explore opportunities to have flexible approach for peatland management and | Hydrological integration to CAP (not only mowing, but also other peatland measures) | ASAP | EC with good examples provided by MSs and stakeholders | | |

| Topic | Action | Description | Timing | Lead | Support | Relevance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | provide recommendations for 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<br>To achieve sustainable and environmental-friendly CAP - provide evidence and form an alliance with stakeholders (small scale farmers, health and youth sectors, tourism) water)<br>European Commission, European Parliament, | Before 2017 | Council and MSs European Commission to collect cases from MSs and other stakeholders | Lobby group (NGOs) and MSs to advocate for greener CAP | |
| Habitat management | 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 | Before having a workshop on the issue | Communication platform and exchange of typologies (in English) | | |
| | Exchange of good practices and management approaches about maintenance of oak-hornbeam forests | Natura 2000 communication platform (bibliography on existing techniques)<br>Workshop | Before Workshop 2016-2017 | Germany | | |
| Ecological connectivity | Restore ecological connectivity in fragmented habitats | Urbanisation and intensification of agriculture in coastal areas has led to fragmentation.<br>The possibilities to restore connectivity for habitats and populations of species should be examined. | The issue is long-term, should be incorporated within national plans and restoration projects. | The issue has formed a key component of the use of LIFE funding | Sharing of experience between Member States and at networking events. | |
| | Further studies on the 'low hanging fruit' habitats | The background documents prepared for the 2nd Continental seminar on low hanging fruits identify | | | | |

| Topic | Action | Description | Timing | Lead | Support | Relevance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | habitats and the need for improvement to make a step change. MS are also identified.4 | | | | |
| Lack of long term monitoring of management; | Appropriate monitoring system of management Establishment of methodologies in relation to precise needs | Methodologies (objectives and details)<br><br>References of time, price<br><br>List of indicators | ASAP | Experts<br><br>Nature conservation authorities and land practitioners<br>Experts | | |
| | Incorporating the monitoring into the adaptive management cycles | Monitoring included in planning<br>Conservation evidence | After building capacity | Nature conservation authorities<br>Experts | | |
| | Building capacity for monitoring | Data repository, financing, human resources | After establishment of the methodologies | Central institution | | |
| Inadequate stakeholder involvement (awareness, knowledge, involvement, attitude)". | Increasing cooperation and mutual understanding between stakeholders thanks to communication;<br>To establish a course on communication skills for nature conservation experts | Training courses (good example from Croatia), use already existing examples | 2016: different places able to share experience | ECNC / ATEN, together with MS | | |
| | To exchange best practices on how to involve stakeholders | EU level conference | 2016 | Consortium in close cooperation with Member States | | |

4 http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/platform/documents/atlantic_seminar/annex_3_supporting_elements_for_2nd_atlantic_natura2000_seminar_core_document_en.pdf

| Topic | Action | Description | Timing | Lead | Support | Relevance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | To share best practices from EU to local level | Stakeholder communication principles and methods | | Umbrella organisations | | |
| IAS and restoration Guidance and best practice | Invasive alien species River restoration | • EU IAS manual on implementation and specific financing<br>• Target setting and improved coordination by MSs and specific focus on IAS on N2000 sites interdisciplinary cooperation with water and agriculture<br>• Provide restoration best practices (e.g. on profit-making restoration) and shift to integrated landscape planning | ASAP | Cooperation EU and national level | users and beneficiaries | |
| Pollution Data sharing and inclusion | Pollution | • Sharing data on pollution (Rhone, Rhine, Danube)<br>• Better use of Green Infrastructure<br>• Identify pollution source and close the loops | ASAP | Directorates conventions, strategies (Ramsar, Danube Strategy), etc. related to rivers | MONERIS, ICPDR and other stakeholders (industry, science, farmers) MSs and regional/local level Stakeholders | |
| Pollution | Have a specific project: with Involvement of farmers | Local initiatives -farmers and conservationists to talk together -best practices presented and disseminated | ASAP | NGOs/MSs | | |
| 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 | 2016 | MSs | | |
| Limited directive Integration and knowledge sharing | Integration of WFD and mire and bogs status | • Discussions of management integration to WFD through national or regional workshops<br>• Sharing and disseminating good practices in hydromorphology among stakeholders -e.g. SER | 2015/2016<br><br>2016 | MSs and water and nature conservation | managers NGOs organise a meeting Site planners informed | |

| Topic | Action | Description | Timing | Lead | Support | Relevance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | • website of cases to be integrated into Natura 2000 platform and LIFE platform | | | | |
| Lack of flexibility in management (esp. in relation to AES) (I) Finding out best practices in AES | Develop database<br>Conduct survey<br>Compile final report | Database of best and worst practices<br>Final report | Mid 2017 | | | |
| | Input from Member States description of best practices in AES for Natura 2000 species and habitats | National reports<br><br>Gap analysis between AES & Natura 2000 needs | Mid 2017 | Member States Natura 2000 responsible bodies and NGOs | | |
| | Negotiations with MS to improve application of most appropriate AES | Improved national AES systems | End 2018 | DG ENV & DG Agri | | |
| Lack of marketing of products. | Share best practice<br>Prepare proposal for LIFE Communication project | Create a database of best practice<br>Best practice examples and guidelines | | NGOs | | |
| Climate change | 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 | | |
| Communication & best practice sharing | Slow Food movement | Communicate to other nature parks the benefits of being part of the Slow Food movement (and other community involvement methods) | ASAP | Strandja Nature Park | | |
| | Communicate the benefits of Natura 2000 | promoting successful projects (e.g. ADEPT NGO working with farmers) and awareness raising campaigns (e.g. Natura 2000 Day) | ASAP | | | |
| | Shared best practice | Bulgaria has prepared a Communication Strategy for Natura 2000 for 2014-2020 with concrete actions and will share it through the Natura 2000 Platform | ASAP | Bulgaria | | |
| | Shared best practice | municipality involvement in projects | ASAP | SandLife Project, Sweden | | |

| Topic | Action | Description | Timing | Lead | Support | Relevance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 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. | ASAP | Life platform operators | | |
| | Make better use of the experience from the HELCOM Convention | | ASAP | Baltic MSs | | |
| | | | | | | |
| Land use | Set aside coastal land for climate change | Support municipalities to set aside land for nature in due time before coastal habitats are being flooded by sea level rise | ASAP | | | |
| Conferences, workshops and events | | A follow-up seminar for Pannonian, Black Sea and Steppic grassland habitats in autumn 2015 (tbc). | October 2015 | Romania, Mr John Smaranda | | |
| Funding | | Utilise scientific funds for data collection and inventories as part of conservation projects | ??? REMOVE? | | | |
| 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<br>Formal group of identified expert from different levels<br>Online, physical meetings of the formal groups | ASAP | Scientific societies, Natura 2000 managers, NGOs driven by European Commission | | |
| Hydromorphology, water quality and habitat Integration | Improvement of hydromorphology by integration of WFD and Nature Directives and improving monitoring Water quality improvement Habitat fragmentation | Integration of e-flow into Nature Directives<br>CAP subsidies to be rethought, develop more integrated land use management (buffer zones and rivers, drainage removal)<br>Integrated planning (rivers and floodplains to be considered together and integrated into spatial planning)<br>Define possibilities of reconnection<br>Small hydropower plants to be restricted | As soon as Possible | EC with MSs and stakeholders<br>Coordination between DG Agri and DG Envi | Regional and national actors (spatial planners, municipalities)<br>During RBMP planning | |

**Annex 2 – List of follow-up and networking events organized after the Kick-off Seminar, relevant to the Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea regions**

- Exploring Landscape Boundaries and Natura 2000 (cross-regional), 6-7 September 2018, Location: Mende, France;
- Cooperating for Grassland Conservation (cross-regional), 4-8 June 2018, Location: Sulmona, Italy;
- Towards a shared ecological rationale for more integrated implementation of the Nature and Water Directives, 15 - 17 November 2017, Location: Fertő-Hanság National Park, Sarród, Hungary;
- Mountain forest management in Natura 2000 sites, 7–9 November 2017, Location: Horska Kvilda, Czech Republic;
- Living together (dedicated to large carnivores), 12-14 October 2017, Location: Municipality of Venzone (UD) - Giulian Alps, Italy;
- Impact of the CAP on grassland habitats in Continental, Pannonnian and Steppic regions, 3-4 October 2017, Location: Eger, Hungary;
- Natura 2000 Forest habitat types on secondary sites – conservation and management strategies, 19-21 September 2017, Location: Bad Bergzabern, Germany;
- Developing conservation management objectives and condition indicators, 4–6 April 2017, Location: Litoměřice, Czech Republic;
- European Workshop on Control and Eradication of Invasive Alien Plant Species, 19-21 May 2016, Location: Budapest, Hungary;
- Forest management and Natura 2000 in the alpine and continental biogeographical regions, 21-23 June 2016, Location: Padova, Italy;
- Follow up event of the Natura 2000 seminar for the Pannonian, Black Sea and Steppic Regions, 4 - 6 November 2015, Location: Arad, Romania;
- Natura 2000 Monitoring workshop, 19 - 21 October 2015, Location: Barcelona, Spain
- How can we make the Water Framework Directive and the Birds and Habitats Directives work together? 7 October 2015, Location: Budapest, Hungary;

**Annex 3 - List of projects and best practices, reported by the Member States during the pre-seminar expert consultations.**

The non-exhaustive list has been developed by extracting projects and references, mentioned in the responses from Member States to the expert consultations, performed in the period June – August 2018.

| **Project title** | **Short description** |
|---|---|
| Interreg project MALSEMUSCHEL - Promotion of the natural environment and occurrence of freshwater pearl mussels (Margaritifera margaritifera) in the Malše catchment area | The project aims at population enhancement of the endangered river pearl mussel in the CZ-AT border-region river Malše through the introduction of young individuals, description of the exact reasons why the species at this site have not been increasing in the long term and elaboration of the basics for the improvement of the water quality and the reduction of erosion in the entire cross-border catchment area. |
| Interreg project 3Lynx | CZ-AT-SLO-DE-IT coordination of monitoring of Eurasian lynx is carried out in the Interreg Central project 3Lynx (https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/3Lynx.html). It also aims at active involvement of key stakeholders, namely hunters and foresters, into lynx conservation issues |
| Interreg project OWAD | CZ-DE coordination of monitoring of Gray wolf is carried out in Interreg project OWAD. The project aims at return and sustainable existence of the wolf. It concerns communication with farmers and hunters and the system of compensations |
| LIFE15 NAT/HU/000902 PannonEagle | The project aims to increase the population of the eastern imperial eagle in the Pannonian biogeographical region. (http://imperialeagle.eu/) |
| LIFE09 NAT/CZ/000364 Butterflies CZ-SK | project achieved its main objective, i.e. the active protection of non-forest habitats and (butterfly) species of Community and national importance – applying suitable management practices, and maintaining and restoring these species and habitats to a favourable conservation status |
| LIFE13 NAT/SI/000550 Dinalp Bear | The project aims at population level management and conservation of brown bears in northern Dinaric Mountains and the Alps (Croatia, Slovenia, Austria, Italy) (http://dinalpbear.eu/home-page-1/) |

| | |
|---|---|
| LIFE Lynx | conservation of Dinaric-SE Alpine lynx population, rescue from extinction and long term preservation (Croatia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Romania, Italy) (https://www.lifelynx.eu/) |
| European Private Land Conservation Network ELCN | Some of the pilot actions of this project give examples of how to engage private land owners in management plans preparation – e.g. in Belgium and Spain. (http://www.elcn.eu/) |
| "Concours prairies fleuries" (Flowered meadow award), France | The aim of this initiative is to demonstrate that farmers are preserving biodiversity in their daily activities and gives a high level of recognition of best practices. |
| LIFE09 NAT/CZ/000363 Project "Lounské Středohoří Steppe - Active protection of the SCIs with thermophilous habitat types and species in Lounské Středohoří hills" | This project focused on promoting and protecting dry grassland habitats in the Louny region of North Bohemia. The initiative aimed to communicate the immense value of concerned Natura 2000 sites and their importance by promotion events and support to farmers in practical issues.<br><br>(http://www.ochranaprirody.cz/en/life/life-lounske-stredohori-steppes/) |
| LIFE16/NAT/HU/000599 OakeyLIFE project: | The project aims to enhance the conservation status and to extend the cover of priority habitats of the calcareous sand forest steppe complex by eliminating local threatening factors and restoration. It also involves raising public awareness and formulation of physically tested, calibrated technological recommendations for land managers and authorities for promoting sustainable management of these habitats and use of ecosystem services.<br><br>http://oakeylife.hu/en/main-page/ |
| Establishing and supporting Local Landcare Association (LCA) on Regional or District Level in Germany | Landcare Associations (LCA) are regional non-governmental associations, established to link the nature conservation groups with local farmers and local communities in Germany. The often opposing interest groups work together in LCAs voluntarily to care for the cultural landscape and traditional farming systems which have created Germany´s landscape for centuries. The cultivation of land has led to diverse landscapes with mountain-meadows, poor soil pastures, hedgerows and orchards. By pooling interests and local forces LCAs implement integrated and sustainable land management practices in many rural areas in Germany to protect the adopted flora and fauna and to support sustainable development. |

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| | More information at: https://www.lpv.de/themen/landcare-english-page/landcare-in-germany.html |