

EU guidelines on Favourable Reference Values

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Outline of the presentation

- **How do we assess the conservation status?**
- **Defining where we want to go & favourable reference values (FRV)**
- **Improving EU guidance on FRVs**
 - Past work on FRVs
 - Summary of the current guidance
 - Feedback on setting FRVs
 - Future work on FRVs (survey, analysis of MS data, best practices)

Assessing the conservations status

1. **Assesses the distance from a favourable situation (≠red listing)**
2. **Thus a definition of a favourable situation is required**
3. **Article 1 of the Habitats Directive defines when a species or habitat is in favourable conservation status**
4. **Assessed at biogeographical level (national & EU)**

The role of Favourable Reference Values (FRVs)

- FRVs are quantitative thresholds
- How much is enough to ensure long-term viability of habitats & species in their natural range?
- FRVs are an important part of the definition of a favourable status for a habitat or species
- But alone they are not sufficient to assess CS (see evaluation matrix)

> 10% below FRV

Equal or bigger than FRV

FRVs are defined as...

- FR RANGE (species & habitats)

'Range within which all significant ecological variations of the habitat/species are included for a given biogeographical region and which is sufficiently large to allow the long-term survival of the habitat/species; favourable reference value must be at least the range (in size and configuration) when the Directive came into force.'

- FR POPULATION (species)

Population in a given biogeographical region considered the minimum necessary to ensure the long-term viability of the species; favourable reference value must be at least the size of the population when the Directive came into force.'

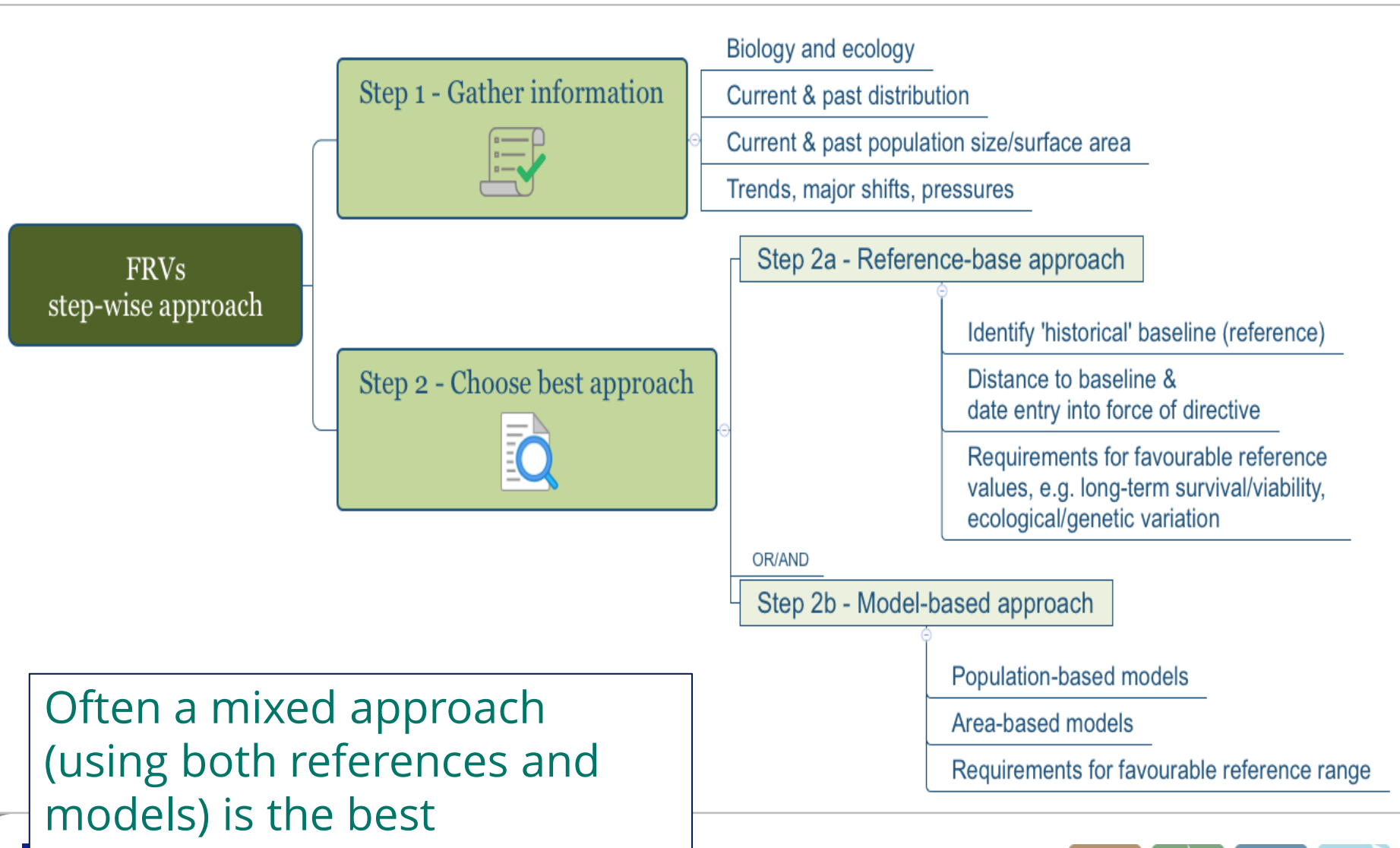
- FR AREA (habitats)

Total surface area of habitat in a given biogeographical region considered the minimum necessary to ensure the long-term viability of the habitat type; this should include necessary areas for restoration or development for those habitat types for which the present coverage is not sufficient to ensure long-term viability; favourable reference value must be at least the surface area when the Directive came into force.'

Assessing conservation status under the Habitats Directive

Code: xxxx	Favourable	Inadequate	Bad
1. Range	Stable or increasing and \geq favourable reference range (FRR)	Not qualifying for red or green	Large decrease or more than 10% below FRR
2. Area covered	Stable or increasing and \geq favourable reference area (FRA) and no big changes in distribution pattern	Not qualifying for red or green	Large decrease or more than 10% below FRA or major losses in distribution pattern
3. Structure & functions	Structures and functions in good condition and no significant deteriorations / pressures	Not qualifying for red or green	More than 25% of the area is unfavourable as regards its specific structures and functions
4. Future prospects	Good prospects, no significant impact from threats expected; long-term viability assured	Not qualifying for red or green	Severe influence of pressures and threats, bad prospects re. long-term viability

Summary of guidance



Often a mixed approach (using both references and models) is the best

Guiding principles in setting FRVs

- **FRVs should be set on the basis of ecological and biological considerations;**
- **FRVs should be set using the best available knowledge and scientific expertise**
- **FRVs should be set taking into account the precautionary principle and include a safety margin for uncertainty**
- **FRVs should not be lower than the values when directive came into force (in principle)**
- **FR population must be bigger than MVP to ensure demographic and genetic viability**
- **FRVs are not necessarily equal to ‘national’ targets**
- **FRVs not automatically equal to a ‘historical maximum’**
- **FRVs not automatically equal to ‘potential value’ (e.g. carrying capacity)**

Many possible uses in different processes...

FRVs & Natura
2000

FRVs &
biodiversity
policy

FRVs &
management
objectives

FRVS &
'national targets'
or 'milestones'

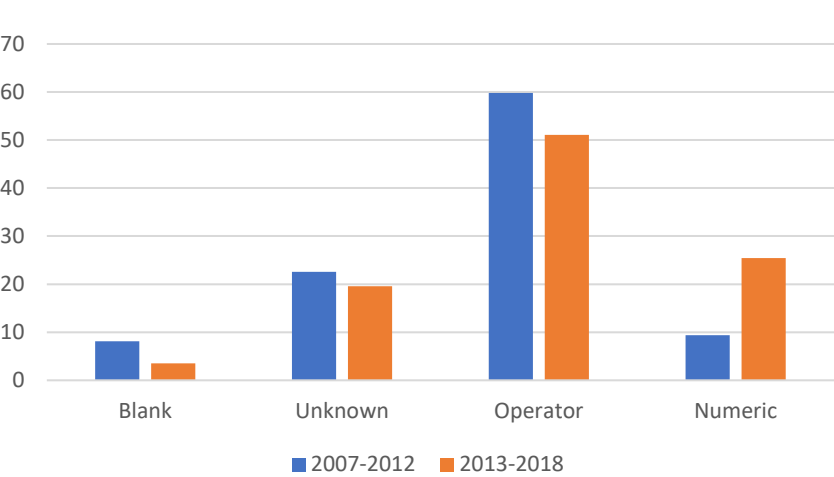
FRVs &
restoration for
climate &
biodiversity

Work done so far

- Ad hoc group of MS experts on FRVs.
 - EC service contract (consortium led by WENR) + Outcome = two reports: methodology and examples.
 - Main outcome – revised and improved guidance on FRVs as part of the ‘Explanatory Notes and Guidelines for the period 2013-2018’ as approved by Nadeq (May 2017)
- Feedback from MS that updated guidance still difficult to implement in practice (part of the review of last reporting round)
- Further scoping work...

Summary of analysis of MS data and survey

Use of numeric FRPs



MS using numeric FRPs (2013 -2018)

BU	92%	AT	1.4%
SE	92%	BE	2%
ES	81%	DK	0%
LV	81%	FI	0%
RO	48%	FR	0.4%
IE	40%	HU	0%
LU	40%	IT	0.2%
CY	32%	MT	0%
DE	19%	NL	0%

EU av: 25.%

Reasons for not setting numeric FRVs

- Lack of resources (10 MS)
- Lack of data (9 MS)
- Lack of methodology (8 MS)
- Lack of operational guidance (8 MS)
- Lack of expertise (7 MS)

Use of EU Guidelines

- 18 MS use EU guidelines fully or partly
- 3 MS don't use them
- 5 MS have own guidelines
- 3 MS have guidelines for selected sp/hab

Reasons for not using EU guide:

- Difficult to apply in practice
- Too generic – lacks concrete examples

Improvements to EU guidelines

- Include more concrete examples eg for problem cases (17 MS)
- Guidance on how to take into account tech /eco feasibility (14 MS)
- Step by step guidance (13 MS)
- Relationship between setting FRV and operational objectives (12 MS)

Also:

- How to handle lack of data and uncertainty
- FRVs not just scientific value, but also value judgement

So further work on FRVs planned...

1. Review of how Member States are setting FRVs since the guidelines came out.
2. Search for further good practice examples
3. Produce an overview on the situation in MS, main issues encountered and where and how further support to MS on setting FRVs could be provided.
4. Decide in cooperation with MS on aspects to develop further in the EU guidance and on the process.

Thank you for your attention

More information

- **Commission guidance** http://cdr.eionet.europa.eu/help/habitats_art17
- **WER-Report** <https://library.wur.nl/WebQuery/wurpubs/fulltext/469035>
- **WER-Case-studies / examples**
<https://library.wur.nl/WebQuery/wurpubs/fulltext/468534>