



## 3<sup>rd</sup> Natura 2000 seminar for the Atlantic region

Antwerp, 12 – 14 June 2019

### Seminar report

Antwerp, Belgium



**Consortium Information:**

Wageningen Environmental Research, Wageningen Marine Research, Wageningen UR

In cooperation with:

NatureBureau Ltd.

Regional Environmental Centre

Estonian University of Life Sciences

Terraecogest

Mãe d'água

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**Event:** For more information on this seminar, see the Natura 2000 Communication Platform:  
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Relevant documents can be found here:

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/platform/events/third\\_atlantic\\_biogeographic\\_seminar.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/platform/events/third_atlantic_biogeographic_seminar.htm)

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Context of the Natura 2000 seminar for the Atlantic region**

The Natura 2000 biogeographical process was launched in 2011 by the European Commission. The objective of the process is to promote information exchange, networking and cooperation on Natura 2000 related issues amongst Member States and stakeholders at biogeographical region level. The process involves regular seminars in each biogeographical region (or group of regions) to discuss key conservation challenges and agree on a roadmap for cooperative action in the region(s) for the following years.

The Atlantic region makes up about one fifth of the land area of the EU, includes nine Member States (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Spain, France, Netherlands, Portugal, United Kingdom) and stretches from the Shetland Islands to northern Portugal.

The seminar took place from 12 to 14 June 2019 in Antwerp, Belgium, where it was hosted by the Agency for Nature and Forests of the Government of Flanders. In total some 95 participants attended the seminar, originating from 9 Member States (all those concerned with the Atlantic region except Portugal, plus two experts involved in the management of flood plain habitats and species from Austria).

The field visits were organised by the Agency for Nature and Forests of the Government of Flanders, in co-operation with Natuurpunt.

### **1.2. The four themes selected for the seminar**

The Natura 2000 seminar was organised around four main themes:

Theme 1 – Protection and conservation of meadow birds: on approaches to protect and conserve meadow birds inside and outside of the Natura 2000 network.

Theme 2 – Integrated approaches to tackling nitrogen pollution (air and water pollution): on approaches to tackling the impacts of nitrogen (air and water pollution) on Natura 2000 sites.

Theme 3 – Improving the conservation of Natura 2000 sites through integrated management: on the development of integrated management through projects and plans yielding multiple benefits, such as flood protection and river restoration.

Theme 4 – Communication and stakeholder engagement in Natura 2000: on approaches to initiate and develop communication, overcome obstacles (and to some extent, conflicts) and to increase stakeholder engagement.

These themes were central to the thematic working groups. The themes were also the focus for the site visits on the second day of the seminar. Reports on the outcome of these sessions were presented in plenary.

### 1.3. Reading guide

After this introduction, Chapter 2 provides a summary of the opening session (day 1). Chapter 3 presents reports from the three field excursions and on the main topics that were discussed during the excursions. Chapter 4 presents the reports from the four thematic working groups, with the findings and recommendations as presented on the closing day. The plenary discussion of the conclusions, as well as the important issues which might require follow-up actions are presented in Chapter 5. Chapter 5 also presents follow-up actions which are included in the roadmap that will be presented in the relevant groups (Steering Committee, NADEG<sup>1</sup>) and made available to the seminar's participants and the general public. Annex 1-3 list the programme, the organisations present at the knowledge market and the participants. Annex 4 provides a summary of the survey undertaken amongst participants to evaluate the seminar.

## 2. Opening and plenary session

The seminar was open by Mrs Evenepoel, Administrateur General, Agency for Nature and Forests of the Government of Flanders, who welcomed the guests and participants of the seminar on behalf of the host organisation and underlined that the Atlantic seminar is about making Natura 2000 a network of people working together throughout national borders. She emphasised that ecological networks need people networks.



*Picture 1: Official opening of the Atlantic seminar by Mrs Evenepoel, Administrateur General, Agency for Nature and Forests of the Government of Flanders*

Mr Humberto Delgado Rosa, Director for Natural Capital, Directorate General Environment (DG ENV), European Commission, highlighted the importance of Natura 2000 biogeographical seminars for the

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<sup>1</sup> EU Expert Group on the Birds and Habitats Directive

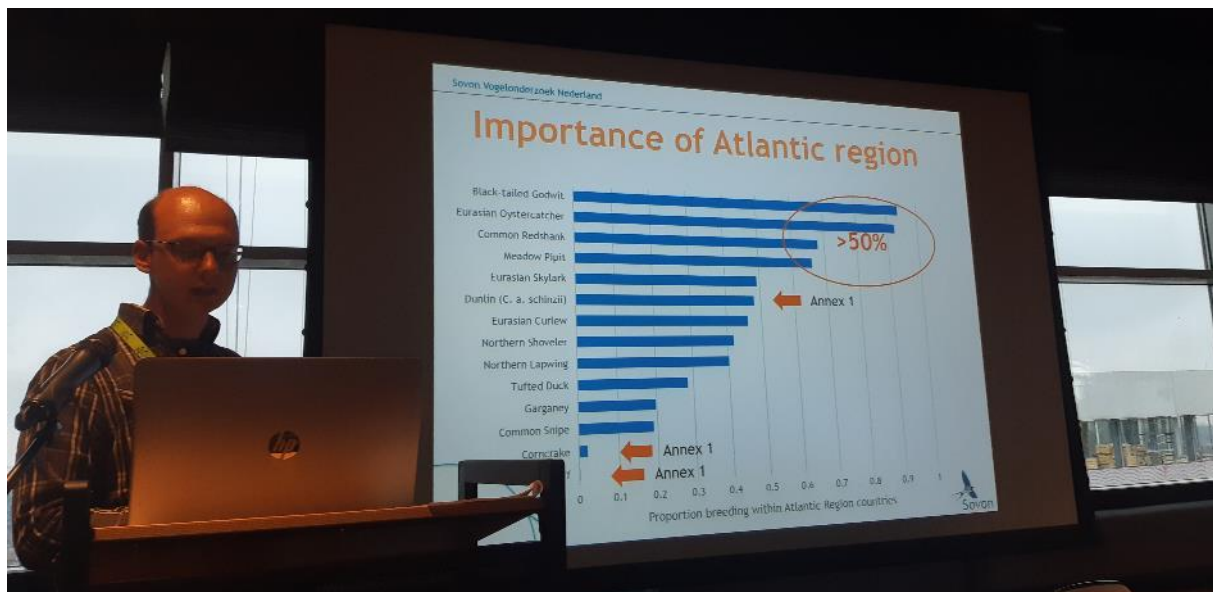
implementation of the EU conservation agenda and in particular for the implementation of the Action Plan for nature, people and the economy developed after the Fitness Check of the Nature Directives.

After the official opening, the context and objectives of the seminar were introduced: Mrs Sophie Ouzet, DG ENV, European Commission, presented the Natura 2000 biogeographical process. She outlined the context of the process. She emphasised that the Natura 2000 biogeographical process is about networking and meant to spark new initiatives for cooperation, for knowledge sharing and harmonisation of approaches. It offers the possibility to take follow-up action through networking events and other activities that can also be supported through the resources available under the Commission's contract with Wageningen University Research (WUR), the Netherlands.

John Houston (NEEMO) presented the dune roadmap for knowledge exchange. He explained how following the first Atlantic Seminar the work on the dune roadmap had developed through active involvement of several of the site managers and through LIFE projects. He underlined the need to increase synergy between the LIFE programme and biogeographical process e.g. by making roadmaps more specific on information gaps and by encouraging LIFE-funded projects to support the process.

The thematic orientation and working group sessions were briefly introduced by the chairs, facilitators or experts involved in the sessions.

Erik Kleyheeg (SOVON, the Netherlands) presented theme 1 on the conservation of meadow birds. He started with outlining which species could be considered as meadow birds. Using European distribution maps, he indicated the importance of the Atlantic region for species such as Black-tailed Godwit, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Common Redshank and Meadow Pipit; the Atlantic region is very important as over 50% of their breeding populations are located in the Atlantic region. The numbers of many meadow species are in (sharp) decline but at the same time there are no Natura 2000 sites designated for the majority of these species as they are not listed on Annex 1 of the Birds Directive. The most common threats for the species are fragmentation, degradation and loss of their habitats, nest and chick loss due to agricultural activities and high levels of nest and chick predation. Erik presented the two EU Action Plans available for meadow birds and highlighted the possible use of the common agricultural policy and in particular agri-environment schemes for meadow birds.



Picture 2: Erik Kleyheeg outlined the importance of the Atlantic region for various meadow birds

Anne Schmidt outlined the second theme on integrated approaches to tackling nitrogen pollution. Nitrogen pollution is one of the main threats to habitats protected under the Habitats Directive across large areas of north-western Europe, affecting both terrestrial as aquatic habitats. Nitrogen pollution can originate from various sources (industry, traffic, agriculture etc.). Actions needed consist of measures at the 'source' to avoid pollution, mitigation measures to reduce the impact of nitrogen pollution, as well as appropriate assessments of plans and projects that might lead to increased nitrogen pollution. Several policy frameworks exist to prevent nitrogen pollution at the source and considerable experience has been gained with conservation measures to reduce the impact of nitrogen pollution but exchanges of this experience are needed.

Richard White presented the session on integrated management. He underlined that we need to consider management of Natura 2000 sites from a landscape scale, that humans are part of nature and that integrated management needs to address multiple goals (social, economic, environment). Examples of integrated management are natural flood management and integrated coastal zone management. For integrated management to work a dialogue needs to be established between the various actors and conflicts should be avoided. In many cases integrated management also requires trans-border co-operation (for instance on seas, rivers/floodplains), especially as wildlife does not recognise political orders and habitats/ecosystems cross political borders as well. Examples of integrated management of rivers and floodplains would be the focus of the workshop.

Dries Gorissen discussed the importance of stakeholder involvement for Natura 2000 sites based on the experience with the Bosland Manifesto in Flanders. He underlined that local populations are the first and most important stakeholders. The local level is where the engagement and support for nature starts. To realise an EU-wide Natura 2000 network the local population needs to be engaged. Local authorities therefore play an important role in this process as do local business that are interested in

sustainability and social entrepreneurship. To engage people's imagination, wonder and emotion is a key mechanism to create engagement with nature.

### 3. Site visits

Each field visit touched upon several themes of the working group sessions of the seminar: 1. Steendorp Fort and Kruibeke Polder, situated in the freshwater tidal zone of the River Scheldt; 2. Kalmthoutse Heide cross-border park, situated on the higher sandy soils of the Campine; 3. Groot-Saeftinghe cross-border park, situated in the brackish water tidal zone of the River Scheldt. Brief findings based on these field visits are presented below.



*Picture 2: Field trip 1, which showed the restoration of brackish intertidal flats along the river Scheldt.*

#### 3.1. Field trip 1: Polders of Kruibeke and fortification of Steendorp

Guides: Joris Goossens (Steendorp), Lieven Nachtegalen, Veerle Campens (Kruibeke); report: Irene Bouwma

The first stop of the excursion was at the Fortification of Steendorp. This fortress was originally built in 1883 as a bridgehead for the River Scheldt, to defend the south-west side of Antwerp. Today, the inner part of the fortress lies in ruins. A part of the fortress is sealed off as a winter hibernaculum for bats (pond bat and Geoffroy's bat), managed through the LIFE project BatAction.

During the field visits it was underlined that good co-operation with the department responsible for cultural heritage had ensured that both the nature conservation goals as well as the heritage goals to preserve the fortress could be met. The monitoring that is ongoing on the wintering bats showed that changes in the different bats species have occurred over the years and a new species has been noted: Geoffroy's bat.



The second stop was a visit to Kruikebe Polders. This diverse 600-hectare nature reserve can store up to 36 million m<sup>3</sup> of water, protecting the region from flooding. If a violent north-westerly storm coincides with spring tides, extra high water levels pose a risk of flooding from the Scheldt and its tributaries. The Kruikebe Polders are perfectly situated to collect excess water, preventing flooding upstream. This area has been developed as part of the Sigma plan which has been going on for several years. During the excursion on bike through the area several lessons of the project were illustrated in the field:

- The Sigma plan was undertaken as a flood protection scheme and a compensation programme for the port development near Antwerp. Due to the interest of these sectors the plan could be executed despite initial resistance against the project.
- If good conditions are created nature is quick to respond – many of the brackish intertidal areas visited were only two years old.
- Several different water-level regimes have been created to assess their respective effects.
- In one of the areas which was designed for breeding birds, experience has shown that earlier mowing dates are needed (adaptive management) – the grass grows very fast due to the quality of the soil– and a discussion is now ongoing with the farmers who manage the land on behalf of the Agency on the most suitable dates.



- To increase local involvement the project has connected art, local history and nature together. Local artists and juries could propose art works that underlined the history and nature of the area as kinds of 'time capsules'.
- Much energy in the project was given to creating ownership by the local population. This effort was successful and now local people are advocates of the project and the area they live in. They organise excursions and educational activities for schools among other events.

*Picture 4. Example of a time-capsule connecting nature, art and local history*

### **3.2. Field trip 2: Kalmthoutse Heide cross-border park**

Guides: Jan Weverbergh (Grenspark), Frederik Naedts (Natuurpunt), Veerle Mees and Jef De Winter (both from the Nature and Forest Agency), Ignace Ledegen (Grenspark); report: Anne Schmidt.

The Kalmthoutse Heide cross-border park is a large heathland area with fens and sand dunes, managed from the Belgium site by the Nature and Forest Agency and Natuurpunt and from the Dutch side by State Forestry and Dutch Society for Nature Conservation (in Dutch 'Natuurmonumenten'). Het 'Grenspark' is a voluntary partnership of the Belgium and Dutch site managers and landowners.

During the field visit the cross-border cooperation and the communication with stakeholders and stakeholder engagement was discussed (theme 4). Special attention was given to different types of restoration and conservation measures, amongst others measures, to tackle nitrogen pollution (theme 2). In addition, the integrated approach of combining water management with nature conservation was demonstrated in the field (theme 3).

In the morning an introduction was given by Jan Weverbergh (Grenspark), who explained the cross-border cooperation of Grenspark and introduced two LIFE projects HELA and HELVEX (see <http://www.grenspark.be/life-projecten-grenspark>). During the morning Frederik Naedts (Natuurpunt) and Veerle Mees and Jef De Winter (both from the Nature and Forest Agency) explained the restoration of the heathlands, the fens (Stappersven) and the inland dunes (De Nol). Currently the heathlands are restored by means of:

- sod cutting: one of the methods shown in the field was the 'fishbone' method in which strips of heathland sod are cut;
- tree cutting: to ensure that the heathlands are not overgrown trees are removed;
- targeted grazing by sheep;
- raising of the ground water levels.

Furthermore, the approach to the restoration of the sand dunes was shown where over a large part of the area trees are removed and sod is cut to ensure that the sand can be transported by wind again.

In the afternoon the restoration of a former lake (Grote Meer) was described by Ignace Ledegen (Grenspark). To ensure that the water level is sufficiently high and the water is of good quality, a big pipe line was constructed. A lot of energy was put into stakeholder engagement as part of the land is privately owned and the pipeline had to cross the private lands.



Picture 5: Restoration of inland dunes (De Nol).

### 3.3. Field trip 3: Groot Saeftinghe cross-border park

Guides: Hilde Van Doorselaer, Pieter Jan Meire; report: Diana Punjar, Theo van der Sluis

The River Scheldt forms part of the largest estuary in Europe. Here interests of economic development and conservation can potentially result in conflicts: for example when the Belgian and Dutch authorities agreed to deepen and dredge the river to allow larger ships to reach Antwerp. This operation would result in the loss of important Natura 2000 habitats such as mud-flats along the river. This required compensation measures to be taken: farmland would be 'depoldered' to establish a new sub-tidal area where, over time, an irregular pattern of brackish marshes, shoals and mud flats would develop.

These depoldering projects are part of the Sigma plan, and form part of the Groot Saeftinghe cross-border park. Situated in the Netherlands and Flanders, Groot Saeftinghe is one of the largest brackish water tidal areas in Western Europe, covering approximately 3,600 hectares. The development of the cross-border park is funded from an Interreg project (2.8 million EUR). The depoldering projects are part of the Sigma Plan, and are funded by the Flemish government (including the Hedwigepolder in the Netherlands). The potential conflicts with communities and other stakeholders in the area are addressed within the cross-border projects: Grenspark Groot-Saeftinghe (2016-2019) and Sigma Plan. The aim of the Sigma Plan is to control the tidal area through long-term integrated management, involving flood control and safety (to protect Flanders against the flooding of the River Scheldt and its tributaries), nature conservation (restoration of the River Scheldt's ecosystem), economical support for farmers and to provide leisure facilities. It involves depoldering and creation of natural flood control areas e.g. salted marshes, to cater for sea level rise. These water retention areas help to achieve the conservation objectives of Natura 2000. Within the 'Cooperation Programme Interreg Flanders, The Netherlands' for 2014-2020, cross-border projects are carried out, which may be complementary to the SIGMA project.

During lunchtime a local farmer from Mariahoeve introduced the farm and the life next to the estuary (see <http://www.opdemariahoeve.nl/>). The farmers have to cope with salt-water intrusion as a result of the depoldering. Some farms like Mariahoeve conduct research into the cultivation of innovative salt-resistant crops such as sea aster (*Aster tripolium*), salicornia (*Salicornia europaea*), sea kale (*Crambe maritima*) and the latest tests are made with oyster leaf (*Mertensia maritima*). Some products are reaching new markets e.g. sea kale is sold to 300 restaurants all over Europe.



Picture 6: The polder of 'Groot Saeftinghe' cross-border park. The aim is to create a new sub-tidal area of salt marshes, shoals and mud flats. Creation of aquatic habitats will support Natura 2000 targets. 'Sometimes you have to rebuild the landscape to create a new history for people' (quote of one of the participants).

At the second stop, the plans for depoldering and creation of salt meadows that act as natural buffers against flooding were discussed. The implementation of cross-border projects depends on communication: integrated management is achieved only through good cooperation with farmers and residents. Local farmers should be advised on farm management practices to improve the quality of surrounding living environment. Several farming and nature conservation issues were described and discussed:

- strip farming – small-scale agriculture in large-scale farmland patterns;
- fox control through removal of tree patches because they threaten meadow and coastal birds and interfere with the achievement of favourable conservation status of Natura 2000 habitats; also creation and management of islands to create breeding places protected from predators;
- creation of aquatic habitats – former farmland is turned into natural habitats;
- crop farming for migratory birds;
- funding of cross-border projects.

The next stop was made at the area established for meadow birds. These kinds of meadows are important breeding and feeding places for migratory birds and at the same time habitats for protected

plants such as orchids. Favourable conservation status is achievable only in cooperation with farmers e.g. to enable grazing or set the limits. Current research on the new wetland and islands showed an increasing number of Black-tailed godwit (*Limosa limosa*), but the species richness is under threat due to fox predation. As a solution to this problem, fencing and permanent fox traps are used. Fences against predators were also discussed at the next stop, together with best practices and research in Germany, leading to knowledge exchange and sharing of contacts.

The afternoon visit to the 'Groot Saeftinghe' coastal meadow, with grazing sheep, led to the discussion about the need for defining favourable reference values. FRVs are essential to define targets and take appropriate measures. The FCS should be based on scientific findings, and management plans should involve short- and long-term targets not only at the site level, but in the broader landscape as well. Moreover, trans-national favourable conservation values should be worked out – which requires common understanding, agreement and development of trans-national thinking.



*Picture 7: Coastal meadow grazed by sheep, with discussion about the importance of setting favourable conservation status of Natura 2000 sites and species. FCS should be based on scientific data, that is incorporated into management plans. The management plans should involve short- and long-term targets. Trans-national favourable conservation values should be worked out which requires common agreement and formation of national thinking.*

The last stop was at the Antwerp port, where temporary habitats have been developed such as wetlands for birds and ponds for Natterjack toads (*Bufo calamita*). Discussion here also focused on predators, in particular last year a colony of European Spoonbills (*Platylea leucorodia*) was destroyed after a fox swam to the nesting island; fencing this year did not result in a return of spoonbills. The recovery and restoration may take time, positive effects may take years and requires good communication of the values and profit for nature and local people. Communication will increase knowledge, allow for compromises, and a form a vision on how to involve local communities.

## 4. Thematic sessions

### ***4.1.1. Theme 1 – Protection and conservation of meadow birds: on approaches to protect and conserve meadow birds inside and outside of the Natura 2000 network.***

**Chair Rebecca Jeffrey**, National Parks and Wildlife Service – NPWS (Ireland).

#### **Context**

There has been a large decline in meadow birds, both migratory and breeding, over the past decades due to intensification of land use, reduced landscape heterogeneity, habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, predation and chemical use (IPBES 2018, table 3.1 background document; Van der Sluis et al. 2015). New conservation strategies and approaches are needed to halt this decline. Species Action Plans have been developed on European, national and regional scales to protect and restore meadow bird populations<sup>2</sup>. In addition, the revision of the common agricultural policy (CAP) – with a more flexible approach, including eco-schemes – provides an additional opportunity for the protection and conservation of meadow birds.

Breeding meadow birds face many challenges that are shared among all EU Member States within the Atlantic region. Among the most challenging is that a large proportion of meadow birds breed on agricultural land, mainly that used for dairy farming, where it is difficult to enforce conservation measures, as this may negatively impact on farmer's incomes. This is due to a trade-off between (1) efficient and cost-effective management of agricultural land for optimal productivity and (2) the preservation of biodiversity, including meadow birds.

#### **Objectives of the thematic session**

- Exchange knowledge of successful approaches to meadow bird protection and conservation, focussing on key factors of success and lessons learned from monitoring;
- Share experiences in the implementation of the Species Action Plans (SAPs) on different scales (EU, national and regional) in relation to Natura 2000 management plans; and
- Discuss the opportunities presented by a revised CAP for meadow bird protection and conservation.

#### **Presentations**

Dr. Heinrich Belting, Lower Saxony Water Management, Coastal Defence and Nature Conservation Agency presented an overview of successful meadow bird conservation. A definition of “meadow” birds was discussed. It was agreed that a wider definition of grasslands (mowed and/or grazed ) should

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<sup>2</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/wildbirds/action\\_plans/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/wildbirds/action_plans/index_en.htm)

be devised. A successful meadow bird conservation programme is determined by a number of factors, all of which have to be implemented simultaneously:

- large areas
- high openness
- low disturbance
- high water tables with temporarily flooded sites
- low or intermediate trophic level of soil
- mowing and grazing respect nesting distribution
- sufficient farming intensity for optimal vegetation structures
- high heterogeneity on landscape level and parcel level
- moderate levels of predation
- well organised guardianship and monitoring

An overview of successful a LIFE + Nature project on meadow birds was given. The main conclusion was that a successful meadow bird conservation should include:

- optimising habitat quality (all criteria)
- grassland farming has to respect the meadow birds (no mowing during the breeding period; low grazing density; no fertilising or only at low levels)
- to combine profitable farming with conservation, well organised guardianship and monitoring.

Ms Evelien Verbij, the director of BoerenNatuur gave an overview on “The cooperative approach under the new agri- environmental scheme at the landscape scale”. A new Dutch agri-environmental scheme was introduced. The new approach is more flexible – the old system involved six year fixed contracts. There is now more flexibility in terms of conservation activities, financial compensation, exact location etc. The main aims of the new approach are to improve scheme results *and* lower implementation costs. It involves a focus on the intermediate position of the cooperatives (which are the final beneficiaries of the provincial subsidies) while the cooperatives have individual contracts with the farmers with ecological guidance in all phases: the development of the management plan, making the individual contracts, and actual activities in the field to be done by the farmers. Collectives serve as final beneficiaries for the subsidy. They have a collective contract with the government and manage individual contracts with the participants.

### **Discussions in working groups**

Three themes with common questions were given for guiding discussions:

1. **Key factors for success (not related to funding)**
  - What according to you are the key factors for success?
  - What conditions are needed for these key factors?
  - How can Member States work together on this issue?

## 2. CAP, management measures for meadow birds

- What types of management measures are needed to conserve meadow birds?
- How can they be introduced in the CAP?
- How can Member States work together on this issue?

## 3. Species Action Plans

- What are the benefits of SAP?
- Which level do you find most useful and why?
- How can Member States work together on this issue?



*Picture 8: Ideas are discussed on key factors for success for protection of meadow birds (Group 1)*

The first two themes were selected by participants for further discussion. The thematic session was organised in two groups, which brainstormed on the common guiding questions and then reported the outcomes to the thematic group. The results are summarised below:

### **Key factors for success and what conditions are necessary for their delivery:**

- Correct ecological conditions
- Clear goals/targets
- One main contact/manager per site
- Happy farmers (scheme/programme must work for them)
- Possibility of long-term agreements/schemes for farmers (future-proofing)
- Landscape scale management
- Results-based payments
- Good governance
- Independent monitoring
- Binding agreements
- Ecological guidance and training for farmers of all ages



- Knowledge exchange at all levels on farming, ecological and sociological aspects
- Political support and societal support

### **CAP Management measures for meadow birds were discussed by group 2.**

The future of meadow birds relies heavily on a revolution in agricultural practices. Given that EU regulations dictate the boundaries within which agricultural practices take place and play a decisive role in the allocation of subsidies, a revision of EU regulations to benefit meadow bird populations could provide an effective basis for a transition to more nature-inclusive agricultural systems. A life cycle approach for agriculture that changes the current intensive use of grasslands to a more extensive use could result in a farming system which is sustainable and promotes multiple functions of the landscape.

At national level the following aspects should be considered:

- Two basic approaches: agri-environment scheme and nature reserve model
- Need for a restoration agenda: suggest a network of core areas that are surrounded by land managed under agri-environment schemes
- Need to clearly identify targets for sited, either single or multi-species
- Consider flagship species

### **How to introduce necessary measures into the CAP?**

- Member States should include measures for grassland birds into their PAFs
- Identify multiple benefits of implementing measures, e.g. link to climate change agenda, Water Framework Directive targets
- Have to convince the farmers, and perhaps encourage results-based schemes

In the last part all participants discussed “How can Member States work together to protect and conserve meadow birds?” The following ideas were proposed:

- Use existing networks (e.g. Africa-Eurasia Waterbird Agreement) to collaborate better and exchange knowledge
- Lobby together (as a biogeographic region) to influence decision makers (at European level)
- Suggest establishment/engagement of a group that represents farmers that are not intensive farmers (similar to European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism?)
- Collaborate on a multi-national conservation project (LIFE-funded?)
- Establish an Atlantic biogeographic level restoration agenda for meadow birds including recovery goals for species; use the biogeographic process to set up a workshop to discuss this further.

For the concluding plenary session it was proposed to further discuss the question:

*Given the need for a wider restoration agenda for grasslands, how best to cooperate to further define and operationalise necessary measures at site and landscape level, including through LIFE, CAP?*

**4.1.2. Theme 2 – Integrated approaches to tackling nitrogen pollution (air and water pollution): on approaches to tackling the impacts of nitrogen (air and water pollution) on Natura 2000 sites.**

**Chair Jan-Willem v/d Vegte, BIJ12 (Netherlands).**

**Context**

A major pressure affecting the conservation status of species and habitats in parts of the Atlantic region is eutrophication due to excess nitrogen input from air pollution (emission and deposition) and pollution of ground and surface water. Different sources lead to nitrogen pollution, such as agriculture, transport and energy plants. ‘At source’ reduction measures are needed to prevent or reduce nitrogen pollution as well as on-site management measures to mitigate its ongoing impact on the conservation status of species and habitats. Robust assessment and permitting procedures are needed to prevent the sometimes irreversible impacts of nitrogen pollution on Natura 2000 sites, species and habitats.

**Objectives**

The objectives of this thematic session:

- to exchange knowledge on the effectiveness of conservation and restoration measures to mitigate the impact of nitrogen pollution on the conservation status of species and habitats; and
- to share experiences and best practices to prevent nitrogen pollution by means of ‘at source’ reduction measures as well as by appropriate assessments and permitting procedures for plans and projects causing nitrogen pollution.

**Presentations**

Alistair Burns outlined the situation of nutrient pollution (airborne and water) in the UK. For water nutrient targets have been developed for eutrophication impacts on aquatic features. These are often tighter than needed for good ecological status. Furthermore a nitrogen decision framework has been developed and the entire approach is closely linked to the implementation of the Water Framework Directive. To tackle airborne nitrogen pollution, Shared Nitrogen Action Plans (SNAPs) have been introduced as a mechanism for integrating action across multiple sources and stakeholder engagement.

Jesper Bak presented the situation in Denmark. After a short history of the approach to tackling nitrogen deposition in Denmark he outlined the current approach. In 2011 it became apparent that the existing ammonia regulation did not ensure a sufficient reduction of ammonia impact to achieve favourable conservation status. Therefore, additional measures were taken consisting of phasing out

of problematic farms and to create buffer zones around Natura 2000 sites. However, this approach is contested by farmers.

Rienk-Jan Bijlsma presented new insights and management approaches in mitigating impacts of N-deposition based on the results from the Dutch OBN Knowledge Network. There were concerns about the current management measures for mitigating impacts of N-deposition which lead to nutritional imbalances in the system. Therefore new measures were piloted focusing amongst others on slow-release fertiliser (rock dust) at habitat level (after proper assessment of nutritional imbalances). Current findings suggest that high-intensity management aimed at N-removal should be abandoned in habitats that still have a relatively good habitat composition and that it should be considered carefully whether to remove the topsoil of extensively managed heath and grassland.

### **Discussions in working group**

The group discussed the issue of restoration measures and formulated several issues on which exchange of information could be useful:

- What is the effectiveness of measures in the short- and long-term
- How to get a grip on nutrient budgets (removing N takes away other nutrients as well)

In addition it was suggested to:

- First explore successes in aquatic environments. Connect to air pollution. Water pollution is very clear.
- Take a programmatic approach. Scientific evidence seems good enough but communication is needed with stakeholders.
- Assess the political situation. Member states determine the opportunities for integrated approaches.

### ***Appropriate assessments***

Member States and regional representatives had varying awareness of the challenges with appropriate assessment of effects from atmospheric and water borne nitrogen on Natura 2000 site ecosystems. Participants welcomed sharing of information about specific tools for undertaking appropriate assessment and related issues with current approaches. The group advocated development of guidance on how to use critical loads in appropriate assessment. To undertake this work, a combination of building on existing networks established under the National Emission Ceilings Directives and creating an informal Expert Working Group on Appropriate Assessment for Natura 2000 Sites<sup>3</sup> was suggested.

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<sup>3</sup> Including the screening step and options for evidence to use in this assessment step.

## Opportunities for cooperative work and follow-up

### → **Share information on innovative restoration measures**

Better sharing of existing knowledge on innovation in restoration measures is needed to mitigate the impacts of nitrogen pollution. Jesper Leth Bak (DK) and Rienk Jan Bijlsma (NL) will get together to explore possibilities of disseminating information on innovative restoration measures to mitigate impacts of nitrogen pollution and as well related problems (e.g. the imbalance in nutrients). Possibly a network event.

### → **Share current appropriate assessment tools and explore alignment**

The group recommended consideration within the roadmap of an action to explore alignment of appropriate assessment and the evidence required to complete this process. It was envisioned this could initially occur through an informal Expert Working Group to document and share existing approaches and challenges. Where possible, the group would establish areas for alignment across Member States that could inform production of a guidance document.

### → **Guidance on using Critical Loads**

Critical loads provide an evidence-based indication of the amount of nitrogen deposition areas with different habitat types within a Natura 2000 area can tolerate without significant negative effects on ecosystem structure, function and species. Currently, critical loads are used in many ways under appropriate assessment. The group recommended development of guidance on how to use critical loads in appropriate assessment. The NECD Working Group on Effects International Cooperative Group on Mapping & Modelling (ICP M&M) developed critical loads.

Jesper Leth Bak (Aarhus University) offered to approach WGE and ICP M&M to see if they would be interested in an open meeting that would inform production of a joint guidance document for Member State use.

For the concluding plenary session it was proposed to further discuss on the following three questions:

- *How to get together to explore possibilities of disseminating information on innovative restoration measures to mitigate impacts of nitrogen pollution and as well related problems?*
- *How best to approach updating and improving guidance for appropriate assessments for nitrogen (article 6 HD)?*
- *Who could contribute to sharing best practises in reduction of pressures (air and water pollution) on Natura 2000 and beyond, using case studies?*

**4.1.3. Theme 3 – Improving the conservation of Natura 2000 sites through integrated management: on the development of integrated management through projects and plans yielding multiple benefits, such as flood protection and river restoration.**

**Chair: Richard White**, NatureBureau (UK)

Integrated approaches, theme 3, were introduced by Richard White. Integrated management focuses at the landscape scale, whereby humans are seen as part of nature. By combining multiple goals then multiple benefits should also be realised. The session discussed the bottlenecks that hinder integrated approaches, as well as opportunities for transboundary cooperation of integrated management of Natura 2000 objectives.

**Presentations**

The session was introduced by four presentations, each focussing on a different aspect of the concept of integrated management of Natura 2000 sites. **Laurent Germain**, from Agence Française pour la Biodiversité, gave an overview of integrated management in France. This takes place at several levels and is driven through N2000 governance structures, integration of N2000 objectives with those of the Marine Strategy Framework and Water Framework directives and regional and local co-operation. He also discussed some obstacles to integration, especially highlighting the need for financial support for EU-driven projects at a local level and the sectoral nature of national and local management. French solutions included a new series of protected area strategies, integrated to territorial policies, enhancing the involvement of volunteer stakeholders and a national campaign aimed at the wider public.

**Lieven Nachtergale**, from the Agency for Nature and Forests in Belgium, introduced the Sigmaplan, a local project which is successfully integrating nature conservation with a large flood management scheme on the river Scheldt. The protection of local communities from tidal surges coming upstream from the North Sea is integrated with the creation and management of a range of conservation spaces. Different water levels are created by sluices, weirs and tidal gates, creating different wetland habitats. At the same time, a network of natural overflow areas and dikes provides flood protection. The integration of conservation and flood management has resulted in significant level of financial support for N2000 management.

**Wendy Olivier**, from IP Deltanatuur in the Netherlands discussed the role that good governance plays in delivering conservation gain through other policy areas. The LIFE IP Delta project is focussed on improving governance in the context of management of wetlands and rivers in the Netherlands. With 28 organisation involves, integration at all levels is essential. Equally important is to identify the ‘undercurrents’, those issues under the surface that can get in the way. In the LIFE IP Delta project, a regular series of site visits, conversations and workshops provides maximum opportunity for communication and understanding local issues. The most critical point is that integration and collaboration require a specific set of skills and competence on mutual gain approaches.

Finally, **Jose Antonio Juanes**, from IH Cantabria in Spain, presented several case studies showing the integration of SAC management with both social and economic drivers. On the Tina Menor estuary, the challenge of addressing eutrophication has included the development of sustainable aquaculture alongside increasing tidal action. Secondary activities, such as bird watching and recreation, provide additional benefits while new businesses based on the growth of saltmarsh species are being developed. On the Joyel estuary, addressing a similar eutrophication problem had to be integrate with allowing the continued use of a historic water mill. In all cases bottlenecks were identified as resulting from a range of issues including legal and administrative constraints and conflicting interests. The development of a truly biogeographical approach, with research into understanding ecological inter-dependencies as well as increased collaboration, was seen as vital.

### **Discussion in working groups**

Four sub-groups were formed to discuss first in small groups, Topic 1, the bottlenecks, such as legal obstacles and conflicting interests that hinder integrated approaches, their causes as well possible solutions or strategies to overcome them. Topic 2 was on opportunities for transboundary cooperation on the integrated management of Natura 2000 objectives in future projects or management plans (e.g. transboundary river management). After some time, the two groups that had been discussing the same topic joined together and formulated their priority issues.

The main bottleneck for integrated management of sites in areas with high land use pressures (agriculture, industry, urban and infrastructural development) as occur in the Netherlands, Belgium and parts of Germany and France was seen by the group as:

- 1) Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, and its legal interpretation, especially Article 6(3) and 6(4) is felt to be reducing the flexibility for integrated management and large-scale habitat restoration: often the Natura 2000 sites are small and large scale restoration will lead to the disappearance of species/habitats for which the site is designated. It also 'locks in' conservation to habitats and species of early successional habitats present at the time of designation and does not allow for unexpected developments. At the same time it is believed among participants that there is little that can be done to change this.
- 2) Funding is a limiting factor in the development of integrated projects. Better use and integration of different funds is difficult due to the compartmentation of funding, with different funding streams for different sectors. This problem is at all levels, from local, regional, national to EU. The positive value of conservation is mostly not accounted for in funding assessments.
- 3) a need for capacity building, since specific skills are required to prepare complex, integrated projects. These skills differ from implementing management at the site-level.

For transboundary cooperation it is essential to:

- 1) Focus on 'harmonising' approaches: to share knowledge and experiences – whether good or bad. This may involve the common understanding of the habitat definitions used, approaches for monitoring and reporting, as well as how enforcement is done.

- 2) Bear in mind that the development of transboundary parks can be a good approach. This requires formal transboundary governance structures, in particular for larger conservation initiatives, which also involves harmonisation of management between countries. This is a challenge, but significant gains can be made. Furthermore, 'out of the box' thinking can be important, and one may join other transnational initiatives (IUCN UK Peat Bog Programme, Large Carnivore Initiative etc.).
- 3) Develop / Maintain international cooperation for transboundary action plans for Invasive Alien Species (IAS). Eradication programmes need to be transboundary, e.g. for the Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*). This should focus both on prevention and eradication. What could be helpful is the development of European protocols for field work, e.g. by universities or research institutes.

Several persons and organisations offered their specific input or lead in some of these actions.

For the concluding plenary session it was proposed to further discuss on the following two questions:

- *How can we develop a programme to create a series of transboundary action plans for Invasive Alien Species IAS?*
- *How can we further develop capacity for integrated management projects?*



Picture 9; Discussion in the working group on integrated management

#### **4.1.4. Theme 4 – Involving local land managers through integrated site management**

**Chair: Dries Gorissen**, Agency of Nature and Forests (Belgium)

##### **Context**

Stakeholder engagement is one of the key success factors in the implementation of Natura 2000. By engaging landowners and users ('rights holders') in the formulation and achievement of Natura 2000 conservation or restoration objectives – in combination with other type of objectives – conflicts can be prevented, and costs reduced. There are different strategies and approaches for stakeholder engagement that can be successful to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the context (which may be different in each Member State, region or site). Lessons can be learned from one another by establishing learning communities, supported by different types of mechanisms, instruments and tools. Some of the common factors which play a role in achieving stakeholder engagement in management are:

- considering the views and concerns of private owners and users regarding site management;
- pro-actively involving private owners and users in the development of management plans; and
- the availability of and access to public funding schemes and other incentives for management.

In recent years, through the development of management plans and through LIFE-funded projects, considerable experience has been gathered in the field of stakeholder engagement in various Natura 2000 sites. However, at the same time, it is acknowledged that transferring lessons learned from one site to another, let alone between Member States, is not always an easy task. This session therefore reviewed different ways in which best practices can be transferred between sites and between Member States.

##### **Objectives of the thematic session**

The objectives of this thematic session were to:

- exchange knowledge on different strategies and approaches to initiating and developing communication to overcome obstacles and increase stakeholder engagement; and
- share ideas and best practices on the development of learning communities and mechanisms, instruments and tools that seem most successful for this purpose.

##### **Presentations**

The session discussed best practices of the involvement of stakeholders in the Natura 2000 network and what individual, group and organisational levels were needed to ensure adequate involvement.

The first presentation by Fernando Ballesteros of the Fundación Oso Pardo (Bear Foundation) presented their experience with the involvement of stakeholders in bear conservation. He underlined



the importance of peer-to-peer storytelling. In their area they organise exchange visits between beekeepers, some of whom have experience with measures to deter bears from raiding bee-hivers and they can best transfer this knowledge to others. In addition, he explained that sometimes it is better to talk with smaller groups of stakeholders or individually then to hold larger stakeholder meetings. Communication, trust, participation and in the end local governance were the steps that are required.

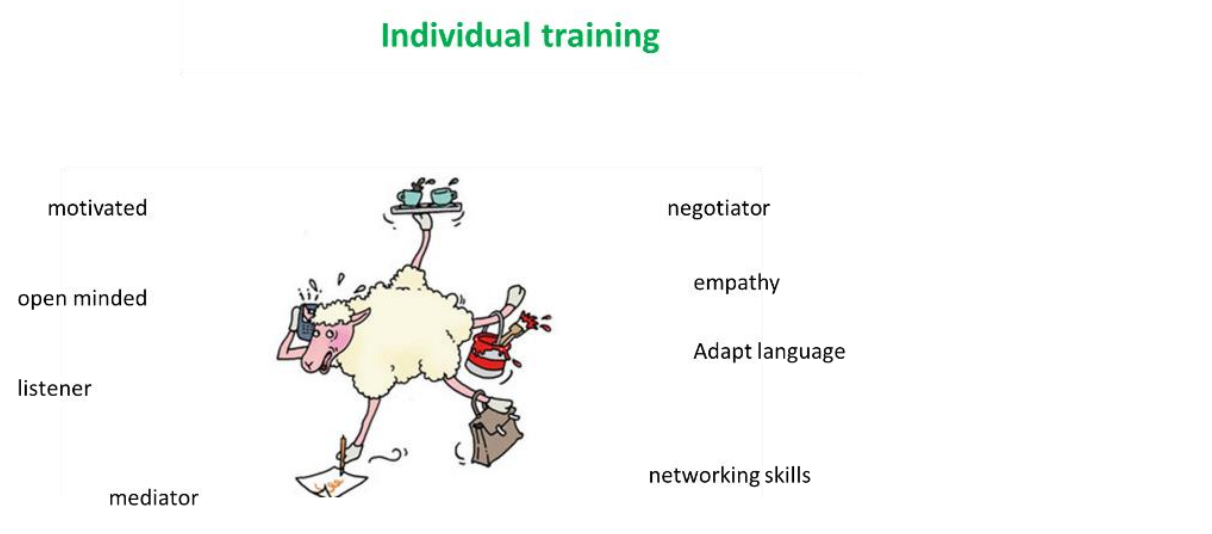
The second and third presentation underlined the importance of training the involved managers on this issue. Mara Rihouet explained the French support/training programme for Natura 2000 managers which is offered by the Agence française pour la biodiversité. The first step was an assessment of training needs, from which a tailored-made programme was designed that consisted of several shorter and longer training sessions on various topics.

Neil McIntosh presented the LIFE – E-learning programme LIFE e-Natura2000.edu that is reviewing the competences needed by Natura 2000 managers. On the basis of this assessment they will develop several online training modules from September 2019 onwards for use by interested organisations.

**Discussion in working groups**

In the breakout groups participants discussed aspects related to training of individual staff, working with groups and cooperation within organisations.

For the individual level it was underlined that staff responsible for stakeholder involvement need to have a broad range of competences. Therefore continuous (lifelong) learning and the chance to exchange their experiences is essential for them. Accordingly, Member States and involved stakeholders should invest in their staff and organise or enable them to receive training and participate in exchanges.



Picture 10: Individual competences necessary for Natura 2000 managers to be able to develop stakeholder engagement identified by the working group

It was noted that the European Landowners Organisation and Eurosite were running projects on the instruments and options to involve landowners in site management and that a joint follow-up initiative is foreseen. For the level of working with groups it was stressed that the first step is to bring people together and that different models are available to facilitate this. A joint vision can help in increasing cooperation in the group. It was stressed that people do not need to agree on everything but that consensus on some issues might be sufficient to get things moving. To increase organisational cooperation it was recognised that a clear division of roles and responsibilities is important, and that a simple organisation structure ensures cooperation. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge the achievements of other organisations.

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

- A) LIFE E- learning project *LIFE e-Natura2000.edu* interested organisations are invited to join
- B) Monitoring: several parties wondered how to monitor the short- and long-term effects on stakeholder involvement, in particular for example after a LIFE project has ended. More cooperation on this issue might be useful to make the best use of the various experiences in the different Member States. This topic was further elaborated on the third day.
- C) Several participants underlined the need for Peer to Peer exchange visits, both between governmental officials and between involved stakeholders. There is an EU funding instrument available for this called [PEER learning for environmental authorities](#)). Ideas for visits were mentioned and also elaborated on the third day.
- D) Two LIFE projects (*European Private Land Conservation Network* managed by Eurosite and LIFE ELCN: *Land Is For Ever* managed by ELO specifically look at instruments to involve experts in projects and a follow up initiative is foreseen.
- E) There is an upcoming LIFE-Platform meeting scheduled for 14-16 October 14 2019 in Brussels on the topic 'Natura 2000 governance' which is organised by the [LIFE Belgian Integrated Project](#). – interested parties can attend and still provide ideas for the meeting.

For the concluding plenary session it was proposed to further discuss on the following three questions :

- *Who likes to contribute upcoming LIFE-IP meeting on Governance in Belgium, October?*
- *How to monitor effects of stakeholder engagement and communication activities?*
- *Can we identify potential exchange visits between MS/ organisations? Interesting themes and offer/demand?*

## 5. Concluding plenary session and following steps

### 5.1. Elaboration of actions

In the last session presentations were made on the three excursions of the previous day and the chairs reported back on the thematic sessions held on the first day (see paragraph 4.1). Each thematic session had selected one to three issues they wanted to discuss further in the plenary session. Each participant could select three issues which were discussed in smaller groups (6 people at most). The following topics were discussed in this setting:

#### 1. How can we develop a programme to create a series of transboundary action plans for Invasive Alien Species (IAS)? *Richard White*

The following actions were proposed and discussed :

- developing a list of IAS specific for the Biogeographical Process; there are already list of invasive alien species but it would be good to select the species most relevant for the Atlantic region and for Natura 2000 sites. It would also be possible to then discuss with Member States regional priorities;
- ensure funding for eradication of IAS amongst others through LIFE;
- develop a network event on IAS.

More discussion is needed. Future meetings could usefully include concerns from outside the Natura 2000 network to ensure co-ordination with other initiatives. Considering who is doing what already as is important to integrate any new actions with the IAS Regulation, with existing initiatives and with other legislation requiring relevant measures (e.g. Water Framework Directive).

#### 2. How can we further develop capacity for integrated management projects? *Theo van der Sluis*

The discussion focused on the identification and the development of the quality of skills. Mastering targeted information is necessary and this may first require a knowledge-needs assessment. Skills should include both practical and process skills. In addition, skills depend on the scale considered (site level or landscape scale). The following suggestions were made:

- Develop project-based training/assistance for those involved in the development of future projects or in actual project execution.
- Established a working group to develop initiatives for capacity development. One approach is to examine good and bad practices, and use this as study case.
- Develop project-based training, in which LIFE and INTERREG programmes can be involved.
- Develop the concept of the LIFE INFO DAY into a meeting where potential projects would have an opportunity to learn directly what support they might seek and how they could shape their perspectives.

- Improving the capacity for integrated management could be enhanced by the development of (integrated) projects under the EU funds, including those executed by DG-CLIMA.

EUROSITE has a working group on integrated management planning and they can give trainings (at e.g. LIFE meetings).

**3. Who would like to contribute to the upcoming LIFE-IP meeting on Governance in Belgium, in October? *Tom Andries***

Several suggestions for speakers to invite and issues to discuss at this meeting were made by the participants.

**4. How to monitor the effects of stakeholder engagement and communication activities? *Irene Bouwma***

The three different groups of stakeholders are targeted by Natura 2000 stakeholder engagement activities :

- those closely associated with projects/processes: usually this is a small core group that is highly motivated;
- those in the vicinity (often indirectly involved through their representatives): they have a stake but contact with them is either indirectly or sparsely;
- and the general public: all those living in the area or visiting it.

Hence, different methods combining quantitative and qualitative indicators are needed to monitor the impact of stakeholder involvement activities for the various groups. It was agreed to collect the approaches documented in literature and LIFE projects to see how this issue is addressed at present.

**5. Can we identify potential exchange visits between Member States / organisations? Interesting themes and offers/requests - *Thomas Defoort***

The themes proposed were:

- management planning;
- determining conservation status;
- meadow bird conservation;
- public-private cooperation;
- field management;
- estuaries.

Concrete actions for exchange visits on aquatic ecosystems, estuaries and sand dunes were proposed with expressions of interest to organise them:

- The Agency for Nature and Forests is preparing a LIFE Sand Dunes project in collaboration with German partners and it might be possible to include a practitioners workshop;
- The Netherlands (Wendy Olivier) and Flanders (Lieven Nachtergale) are planning a meeting on dealing with water ecosystems (concrete case: Grevelingen) with regard to complying with Article 6.3 and 6.4 of the Habitats Directive;
- The Cantabria region will organise a meeting or workshop as part of 2 LIFE projects in the region on estuaries.

The following ways to stimulate the organisation of meetings and events was suggested:

- Stimulate the organisation of exchange meetings as part of LIFE projects through the new LIFE programme more than is already the case and including in terms of resources;
- Stimulate Member States to hold transboundary exchange meetings on their priority issues as part of the implementation their prioritised action frameworks.

**6. Given the need for a wider restoration agenda for grasslands, how best to cooperate to further define and operationalise necessary measures at site and landscape level, including through LIFE, CAP? The debate should include monitoring, involvement of stakeholders and cooperation between Member States. *Kalev Sepp***

The following ideas and actions were proposed and discussed:

- To compile and submit a Life IP proposal on protection of meadow birds (all grassland species), led by Lower Saxony Water Management, Coastal Defence and Nature Conservation Agency. Deadlines: 6 September 2019 (project concept note), February 2020 (full proposal). All Atlantic region Member States, as well stakeholders and non-governmental organisations are invited to participate. Contact Heinrich Belting.
- To establish an Atlantic biogeographical level restoration agenda for meadow birds including recovery goals. Member States should define their interests in the restoration agenda.
- Member States should mainstream the measures necessary for the protection of meadow birds into the common agricultural policy.
- To increase awareness about protection of meadow birds amongst the general public. It was suggested by the participants that a booklet on meadow birds could be compiled at EU level.
- The establishment of a thematic network within the Atlantic region on meadow birds protection was suggested.

**7. How to get together to explore possibilities for dissemination of information on innovative restoration measures to mitigate impacts of nitrogen pollution and related problems? *Rienk-Jan Bijlsma***

The group discussed:

- existing relevant networks and meetings (e.g. Dune network, previous network meetings, RSPB's Dorset heathland project and annual heathland festival);
- the development of guidance on the most effective measures, looking not only at the N-budget but at all nutrient budgets;
- the role of the forthcoming EU dry heathland action.

**8. How best to approach updating and improving guidance for appropriate assessments for nitrogen (article 6 of the Habitats Directive)? *Jan Willem van der Vegte***

Member States and regional representatives had varying levels of awareness of the challenges with appropriate assessment of the effects from atmospheric and water borne nitrogen on Natura 2000 site ecosystems. Participants welcomed sharing of information about specific tools for undertaking appropriate assessment (such as Arius, Scail) and related issues with current approaches. The group advocated the development of a guidance document on how to use critical loads in appropriate assessment. To undertake this work, a combination of building on existing networks established under the National Emission Ceilings Directives (NECD) and creating an informal expert working group on appropriate assessment for Natura 2000 sites was suggested.

Specific actions recommended were:

- Share current appropriate assessment tools and explore alignment:

The group recommended consideration within the roadmap of an action to explore alignment of appropriate assessment and the evidence required to complete this process. It was envisioned this could initially occur through an informal expert working group to document and share existing approaches and challenges. Where possible, the group would establish areas for alignment across Member States that could inform production of a guidance document.

- Guidance on using critical loads:

Critical loads provide an evidence-based indication of the amount of nitrogen deposition that areas with different habitat types within a Natura 2000 site can tolerate without significant negative effects on ecosystem structure, function and species. Currently, critical loads are used in many ways under appropriate assessment. The group recommended development of guidance on how to use critical loads in appropriate assessment. The National Emission Ceilings Directive (NECD 2016/2284/EU), the Working Group on Effects (WGE) of the

Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution and the International Cooperative Group on Mapping and Modelling (ICP M&M) have developed guidance material on critical loads for various airborne pollutions including nitrogen deposition. For more information on the guidance material developed by these groups visit the websites:

<https://icpvegetation.ceh.ac.uk/> and

<http://www.unece.org/env/lrtap/WorkingGroups/wge/mapping.html>.

Jesper Leth Bak (Aarhus University) offered to approach WGE and ICP M&M to see if they would be interested in an open meeting that would inform production of a joint guidance document for Member States' use.

**9. Who could contribute to sharing best practices in reduction of pressures (air and water pollution) within and beyond Natura 2000 sites, using case studies? How to disseminate information. Anne Schmidt**

Several bottlenecks were identified that hamper information dissemination such as the facts that much information is in grey literature in various languages, and that practitioners hold much information which is difficult to access. The following suggestions were made to improve this situation:

- Develop a platform to exchange information;
- Translate or summarise existing grey literature in English;
- Undertake study/exchange visits;
- Develop a question/answer facility.



Picture 11: Further elaboration of issues during the plenary session

## 5.2. Closing remarks

- The new roadmap will be based on the meeting; it must be flexible and capture the ideas of the meeting. It is not fixed in stone, but will be updated as part of the biogeographical process.
- The draft roadmap will be prepared separately from the seminar report, further elaborated within the steering committee and posted on the Natura 2000 Platform.
- At the end of 2019 there will be new call for proposals for networking events by the Consortium organising the Biogeographical process. Announcements will be made on the platform, in the Newsletter and through Twitter.
- To implement Natura 2000, existing tools, policies and networks should be employed. This in particular relates to the network on invasive alien species.

## 6. Additional information: development of the roadmap

The roadmap of the Atlantic Region will comprise a series of actions which would address the need for knowledge exchange on the key issues already identified for the Atlantic biogeographical region. For some of these actions, the roadmap will identify possible lead bodies and a target timetable. In some cases a lead has been offered, in others a lead will be proposed by the European Commission through the Biogeographical Process and in others there are suggested lead bodies.

The roadmap acts as an “aide-mémoire” 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 State conservation bodies.

The roadmap has been developed for the Atlantic biogeographic region and the Biogeographic Process led by the European Commission. The Habitats Directive requires Member States within each biogeographic region to work together to achieve favourable conservation status at the biogeographic level. However, the ambition of a European Network is to share experience across all biogeographic regions. Moreover, through LIFE projects there is a ‘family’ of European projects where networking, transfer of knowledge, replication of success and sharing of good practice is built into project design. These projects are encouraged to use available resources from the Natura 2000 Platform and actively participate in the Natura 2000 network events (and sometimes biogeographical seminars).



## ANNEXES

### Annex 1 – Programme of the seminar

#### Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2019:

Arrival of participants

19.30 hr. Pre-seminar briefing meeting of chairs and reporters (lobby Leonardo hotel).

#### Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2019:

Time	Session, topics and speakers	Location
8:00- 9:00	Registration of participants	Registration desk on 12 <sup>th</sup> floor
<b>Plenary session</b>		
9:00- 10:15	Official welcome & introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mrs Evenepoel, Administrateur General - Agency for Nature and Forests</li> <li>• Mr Humberto Delgado Rosa -Director for Natural Capital in DG ENV</li> <li>• Thematic orientation on the seminar, review of the progress since the 2nd Atlantic seminar (Ireland) and roadmap of the biogeographical process -Sophie Ouzet (DG ENV)</li> <li>• Inspiration from previous Seminars- The co-operation on Dune roadmap – John Houston ( NEEMO).</li> </ul>	Meeting room 12 <sup>th</sup> floor
10:15- 10:45	Coffee break	
10:45- 12:00	Overview of the thematic working groups by chairs/facilitators. Guest speaker for Theme 1: Erik Kleyheeg (SOVON) Presentation of each of the topic of the sessions and questions to be addressed	Meeting room 12th floor
12:00–13:30	Lunch	Buffet room 12 <sup>th</sup> floor
<b>Parallel working groups session</b> <i>Each session starts with 5 minutes welcome by Chair, followed by three presentations of 15 minutes.</i>		
13:30- 17:30	Theme 1: Protection and conservation of meadow birds Chair: Rebecca Jeffrey (National Parks and Wildlife Service – NPWS (Ireland)) Speakers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heinrich Belting –Meadow Birds LIFE NLWKN Staatliche Vogelschutzwarte (Germany)</li> </ul>	Meeting room Hamburg 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor

Time	Session, topics and speakers	Location
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evelien Verbij- Boerennatuur (Netherlands)</li> </ul>	
13:30- 17:30	<p>Theme 2: Integrated approaches to tackling nitrogen pollution impacts on Natura 2000 sites</p> <p>Chair: Jan Willem van de Vegte - BIJ12 (Netherlands)</p> <p>Speakers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jesper Leth Bak - Aarhus University (Denmark)</li> <li>Rienk-Jan Bijlsma, WENR (Netherlands)</li> <li>Alastair Burn (Natural England, UK)</li> </ul>	Meeting room Rotterdam 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor
13:30- 17:30	<p>Theme 3: Improving the conservation of Natura 2000 features through integrated management</p> <p>Chair: Richard White – NatureBureau (United Kingdom)</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lieven Nachtergale - Agency for Nature and Forests (Belgium)</li> <li>Wendy Olivier – IP Deltanatuur (Netherlands)</li> <li>Jose Antonio Juanes de la Pena - IP CONVIVE (Spain)</li> <li>Laurent Germain - Agence Française pour la Biodiversité ( France)</li> </ul>	Meeting room Vancouver 1 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor
13:30- 17:30	<p>Theme 4: Developing stakeholder engagement in Natura 2000 through translation of best practices</p> <p>Chair: Dries Gorissen, Agency for Forests and Nature (Belgium)</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fernando Ballesteros -Fundación Oso Pardo (Spain)</li> <li>Mara Rihouet - Agence française pour la biodiversité (France)</li> <li>Neil McIntosh – EUROPARC Federation</li> </ul>	Meeting room Vancouver 2 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor.
<b>Evening</b>		
19:00- 21:00	<p>Knowledge market</p> <p>Participants are invited to a buffet dinner during the knowledge market</p>	Buffet Room 12 <sup>th</sup> floor

**Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2019:**

Time		Location
8:00	Gathering of the participants and boarding the buses Lunch will be provided by the organisers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-border park Groot Saefthinge departure 8:15,</li> <li>• Polders of Kruikeke and fortification of Steendorp, departure 8:30,</li> <li>• Kalmthoutse heide: departure 8:45</li> </ul> <b>Note! – Participants are kindly requested to wear comfortable shoes and to bring warm clothes in case of rain or cold weather.</b>	Departure in front of the Lindner hotel, busses will leave at the indicated time
8:00– 17:00	Cross-border park Kalmthoutse heide Polders of Kruikeke and fortification of Steendorp Cross-border park Groot Saefthinge	
17:00	Arrival at Parkspoor Noord (North of Antwerp- old railway area converted to park)	
17:00-20.00	Buffet at restaurant at Parkspoor Noord	

**Friday 14<sup>th</sup> of June 2019:**

Time	Session, topics and speakers	Location
<b>Plenary session</b>		
9:00- 9:30	Reporting on excursions on Day 2 and introduction to Day 3	New York room, 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor
9:30– 10:30	Reporting from Thematic Working Groups by Chair persons of the 4 thematic groups	New York room, 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor
10:30- 11:00	Coffee break	Lobby
11:00- 12:00	Discussion on actions and initiatives Update on the roadmap for Atlantic Seminar	New York room, 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor
12:00- 12:30	Awarding of the Knowledge Market Price Closing remarks and way forward	New York, 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor
	Departure of participants	

## Annex 2 – List of organisations and projects at the knowledge market

Country	Organisation	Title of the presentation/poster and short description
EU	Eurosite/European Habitats Forum	Project poster and Eurosite brochures and a computer for people to sign in for a newsletter
EU	Coastwatch /Environment Pillar Ireland	<p>One or more of these as report highlights, photos and GIS maps</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coastwatch citizen science results especially relating to coastal biodiversity, with examples from the Baltic, Celtic Seas and Portugal/Spain</li> <li>2. Island of Ireland Zostera citizen science training, survey by foot and kayak and results, including X border areas of Lough Foyle and Carlingford lough.</li> <li>3. Case study: Veins running between hinterland and sea: citizen audit and protection of small inflows into Bannow Bay Natura 2000 site and subsequent engagement. A joint Wexford County Council, Coastwatch, LAWCO, Agriculture advisor and local stakeholder project.</li> </ol>
EU	NEEMO	Brochures on LIFE programme
EU	The EUROPARC Federation	LIFE – E-learning programme (brochures)
France	Conservatoire d'espaces naturels Normandie Seine	Poster on a seminar organised in September on the management of calcareous grasslands
France	Scarpe-Escout Regional Natural Park	Natura 2000 letters and other folders and roll'up and panel on the project 'Bienvenus les sportifs!'
Germany	Niedersächsischer Landesbetrieb für Wasserwirtschaft, Küsten- und Naturschutz	Poster on the Meadowbirds LIFE project and leaflets
Germany	Behörde für Umwelt und Energie, Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg	Poster. Title: From legislation to implementation: The Hamburg strategy for improving the conservation status under the EU habitats directive.
Germany	Federal Agency for Nature Protection	Reports on Natura 2000

Country	Organisation	Title of the presentation/poster and short description
Germany	LANUV - Landesamt für Natur, Umwelt und Verbraucherschutz	Poster on IP-LIFE "Atlantic Sand Landscapes", flyer
Germany	Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN)	I could bring some handouts and publications of a project that was presented as a poster at the last Atlantic Seminar (Management concepts for selected species and habitat of the Habitat Directive) if it is of interest.
Ireland	National Parks and Wildlife Service	A pop-up banner illustrating the work of The Living Bog - Raised Bog Restoration Project (LIFE14 NAT/IE/000032): <a href="http://raisedbogs.ie/about-the-living-bog/">http://raisedbogs.ie/about-the-living-bog/</a>
Netherlands	Waternet	Brochures of Life project.
Netherlands	BoerenNatuur	Brochure about BoerenNatuur
Netherlands	WENR	Pop-up banner on The Biogeographical Process
Spain	Brown Bear Foundation (Fundación Oso Pardo)	A poster for the presentation of the LIFE Natura2000+Bear

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## Annex 5- Evaluation of the seminar (summary)

95 people attended the seminar. A total of 38 responses<sup>4</sup> were received in response to the evaluation survey and these are included in this evaluation (response rate = 40 %). In the evaluation the delegates could indicate a score from 1-10 for various parts of the seminar. The range varied from 10 – 2. One participant expressed highly negative scores on almost all aspects of the survey.

In the table below the average scores are given:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Average score</b> (best score = 10/10)
the overall organisation of the seminar	8,7
the opening plenary session of the seminar	7,8
the work presentations	7,8
the quality of the facilitation	7,8
the interactions with other participants	7,9
the field visits	8,9

Table 2 presents the overall scores given to the six questions where scoring could be indicated. It shows that only 4 times a score was given below 6 (2%).

<b>Scoring</b>	<b>Total</b>
2	2
4	1
5	1
6	14
7	36
8	68
9	45
10	18
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>185</b>

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<sup>4</sup> One response was excluded from the survey as the written comments (very positive) did not match the scores provided (very negative) so perhaps the scoring system was misunderstood.

Participants were also asked to provide feedback on the values of the seminar they attended in 4 fields, these being knowledge, interaction and empowerment.

<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Total</b>
The talks and discussion I heard during the seminar have changed my view of the management of Natura 2000		1	21	15		37
The information provided at the seminar has given me a more in-depth understanding of the intricacies of the management of Natura 2000			5	26	6	37
During the seminar I gained new and useful ideas for my future work		1	4	26	6	37
I am likely to use the information provided at the seminar to change or adapt my own management or implementation of Natura 2000	1	1	14	18	3	37
<b>Interaction</b>						
The seminar allowed me to become acquainted with new contacts and has expanded my professional network			3	20	14	37
The seminar allowed me to reconnect with previous professional acquaintances	1	2	10	18	6	37
Through the seminar I learned that other participants are facing similar challenges as I am with implementing Natura2000 policy			6	17	14	37
<b>Empowerment</b>						
This seminar reinforces the strategic importance in my organisation to invest in Natura 2000	1	3	11	17	5	37
The information provided at the seminar allows me to have better discussions on the purpose and goals of Natura2000 policy with colleagues from my home organisation and other related parties in my country		2	5	23	7	37
Taking part in the seminar helps me with initiating or taking part in follow-up actions under the Natura 2000 biogeographical process	1		8	21	7	37



Participants could also indicate one issue they felt was a particular success during the seminar. The responses are given below:

- The roving groups in the last session (each person visiting 3 of the 9 themes)
- The workshops
- Good location near a train station so therefore easy to reach
- The hospitality
- Field visit
- Interactivity during the workgroups, the field visits, the off times...
- Timing
- The field visit
- Valuable opportunity for networking
- The multitude of idea's I bring at home to improve the work on n2000 in my own country
- The overall structure with introductions, presentations, workshops and excursions
- The last session which helped to distil down actions for the roadmap
- The facilitation techniques and approach used in the interactive sessions - compared with previous seminars, the Friday morning interaction is definitely a valuable addition.
- The range of participants
- Perfect networking
- Interactive approach, workshops
- Well run field trips.
- Good range of participants, from most member states in the region
- The visits
- The field trips, with time to talk to the other participants
- Timing very well adhered to, facilities very good
- Field trips
- Information sharing and having key actions for international working to take forward in current bidding rounds.
- The field excursions
- Motivation, new ideas and contacts for a growing network
- Roadmap approach
- Very good networking, interesting excursion
- It was all extremely well organised on both days from the variety of talks, rooms and food with very knowledgeable people leading segments of the field trip.
- Useful and practice-oriented discussion during site visit in a pleasant context
- Fieldtrips and breakout groups
- many contacts with professionals
- field trips
- the overall organisation - the discussion between all the participants
- Linking up with science and policy people across the region

- Field trip including discussions between participants and stakeholders/residents
- Participation of almost all MS from the region
- Many participants from different countries

Participants could also indicate one issue they felt needed to be improved during the seminar. Below their responses are given:

- Lunch on the final day would have been a nice conclusion to the event.
- General introduction
- The room for our sub session was very small
- Less traffic at rush hour
- Knowledge market
- The integrative management of N2000 need perhaps a precision of what we want to integrate: the different rules, the stakeholders, the managers, all those items?
- Parts of our field trip
- Knowledge market
- The agenda during the workshop was not totally clear (what results should be achieved)
- Give more information about the field trips in advance, suggest at each part of a field trip the discussion point to exchange thoughts on.
- There was much too little time to have discussions in workshops! If we are to contribute substantially more time is needed. Maybe run the same themes for workshops several times, at different times, so it will be possible to participate in more than one workshop/theme.
- Field trips before the working groups
- Editorial checks for the documentation - always scope for improvement!
- More information on the process, habitats, Article 17 and 12 reporting etc.
- Define a clear Output for the workshops
- Lunch, last day.
- More time to meet other participants.
- Ability to attend more than one workshop
- The workshop
- The sessions on Wednesday afternoon were a bit long, starting with 3 presentations.
- Organisation of chairs for the breakout groups during the workshop sessions
- Networking
- The only part I would report back was we were unfortunate recipients of a smelly coach on trip 2. Luckily we got to spend lots of time outside of it.
- Better exchange of contact information regarding future cooperation
- Maybe there should be extra time for the knowledge market, before dinner starts
- Connect process to Article 17 reporting

- More focused themes on the workshops
- I did not understand how the knowledge market and its awarding was done.
- The attention to the stands on the knowledge market seemed lower this time. A brief moment at every stand consecutively, with a glass in hand, in a few sentences, a recruiting eye opener for the group (this was the procedure in Ireland if I remember correctly?)
- We needed to have more interaction with other stakeholders – everyone gravitated towards their own countries.
- Better knowledge of the results of the other workshops, I hope to find them in the report
- Follow-up process
- The organisation of the market knowledge - I think it would be nice to have a specific time for it
- Can't think of anything
- To receive a list of participants/affiliations in advance (instead of during the meeting)
- Nothing specific
- There should be more time for discussion in the thematic workgroups. Link between themes from workgroups and field excursions should be made clearer.