



Selection of themes for the 3rd Natura 2000 Mediterranean seminar

Version 3 April 2020

Introduction:

The following selection of themes for the 3rd Natura 2000 Mediterranean seminar takes account of the feedback from Member States prior to the Steering Committee held on 19 March 2020 and during this meeting on the list of proposed themes, as well as of the proposals in the concept note transmitted by Spain¹.

In line with the existing roadmap for cooperation under the Natura 2000 process in the Mediterranean region (Mediterranean roadmap), it has been generally acknowledged that in most cases, agreeing on the conceptual framework for Natura 2000 (FCS, FRVs, coherence...) is necessary for discussion and action at biogeographical scale regarding restoration and management to become fully meaningful. Thus, we would like to ensure that discussions during the seminar, either in plenary or in the working groups, build on the Mediterranean roadmap and on the results, conclusions and proposals for future action defined by the experts from the biogeographical region in the 'Workshops for the harmonization of procedures for monitoring, assessment and conservation of the habitat types of Community interest' organised by the Spanish Ministry for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge (MITECO).

Topics for discussion in the opening plenary:

To take account of the background elements mentioned above, we propose that the roadmaps, results, conclusions, proposals already developed under the Natura 2000 biogeographical process in the Mediterranean region are shared and where necessary discussed in plenary, before the thematic working groups meet.

We also plan to exchange in plenary, prior to the working groups, on issues that are likely to be at the core of the upcoming EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. Coherence and connectivity of Natura 2000 and protected areas are very likely to fit into this discussion.

All these elements, though yet to be completed according to the specific roadmaps on harmonisation or through additional operational initiatives, will inform working group discussions on the implementation of EU, biogeographical and national strategies in the Mediterranean region.

Topics for discussion in the thematic working groups:

Themes A and B below will in particular expand the opening plenary debate. Themes C and D relate to best practice and capacity building in management of the Natura 2000 network.

A. Defining and coordinating a Natura 2000 restoration agenda for the Mediterranean region.

For many species and habitat types, achieving favourable conservation status (FCS) requires the implementation of active restoration measures, both within the Natura 2000 network, and beyond. Developing an efficient conservation agenda at national or biogeographical scale requires that Member States align their understanding of FCS at these levels. However, considering its potential for combining biodiversity and climate objectives, restoration is expected to become one of the key objective of the upcoming EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

¹ Concept note from the Spanish Ministry for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge (MITECO) on "The Natura 2000 Biogeographical Process: Overview and experiences from Spain" dated 19 March 2020

In the frame of the current seminar theme, participants will further exchange about how their approaches for operationalising the concept of FCS, in particular in terms of defining locations, areas and type of the required restoration measures at national, regional or site level.

This will be illustrated with existing experiences with setting of restoration objectives, measures and priorities, such as the Prioritized Action Frameworks (PAFs) and approaches towards setting regional site-level restoration objectives.

Participants will also be invited to explore opportunities for translating their national approaches into a common “biogeographical region restoration agenda” for the Mediterranean region.

NB: - This theme stems from theme 1 from the annex to the Steering Committee’s agenda (meeting of 19 March 2020).

B. Defining conservation objectives at site level and monitoring the impact of the measures.

If the Natura 2000 network is to enable the maintenance or restoration of a favourable conservation status (FCS), the setting of site-level conservation objectives and measures will necessarily need to include elements of both conservation/maintenance and restoration/improvement.

In the frame of the current seminar theme, participants will review existing guidance and best practice, discuss operational experience and identify replicable methods in the setting of site-level objectives and measures for habitats and species. A particular focus will be given to the setting of objectives and measures for achieving improvements, and how to monitor progress with their implementation at site level.

The discussions will be illustrated with examples of conservation objectives and measures included in site-level SAC designation acts and management plans, and existing site-level monitoring approaches in the member States.

NB: - This theme stems from theme 4 from the annex to the Steering Committee’s agenda (meeting of 19 March 2020).

C. Addressing land abandonment in the Mediterranean region.

For species and habitats that depend on agricultural management practises, land abandonment is a major ongoing pressure in the Mediterranean region. The direct impact of abandoning suitable land management practises can be exacerbated further through climate change impacts. For example, more intensive periods of drought are well known to increase the risk of uncontrolled fires, in particular on recently abandoned lands.

In the frame of the current seminar theme, participants will share and review their existing experiences, both on how to prevent land abandonment in the frame of Natura 2000 site management, and on how to identify possible approaches towards mitigating negative impacts. Information will also be shared on the use of financing opportunities, such as those related to climate change mitigation, the Common Agricultural Policy, etc.

The discussions will be illustrated with examples of conservation objectives and measures aimed at preventing land abandonment or mitigating its impact (including nature-based solutions).

NB: - Merges themes 2 and 3 from the annex to the Steering Committee’s agenda (meeting of 19 March 2020).

D. Building capacity for Natura 2000 management.

The development and maintenance of sufficient administrative and financial capacities for the management of Natura 2000 sites is a shared concern amongst EU Member States. Insufficient resources impact both on the capacity to manage the Natura 2000 network and on the capacity to develop large conservation or restoration projects.

In the frame of the current seminar theme, participants will share and review their existing experiences on how to build and maintain the necessary capacities and skills for an effective management of the network and the development and implementation of large projects.

Discussions will be illustrated with examples, in particular from recent LIFE Nature integrated projects.

NB: - Corresponds to theme 5 from the annex to the Steering Committee’s agenda (meeting of 19 March 2020).