Natura 2000 Biogeographical Seminar for the Continental, Alpine, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea regions

25-27 June 2024

Prague, Czech Republic

Background Document

4th Biogeographical Seminar for the Continental, Alpine, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea regions

Prepared by	CEEweb for Biodiversity
Authors	Luna Milatović (CEEweb), Paul Goriup (NatureBureau), Irene Bouwma (WENR)
Version	V3
Date	12.06.2024
Reviewed by	Irene Bouwma (WENR), Frank Vassen (European Commission)

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our gratitude to Frank Vassen from the European Commission for his advice on the scope and thematic clarifications in the document. We extend our gratitude to Mette Lund from the European Environment Agency (EEA) and Jan Sliva from ELMEN EEIG for their input.

Citation: Milatović, L., Goriup, P. and Bouwma, I. (2024). *Background Document for the 4th Continental, Alpine, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea regions*

Event: For more information on this seminar or the updated programme, see the Natura 2000 Communication Wiki: https://biogeoprocess.net/continental-region/

Or scan the QR code:

Contents

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

The Natura 2000 biogeographical process was launched in 2011 by the European Commission. The objective of the process is to promote knowledge exchange, networking, and cooperation on Natura 2000-related issues at the biogeographical region level. At the heart of the process lie the Natura 2000 seminars, coupled with a networking programme consisting of workshops, events, or meetings relevant to the objective of the process as well as by other related actions.

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

As the responsibility for implementing Natura 2000 lies with the Member States, the seminars create an opportunity for the competent authorities to exchange information and coordinate conservation actions as well as discuss and involve other key stakeholders and expert networks, including NGOs.

1.1. Biodiversity Strategy 2030

The strategic orientation of the process is evolving over time. On 20 May 2020, the European Commission (EC) adopted the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 "Bringing nature back into our lives" [1]. It is a comprehensive, ambitious and long-term plan for protecting nature and reversing the degradation of the ecosystem services it provides. Among the high number of the Strategy targets to be achieved by 2030, the two most relevant for the biogeographical process are:

- **Protected areas target**: protecting 30% of EU land and 30% of EU marine areas, designating part of them as 'strictly protected', and having clear conservation objectives and measures in place for all protected areas;
- **Conservation status improvement target**: taking measures for halting any further deterioration of protected species and habitats, and for improving the status of at least 30% of all species and habitats not currently in favourable condition.

These targets are not legally binding and do not replace the legal obligations of Member States under the Birds and Habitats Directives. Rather, they represent a political agreement for action to drive their delivery through a new and over-arching context for the Natura 2000 process.

1.2. Pledge and review

As part of the initiative to meet the objectives set out within the Biodiversity Strategy 2030, the EC has requested that Member States make pledges to show how they will meet the protected area and

[1] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1590574123338&uri=CELEX:52020DC0380

conservation status targets. These should follow the format and contents agreed[2,3] upon with the Commission and the European Environment Agency (EEA), using the Excel file template developed by the EEA and the European Topic Centre for Biodiversity and Ecosystems (ETC-BE) for pledge submission to the EEA's Reportnet platform[4,5]. Commission Guidance documents have been produced that provide further clarifications for each of the targets[6,7]. Pledges will be peer reviewed by the Commission, the EEA, and the other Member States. A short summary of the pledges received so far is included in Chapter 2. The Natura 2000 seminar programme forms a central element of the review process for the pledges.

1.3. Biogeographical Process and Natura 2000 seminars

The scope of the Natura 2000 biogeographical process has been expanded to provide additional support to Member States for the pledge and review process. In addition to helping Member States to implement their legal obligations under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives, the process will help them to implement the targets under the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. Natura 2000 seminars will therefore support key players in:

- Achieving a common understanding on processes and objectives of the targets under the Biodiversity Strategy,
- Presenting and discussing national pledges related to these targets for a peer review by the Commission, the EEA and the other Member States,
- Achieving a common understanding on relevant topics, particularly in relation to Natura 2000, to improve and standardise what is done at national level in terms of implementation and management, financing, monitoring and reporting, to ensure coherence and effectiveness of implementation at supranational levels,
- Sharing good practices in regulation, supervision, conservation, and restoration with a view to promoting and upscaling them, and
- Facilitating setting up joint projects to support delivery of these objectives, including on management/restoration.

1.4. Biogeographical process in the marine regions

The EU Biodiversity Strategy applies equally to the terrestrial and marine environments. A separate contract has been put in place to provide better, more focused, support to Member States working in

---

[2] Format for the protected areas target,
Format for the status improvement target

[3] The reference page on the Central Data Repository which includes all supporting documents and guidelines

[4] https://reportnet.europa.eu/public/dataflow/705

[5] https://reportnet.europa.eu/public/dataflow/703

[6] Commission guidance on the protected areas targets

[7] Commission guidance on the status improvement targets

marine regions[8]. The two biogeographical processes are complementary and coordinate with each other, which is essential as the 30% conservation status improvement target does not distinguish between habitats and species in marine and terrestrial regions. There is a strong level of liaison between the two projects, including a joint communications platform and shared wiki[9]. The project in the marine regions concluded in May 2024.

[8] Support for the Natura 2000 Biogeographical Process in the Marine Regions ENV/2022/OP/0006
[9] https://biogeoprocess.net/

2. The geographical scope of the seminar

Like in previous cycles of the biogeographical process, this Natura 2000 seminar involves four distinct biogeographical regions (Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea biogeographical regions – called "CPSBS regions" hereafter), covering 16 Member States in one-third of the European Union land territory. Whereas the Continental biogeographic region covers 13 different Member States, the Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea regions only cover one or few Member States each, and each of these regions only covers a small share of the EU area (Table 1). In addition, it was not possible to find a host for a separate seminar for the Alpine region, so it was decided to merge it with CBSBS due to the large overlap of Member States in these regions.

Although having a part of their territory in the Alpine region, Spain is not included in the seminar as their conservation status and protected area pledge were discussed in other seminars they attended.

Table 1: Countries and area of the 5 biogeographical regions

Biogeographical region	**Member States**	**Coverage[10]**
Continental	Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Germany, Denmark, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Slovenia	31.3%
Pannonian	Czechia, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia	3.1%
Steppic	Romania	0.9%
Black Sea	Bulgaria, Romania	0.3%
Alpine	Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, *Spain* and Sweden	9.2%

[10] Calculated based on the size of each biogeographical region against the EU total area of 4 131 745km^2 which is also used in the Natura 2000 barometer (https://sdi.eea.europa.eu/catalogue/srv/eng/catalog.search#/metadata/3275ecdb-a6c5-4ffe-875f-c0b2bfcc5786). Size of each biogeographical region: https://sdi.eea.europa.eu/catalogue/srv/eng/catalog.search#/metadata/c6d27566-e699-4d58-a132-bbe3fe01491b

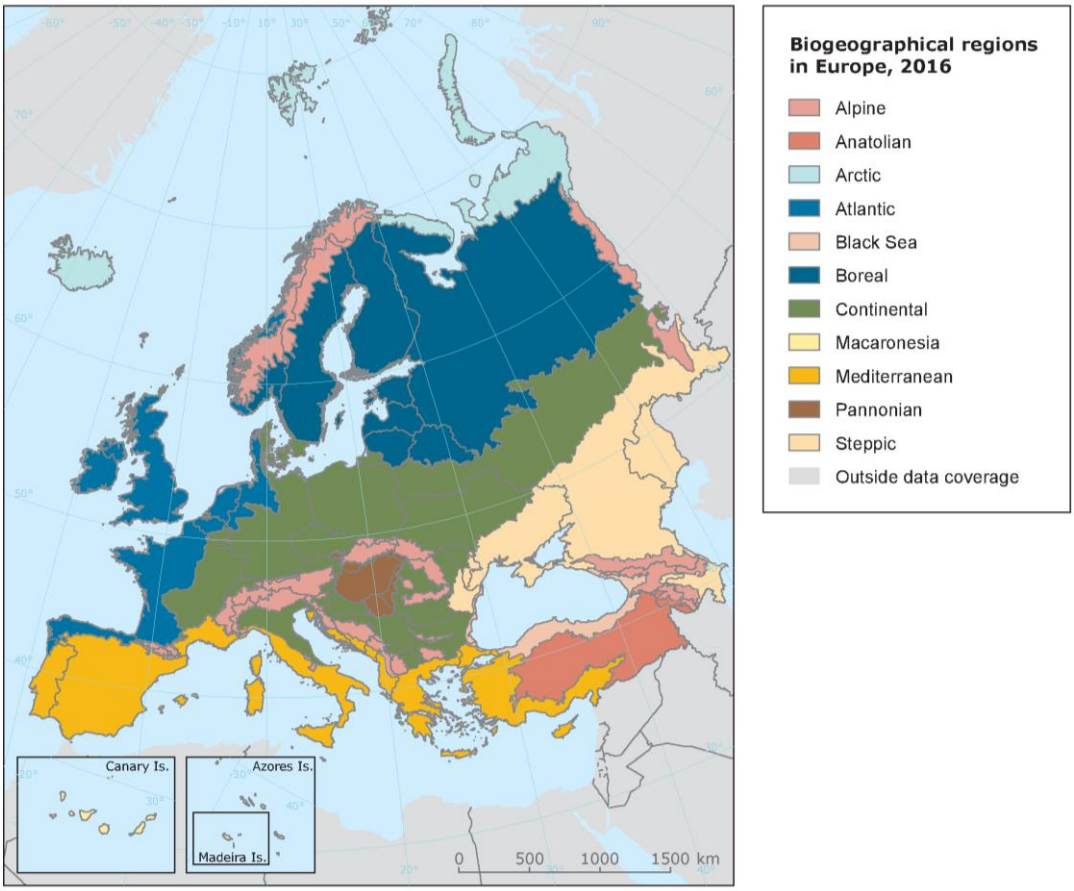


Figure 1: Biogeographical regions in Europe (source: EEA[11])

2.1. The biogeographical process in the CPSBS region

The Continental, Pannonian, Black Sea and Steppic biogeographical regions were combined since the beginning; the first Natura 2000 seminar for these regions took place in Luxembourg, in July 2015. The Kick-off Seminar was organised in four Habitat Working Groups: coastal habitats; wetlands, rivers and lakes; grasslands, heaths and scrubs, and woodland and forests. Each of the working groups reviewed introductory case study presentations, identified the common issues, pressures and threats to the habitat group, discussed each pressure and threat separately and proposed management requirements and solutions. Each group then identified opportunities for cooperative action, recommendations and commitments to address the conservation of the discussed habitats. Follow-up actions were identified based on these and compiled into the first roadmap for the CPSBS regions[12].

The second CPSBS Natura 2000 seminar was held in Strasbourg, France, in October 2018. Discussions were held in working groups based on four priority themes:

1. Linking site-level objectives, regional/national-level objectives and favourable reference values

[11] https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/figures/biogeographical-regions-in-europe-2

[12] https://biogeoprocess.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/186.-Continental_2018_Input-document.pdf

2. Identifying and solving issues in relation to habitat type definitions
3. Increasing the involvement of local land managers through integrated site management
4. Selecting biogeographical level conservation priorities and measures

Three field visits were organised around a specific cluster of habitats and their management: forest, water courses, and meadows, and each visit covered topics addressed in the thematic groups. The outcomes of the discussions were included in the revised roadmap (3.0)[13]

2.2. The biogeographical process in the Alpine region

The first Natura 2000 seminar for the Alpine region was in Graz, Austria, in November 2013. This seminar discussed the priority conservation issues facing each of four broad habitat groups: forests, wetlands, grasslands, and freshwater, as well as identifying a number of cross-cutting issues. A list of actions was drawn up by each Habitat Working Group, representing the first Alpine roadmap[14].

The second Alpine seminar took place in Padova, Italy, in June 2017. In addition to reviewing progress since the first Alpine Seminar, the seminar considered four thematic clusters which directly corresponded to the objectives of the EC's Nature Action Plan[15]:

1. Setting conservation status, objectives and priorities
2. Conservation measures and their effectiveness
3. Monitoring and evaluation
4. Addressing threats and pressures to Alpine habitats and species

As well as priority conservation issues, the seminar also addressed how so-called 'low-hanging fruit' habitats could be identified, for which improved conservation status at EU biogeographical region-level could be achieved more easily and in a short time. The seminar also included two site visits, to a forested and grassland area, providing practical on-the-ground examples of the issues being discussed. A number of actions were identified in the revised roadmap[16].

The third Alpine seminar was held online in September 2020 due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The seminar consisted of plenary sessions and parallel sessions based on four themes:

1. Defining and coordinating a Natura 2000 restoration agenda in the Alpine region
2. Managing land use to improve the conservation of Alpine Natura 2000 habitats and species

[13] https://biogeoprocess.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Roadmap-Cont-etc..pdf
[14] https://biogeoprocess.net/alpine-region/
[15] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/58d58aa7-5c78-11e7-954d-01aa75ed71a1/language-en
[16] https://biogeoprocess.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Second-Alpine-Report.pdf

3. Optimising co-benefits of Natura 2000 management with climate change mitigation and adaptation
4. Improving landscape connectivity for the Natura 2000 Alpine habitats and species.

The outcome of the discussions held in each of the thematic sessions included two topics suggested for further consideration when planning for practical action[17].

2.3. Current conservation status

An overview of the conservation status of habitats and species in the CPSBS and Alpine region is provided by the Member States reporting under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive, for the period 2013-18. This provides a baseline against which progress towards the conservation status targets can be assessed.

2.3.1. Habitats

Figure 2 presents the combined results of habitat assessments for Member State reporting in the different biogeographical regions for the period 2013-18[18]. Each habitat is assessed as favourable (FV), inadequate (U1), bad (U2) or unknown (XX). In addition, a trend value is reported for each assessment, declining (D), increasing (I), stable (S), or unknown (Unk). This overview of the conservation status of habitats of Community interest shows that of the four regions considered in this seminar, the Steppic region followed by the Alpine region has the highest percentage of habitats in favourable conservation status. The Pannonian followed by the Alpine region has the highest number of habitats in an unfavourable conservation status and declining trend (see Figure 2).

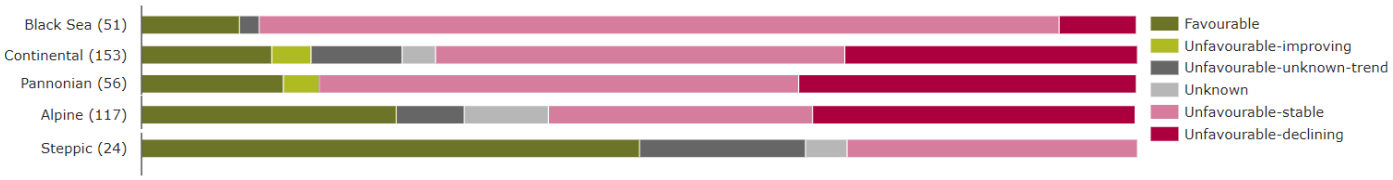


Figure 2: Assessment of conservation status and trends of habitat types (2013-2018) (EEA 2020a).

2.3.2. Species

Figure 3 presents the combined results of species assessments for Member State reporting in the different biogeographical regions for the period 2013-18[19]. Each species is assessed as favourable (FV), inadequate (U1), bad (U2) or unknown (XX). In addition, a trend value is reported for each assessment, declining (D), increasing (I), stable (S), or unknown (Unk). This overview of the conservation status of species of Community interest shows that of the four regions considered in this seminar, the Black Sea

[17] https://biogeoprocess.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Third-Alpine-Report.pdf

[18] Article17_2020_speciesEUassessment (accessed 25-08-2023)

[19] Article17_2020_speciesEUassessment (accessed 25-08-2023)

region followed by the Alpine region has the highest percentage of species in a favourable conservation status. The Black Sea followed by the Continental region has the highest number of habitats in an unfavourable conservation status and declining trend (see Figure 3).

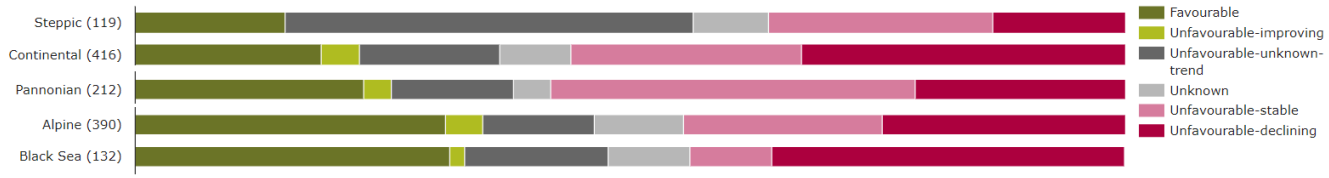


Figure 3: Article 17 reporting for the Habitats Directive (EEA 2020a)

While equivalent assessments are also carried out for bird species, with reporting on populations etc., in the same reporting round under Article 12 of the Birds Directive, these data are not reported by biogeographic region.

Pressures and threats identified help understand the drivers resulting in poor conservation status of habitats and species. The main pressures are agriculture, forestry and urbanization. Agriculture in particular has an impact on wetlands, grasslands and heath and scrubs, from the species groups in particular invertebrates are impacted. Urbanization is in particular a threat to coastal, dune and rocky habitats.

Figure 4: Distribution of level 1 pressure categories among habitats and species for all of Europe (EEA 2020a)

2.4. Current Protected Area coverage

The most recent analysis of terrestrial protected area coverage at biogeographical regions level was conducted by the European Environment Agency based on the data reported by the end of 2020 for Natura 2000 sites and in 2021 for nationally designated areas (figure 5). It combines data for Natura 2000 sites with those for nationally designated areas reported by Member States and therefore provides an overview of the total area that is designated as protected, accounting for overlaps between different designations. Figure 5 shows both the absolute area in square kilometres and the percentage of the total area of a biogeographical region covered by protected areas which can be compared against the 30% protected areas target of the EU Biodiversity Strategy.

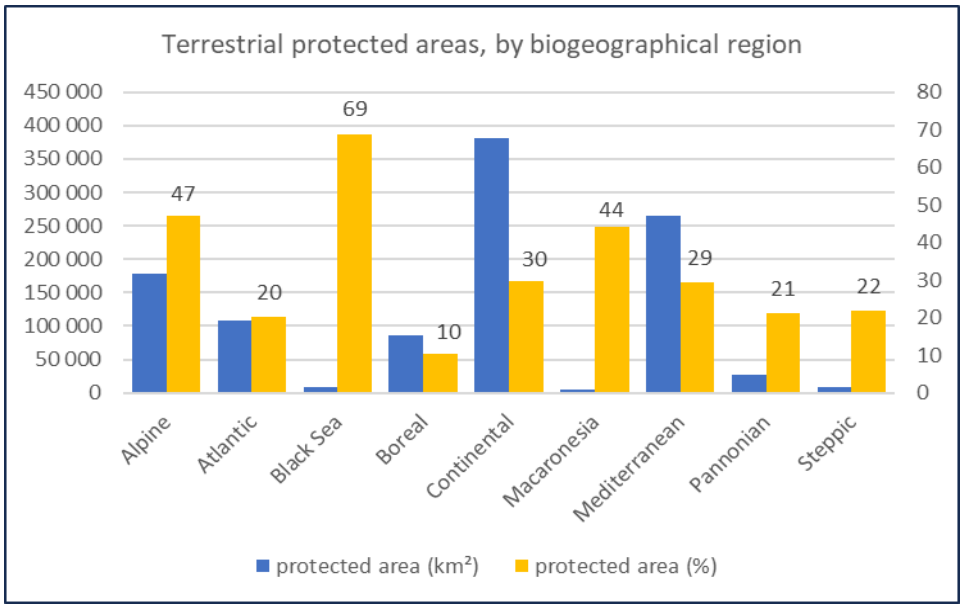
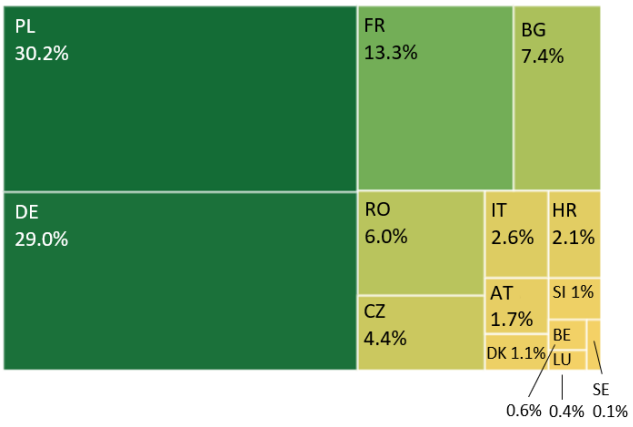


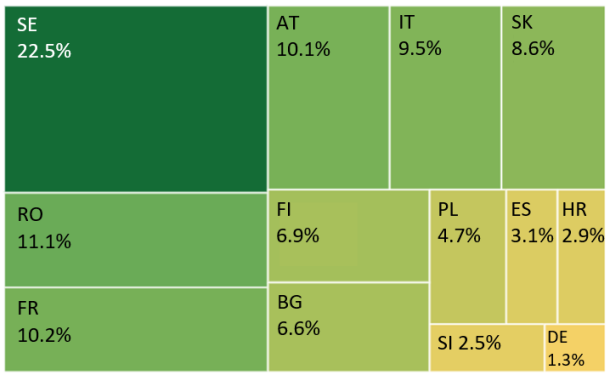
Figure 5: Terrestrial protected areas summarised by biogeographical region

Figure 6 indicates the relative contribution of each Member State towards the protected areas network for each of the biogeographical regions covered in this seminar. Since Romania is the only Member State in the Steppic biogeographical region, 100% of the protected areas for that region are in Romania.

Continental region



Alpine region



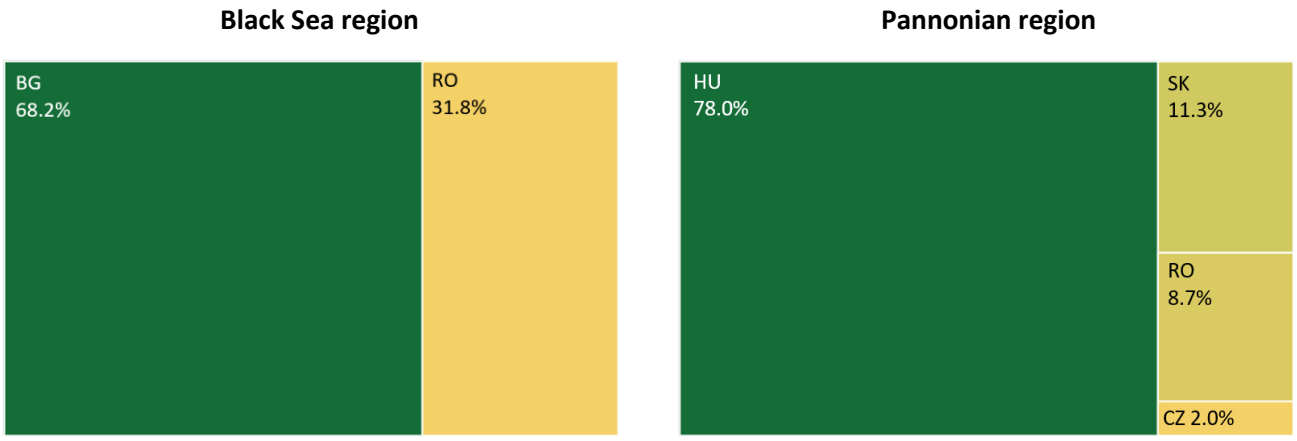


Figure 6: Share of total protected area in the biogeographical region per Member State

The statistics by biogeographical region also show the percentage area under Natura 2000 versus the area under national protection only (Nationally designated areas – NatDa), as well as the spatial overlap between Natura 2000 and NatDa areas (Figure 7).

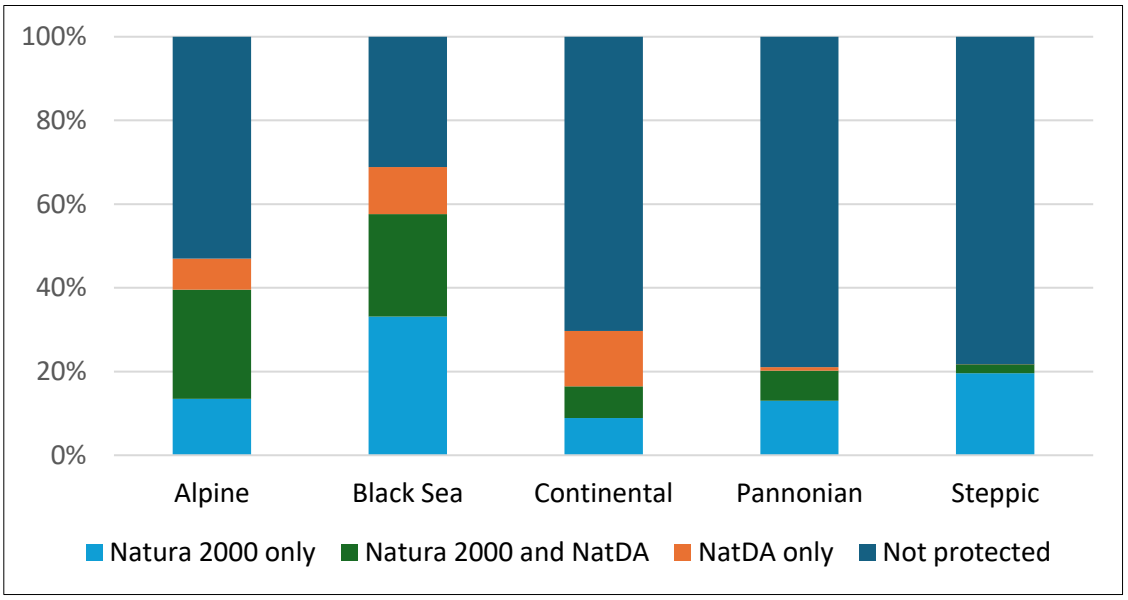


Figure 7: The share of protected area designation type to the total protected area per biogeographical region

Figure 8 is comparing the total land territory of each Member State that is protected (either as Natura 2000 or nationally designated, or both), as compared to the area under no protection.

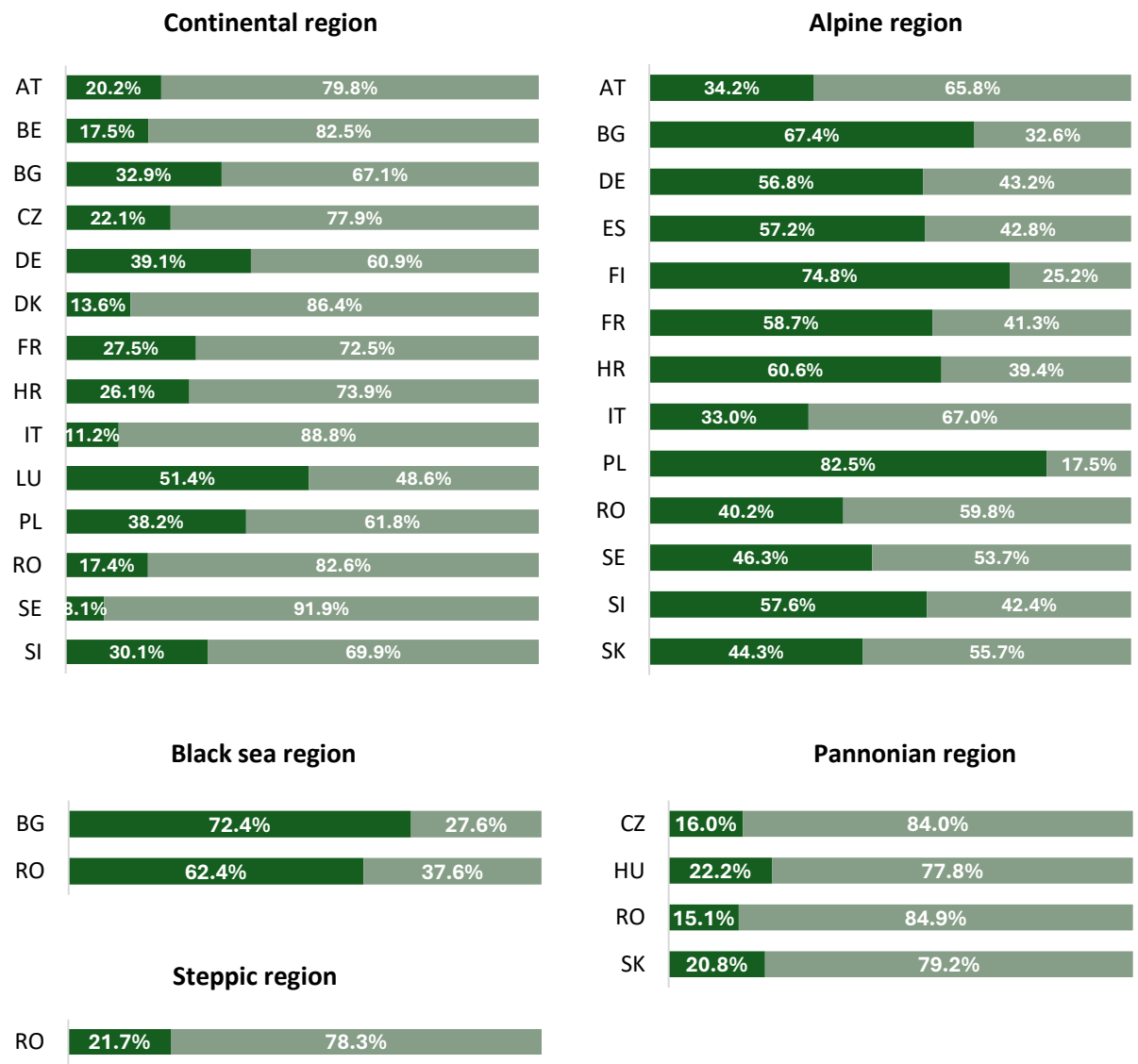


Figure 8: Share of terrestrial protected areas coverage (dark green) in each region by Member State

The same breakdown of protected area designation type can be done to show the contribution of each designation type to the total protected area in each of the Member States per region (Annex I).

2.5. Status of pledges in the Continental, Alpine, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea regions

For the Continental region, protected area pledges received so far (as of 3 June 2024) are from Denmark (DK), the Czech Republic (CZ), France (FR), Germany (DE), Luxembourg (LU) and Sweden (SE). Czech Republic and France only submitted the protected area pledge, while the rest of the countries submitted both the protected area pledges and status improvement pledges.

For the Alpine region, France (FR), Germany (DE), Spain (ES) and Sweden (SE) submitted their pledges. As for the Continental region, France only submitted the protected area pledge. As the Spanish pledges have already been discussed in two previous seminars, they will not be covered in this seminar.

All pledges that were submitted are publicly accessible[20].

For various reasons, the rest of the Member States which are part of the Continental and Alpine regions (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Italy, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Slovakia, Slovenia) have not yet submitted any pledges.

No Member States from the Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea regions have submitted pledges so far.

2.5.1. Preliminary analysis of the protected area pledge

In terms of protected area pledges, a preliminary analysis was undertaken to look at the question of the current baseline. This was done by reviewing the responses of the countries regarding nationally designated areas which should be counted towards the 30% target. This will be further discussed during the seminar and it is hoped that this will help understand better the approaches taken by the countries in this regard.

Furthermore, a preliminary analysis of the responses regarding future protected areas was undertaken. While it was possible to see some trends, a comprehensive analysis was not possible as this can only be done for a given biogeographical region once the pledges from all countries in that region have been received. Preliminary results will be presented at the seminar.

2.5.2. Preliminary analysis of the conservation status improvements pledge

The following reviews were undertaken. More detailed information will be presented during the seminar.

For the Member State level:

- For each Member State the overall pledge is analysed on its completeness e.g. whether all Habitats Directive species and habitats in unfavourable status or bird species in non-secure status are included in one of the categories of the pledge (non-deterioration or improvement).
- Whether the 30 % target for improvement has been reached at the Member State level.

[20] https://reportnet.europa.eu/public/dataflow/703 and https://reportnet.europa.eu/public/dataflow/705

3. Themes selected for the 4th Natura 2000 seminar for the Continental, Alpine, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea regions

During the first day of the seminar discussions will focus on the pledge and review process, specifically on the approaches Member States have undertaken in developing the pledges. The following two additional themes were selected between the host and the EC for discussions during the second and third day of the seminar:

- Theme 1: Restoration actions in protected areas
- Theme 2: Using OECM's to safeguard biodiversity

3.1. Theme 1: Restoration actions in grassland protected areas

3.1.1. Context

Grassland conservation in Europe is of outstanding importance due to their remarkably high biodiversity and the vital ecosystem services they provide. Traditionally managed as hay meadows or grazed pastures with a low fertiliser input, grasslands are key habitats for many rare and threatened species in Europe, including birds, butterflies and plants. In addition to their outstanding value for biodiversity, well-managed grasslands provide many important ecosystem services, including carbon storage, ground water replenishment and protection against erosion. Protecting and restoring these landscapes is essential for preserving Europe's natural heritage and ensuring environmental sustainability.

Grasslands are amongst the EU protected habitat types with the highest number of deteriorating trends in the European Union. Some 15% of 122 grassland habitat assessments were rated as favourable or unfavourable-improving in 2016: only dune habitats are in a worse situation (EEA 2020b) (Figure 9). In addition to their floristic characteristics, protected grasslands also provide indispensable habitat for a wide range of associated fauna, from mammals to reptiles and invertebrates. Restoring grasslands would therefore assist Member States to meet both the protected area and conservation status targets set out in the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030.

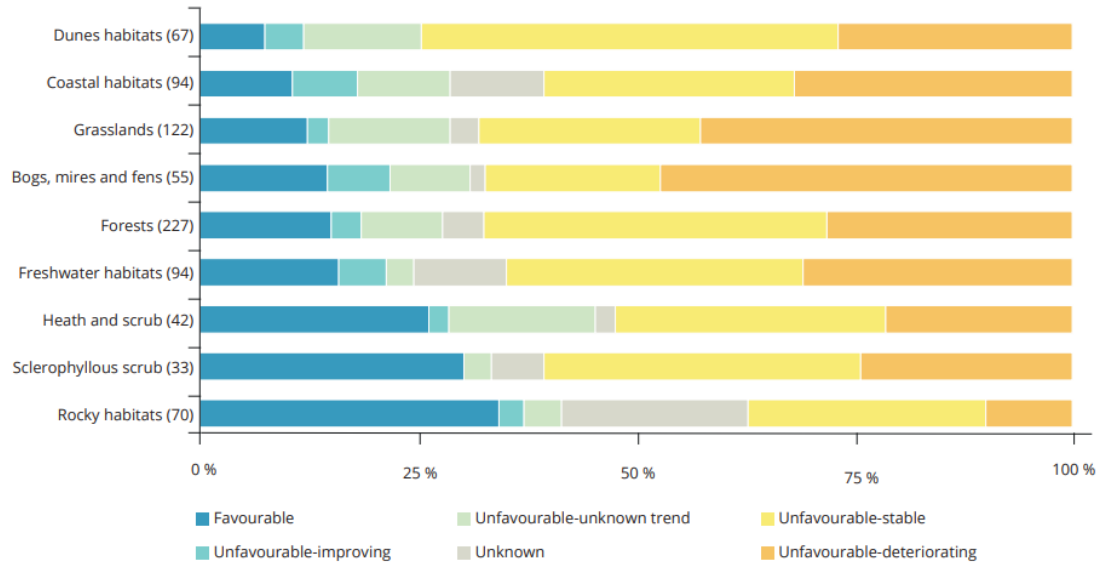


Figure 9: Trends in conservation status of assessed habitats at EU level (n=804)

The Strategy also notes that "Significant areas of other carbon-rich ecosystems, such as peatlands, **grasslands**, wetlands, mangroves and seagrass meadows should also be strictly protected, taking into account projected shifts in vegetation zones." Furthermore, the Strategy calls on the Commission to ensure that CAP Strategic plans are assessed against robust climate and environmental criteria, and that Member States set explicit national values for the relevant targets set in this strategy, as well as in the Farm to Fork Strategy. These plans should lead to sustainable practices such as precision agriculture, organic farming, agro-ecology, agro-forestry, **low-intensive permanent grassland**, and stricter animal welfare standards.

According to the most recent reporting under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive[21], there are 27 protected grassland types present in the Natura 2000 network across the Continental, Alpine, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea biogeographical regions, with a total area of more than 130,000 km^2 (Table 2). In quantiative terms, Natura 2000 grasslands are dominated by just two habitat types: 6510 Lowland hay meadows (64%) and 6520 Mountain hay meadows (16%), with 6150 Siliceous alpine and boreal grasslands (8%) coming third. All other types together account for just 12% of the total grassland cover in Natura 2000 sites in the regions covered by this seminar. Out of total grassland cover in Natura 2000, 70% is in the Continental region, and 26% is in the Alpine region.

Table 2: Protected grassland types and area (km^2) in the Natura 2000 networks of the seminar regions

Habitat	Alpine	Black Sea	Continental	Pannonic	Steppe	Total	% of total
1310		2	340		500	841	0.65
1320			18			18	0.01
1330			289			289	0.22

[21] https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/datahub/datahubitem-view/d8b47719-9213-485a-845b-db1bfe93598d?activeAccordion=1082742%2C1084677

1340			34	3		37	0.03
1410		702	41			742	0.57
1420			120			120	0.09
1530		361				361	0.28
1630			9			9	0.01
6110	203	1	269			474	0.36
6130	3		7			10	0.01
6140	1,106					1,106	0.85
6150	10,665		31			10,696	8.22
6170	6,537		153			6,690	5.14
6190				12		12	0.01
6210		88				88	0.07
6220	41	106				147	0.11
6250			135	211		346	0.27
6260			4	406		409	0.31
6270	9		180			189	0.15
6280			135			135	0.10
6410				96		96	0.07
6420	3		21			24	0.02
6430	1,438		1,565			3,003	2.31
6440				474		474	0.36
6450	30					30	0.02
6510	4,446	408	76,725	1,032	700	83,311	64.05
6520	9,732		10,643	33		20,408	15.69
Total	**34,212**	**1,668**	**90,719**	**2,268**	**1,200**	**130,066**	

Key to grassland habitat types

1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand
1320 Spartina swards (Spartinion maritimae)
1330 Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae)
1340 Inland salt meadows
1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi)
1420 Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrubs (Sarcocornetea fruticosi)
1530 Pannonic salt steppes and salt marshes
1630 Boreal Baltic coastal meadows
6110 Rupicolous calcareous or basophilic grasslands of the Alysso-Sedion albi
6130 Calaminarian grasslands of the Violetalia calaminariae
6140 Siliceous Pyrenean Festuca eskia grasslands
6150 Siliceous alpine and boreal grasslands
6170 Alpine and subalpine calcareous grasslands
6190 Rupicolous pannonic grasslands (Stipo-Festucetalia pallentis)
6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia)
6220 Pseudo-steppe with grasses and annuals of the Thero-Brachypodietea

6250 Pannonic loess steppic grasslands
6260 Pannonic sand steppes
6270 Fennoscandian lowland species-rich dry to mesic grasslands
6280 Nordic alvar and precambrian calcareous flatrocks
6410 Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae)
6420 Mediterranean tall humid grasslands of the Molinio-Holoschoenion
6430 Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels
6440 Alluvial meadows of river valleys of the Cnidion dubii
6450 Northern boreal alluvial meadows
6510 Lowland hay meadows (Alopecurus pratensis, Sanguisorba officinalis)
6520 Mountain hay meadows

In addition, the EC is currently developing a monitoring system for grasslands in Natura 2000 sites based on satellite imagery[22]. This is still a prototype tool and further updates and improvements of the contents, including an increase in the number of Natura 2000 sites, will take place in the near future.

3.1.2. Objectives of the thematic session

Restored grassland areas could contribute significantly to the 30% protected area target and directly or indirectly to the species conservation status targets. In recent years, much experience has been gained with restoration programmes and projects for grassland habitats as well as species (e.g. the Multi-Species Action Plan for Lowland Wet Grassland Waders). This session will present and discuss these experiences, with a focus on the following issues.

The objectives of this thematic session are therefore to discuss and reach a common understanding on the following questions:

- What are the main pressures that affect biodiversity of grassland habitats?
- How climate change affects dynamics of grassland habitats and how it interacts with anthropogenic factors?
- What are the main principles of grassland habitats management and what scientific methods are used for their correct determination?
- How is grassland management implemented in order to ensure a long-term non-deterioration of grassland habitats and what are the main challenges?
- Which measures are both cost-effective and suitable to prevent grassland habitats from deterioration?
- Which successful projects were implemented for the restoration of grassland habitats?
- What opportunities are there for cooperative work and follow-up across biogeographical regions?

[22] https://ec.europa.eu/eu-grassland-watch/

3.1.3. Cases and best practices

As stressed above, the latest assessments show that the conservation status of many grassland habitats in the EU is still unfavourable. While the status of HNV grasslands varies significantly between different member states, regions and types of grasslands, it is still of a high concern that grasslands, particularly semi-natural ones, are among the most threatened European habitats.

Pressures, problems and barriers as identified in the 1st Kick-off Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea Seminar in 2015 still widely persist. Many grassland habitats remain under threat from agricultural intensification, land abandonment, and urbanization. Monitoring and enforcement of conservation measures have been inconsistent across member states, leading to variable outcomes. Moreover, financial and administrative barriers have sometimes hindered the full implementation of conservation schemes.

On the other hand, the conservation status of grassland has improved in many regions through targeted restoration projects and effective management under the AES. In particular, a large number of projects under EU LIFE funding instrument (especially the Nature, Bio, IPE and SNAP strands) have contributed significantly to improving the conservation status of European grasslands by funding restoration measures, promoting sustainable management practices, raising awareness and informing policy. Through these multi-faceted efforts and holistic approaches, LIFE has contributed significantly to maintaining and enhancing the biodiversity and ecological value of grasslands across Europe. It is now crucial that the best practices developed and the knowledge gained are utilised, upscaled and replicated.

Since the establishment of the LIFE programme in 1992, a total of around 570 projects have been carried out that were wholly or mainly aimed at improving grassland habitats. Of these, some 370 projects have been carried out in Member States located in or containing a significant part of the BG regions addressed by this seminar.

Focusing on the more recent period, according to an analytical project mapping some 100 EU-wide (+ UK) LIFE projects were of medium or high relevance for grasslands between 2014 and 2022. Of these, around 80 projects of medium and high relevance and 34 projects of high relevance were carried out in the biogeographical regions concerned, i.e. a fairly high proportion of the EU-wide total.

In the following, a few projects with a grassland focus and substantial achieved or planned results are highlighted. The table Annex II then lists all 34 projects with high relevance for the conservation and restoration of grasslands as mentioned above.

In the Continental region, LIFE to Grasslands (LIFE14 NAT/SI/000005) focussed on the conservation and management of dry grasslands in eastern Slovenia. IN five years(2015-2020) a total of 690 hectares of grassland were restored and protected. Of these, the conservation status (CS) of semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facets on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*, 6210) and species-rich Nardus grasslands (6230) was improved on 260 ha and 256 ha respectively. The main objective of the

Croatian project Dinara back to LIFE (LIFE18 NAT/HR/000847) was the conservation management planning, protection and restoration of dry grassland habitats and their characteristic species in Natura 2000 network sites in the Dinara Mountains, aiming for the improvement of the CC of the targeted habitats and species. The cross-border Slovak-Hungarian LIFE-endemic PANALP (LIFE19 NAT/SK/000895) specialises in the conservation of endemic species and dry grassland habitats in the contact zone between the Pannonian and Alpine bioregions. At the end of the project in 2027, the condition of dry grassland habitats should be improved on almost 440 ha (almost 220 ha in Hungary and 220 ha in Slovakia), populations of several endemic plant species should be significantly strengthened, and long-term and sustainable management should be ensured through extensive grazing or mowing on 90 ha of the target habitats (10 ha in Hungary, 80 ha in Slovakia).

Along the border between the continental and alpine regions, the Romanian LIFE TransilvaCooperation project (LIFE19 NAT/RO/000602) is developing and demonstrating co-operative approaches to good management of Natura 2000 grasslands at the landscape scale in Transylvania. The project will ensure good future management within locally agreed local management plans; training and co-operative management approaches with farmers managing about 1 800 ha of grassland and associated landscape features at the valley/watershed level, including about 500 ha of targeted grassland habitats. In addition, specific habitat restoration measures are planned for at least 240 ha of HNV grassland habitats.

The project LIFE-IP GRASSLAND-HU (LIFE17 IPE/HU/000018) aims at the long-term conservation of Pannonian grassland and related habitats through the implementation of strategic PAF measures. The focus is on semi-natural grassland habitats that require active habitat management to achieve a favourable CS. Significant quantitative results and impacts are expected in the improvement of hydrological conditions, the removal of encroaching shrubs and invasive species and the sustainable reintroduction of grazing on the restored areas to achieve an improvement in conservation status.

Numerous projects have focussed on the protection and improvement of the conservation status of individual species or groups of animals. However, in order to achieve the desired objectives and expected impacts, large areas of grassland often need to be improved or restored as they serve as habitat, breeding or feeding grounds for these species. For example, as part of the successfully completed Bulgarian LAND for LIFE project (LIFE14 NAT/BG/001119), large-scale restoration was carried out and the sustainable management of grassland as a feeding habitat for Imperial Eagles was ensured. Around 1,500 ha of degraded pastures were restored in numerous Natura 2000 areas, eight model herds (horses, sheep, goats, cattle) were established and recommendations for grazing and RDP payment programmes were developed. Similarly, the French project LIFE SOS Crau Grasshopper (LIFE20 NAT/FR/000080) uses grassland adaptive habitat management on at least 1,400 ha grasslands to improve the habitat conditions for the endemic and critically endangered Crau plain grasshopper (*Prionotropis rhodanica*). Focusing on this insect flagship species, numero0us other species, and habitats will benefit.

Other projects focus on creating the political conditions and testing new types of financial incentives that are needed to develop nature-friendly and sustainable grassland management into an independent branch of farming. For example, LIFE IP NATUREMAN, which aims to make it financially attractive for farmers to incorporate natural areas in numerous Natura 2000 sites into their agricultural activities through grazing or harvesting biomass by developing high-quality specialised products.

Even though also other EU funding programs such as Interreg and HORIZON contribute with several calls and projects to grassland conservation and improvement, it is apparent that the EU LIFE Program plays a pivotal role in the conservation and restoration of grasslands habitats in and outside of protected areas.

3.2. Theme 2: Using OECM's to safeguard biodiversity

3.2.1. Context

The concept of "Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures" (OECMs) first appeared in 2010 in global policy as part of the Aichi Target 11 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Following requests by Parties to the CBD for guidance on interpretation and application of the term in practice, a formal definition and identifying criteria for OECMs were adopted by the CBD Decision 14/8[23]. The OECMs were formally defined in 2018 as *"A geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio–economic, and other locally relevant values*". This includes areas where biodiversity conservation is not an objective but is achieved as by-product of other objectives (**ancillary conservation**); areas with active conservation but only as a secondary management objective (**secondary conservation**; and, areas where biodiversity protection is a primary objective, but governing authorities cannot or do not wish to report the site as a protected area (**primary conservation**). OECMs therefore provide an opportunity to complement existing protected area networks by recognising important biodiversity areas that are not formally protected, but also to mainstream biodiversity conservation in areas under different uses thus contributing to also to connectivity of the networks (Dudley et al. 2021). Therefore, it is not surprising that the Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework [24], calling for countries to protect 30% land and sea by 2030, contains OECMs.

Coherent with this global target, OECMs are similarly included in the EU Biodiversity Strategy in the protected area target aiming at legal protection for at least 30% of EU land and sea area. In January

[23] https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-14/cop-14-dec-08-en.pdf

[24] https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-15/cop-15-dec-04-en.pdf

2022, the EU released a staff document on *Criteria and guidance for protected areas designations,* including requirements for OECMs to be counted towards the 30% target (section 3.3.2.):

1. the area is covered by a **national or international legislative or administrative act or a contractual arrangement** aiming to achieve **long-term conservation outcomes**,
2. **conservation objectives and measures** are in place,
3. **effective management** and **monitoring** of the biodiversity in the area is in place.

One significant difference between the CBD and the EC criteria is the requirement that the area should have conservation objectives in place in order to qualify for an OECM. This means that those areas where conservation is not an objective but is achieved as by-product of other objectives (ancillary conservation listed above), would not count as OECMs towards the EU target. The guidance additionally stipulates that 'Should Member States rely on OECMs, tailored conservation objectives and measures would be necessary also for OECMs', which might not be the case for all OECMs reported for global targets.

The OECM concept is still new and relatively unknown in EU policy, and there are discussions to be had in order to apply the concept in practice in the EU context. Even translating it into the national language can be cumbersome, but helpful in avoiding misunderstandings and gaining support for this novel approach.

A survey conducted in 2022 by German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) indicated that the major challenges for the uptake of OECMs in Europe are:

- lack of understanding of OECMs and their relevance for conservation in Europe;
- lack of knowledge on tools and methods;
- no national processes in place;
- no political will or priority;
- lack of resources (Stolpe et al. 2024).

One of the common challenges for Member States is in identifying OECMs, and most European countries have not yet established any systematic processes for doing so. The exception is Finland which developed the process for OECM identification and piloted it on state-owned land, with plans to expand this process into non-state land from 2023 to 2025 (Heinonen and Alanen 2022). Level of knowledge about biodiversity and its condition in the potential OECM area can hinder countries from identifying potential OECMs and make it difficult to establish the baseline when they do. Monitoring systems put in place to track the implementation of other directives may provide this information.

Lack of a clear reporting mechanism has been identified by countries as an issue, as the Nationally designated areas (NatDA) allows only the categorisation of areas as OECMs at the designation type level. Updating of the Nationally designated areas data collection to include indication of OECM at site level is being undertaken by the EEA.

To be considered as an OECM, the area has to achieve long-term conservation outcomes, have effective management, and systems in place to monitor if those outcomes are achieved; all of which require support and management robust enough to sustain the OECM in the long run. Mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of identified OECMs and their reassessment in case the area stops delivering conservation are currently lacking and need to be discussed.

3.2.2. Objectives of the thematic session

The objectives of this thematic session are to discuss and reach a common understanding on the following questions:

- What are the minimum requirements for the area to be declared as the OECM?
- Is there a legal status of OECMs or which legal, financial or motivational tools are used for their implementation?
- Is the concept of OECMs actively explored and developed with the assistance of state authority institutions?
- Are there any examples of OECMs and what is their relationship with national nature protected areas designation schemes?
- What is the role of OECMs in the national pledges?

3.2.3. Ideas on opportunities for cooperative work and follow-up

There is a need for raising awareness among stakeholders about the very concept of OECMs, its opportunities and constraints, and for clarifying the criteria an area needs to meet in order to be recognised as an OECM in the EU. Since their inclusion in the Biodiversity Strategy in 2020, a number of events were organised by the EC and other stakeholders with this objective[25,26,27], and regional common understanding exercises have been undertaken by other actors[28]. The Natura 2000 biogeographical process is a good example of a platform for these discussions between Member States and the EC, while similar discussions with all stakeholders are encouraged nationally.

Since OECMs are areas with management systems delivering biodiversity conservation already in place, Member States will need to identify and recognise them rather than impose new management models. Naturally, in cases when areas are identified as 'potential OECMs' but they don't completely meet the criteria, some management changes might be required to reach full OECM status. Nevertheless, existing management, combined with diverse ownership and governance that these

[25] https://www.face.eu/2023/12/what-future-for-other-effective-conservation-measures-oecms-in-the-context-of-the-eu-biodiversity-strategy-for-2030/

[26] https://ebcd.org/understanding-oecms-to-achieve-the-30-by-30-target/

[27] https://ruralcommons.eu/

[28] https://helcom.fi/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Regional-common-understanding-of-the-OECM-criteria-and-potential-OECM-identification-tree.pdf

areas by nature have, is a good opportunity to recognise contribution from other sectors and stakeholders towards biodiversity conservation that has not be accounted for. OECMs provide an opportunity for garnering greater public support for conservation by stakeholders traditionally excluded from conservation planning.

A number of countries globally have already identified, recognised and reported OECMs[29], providing a wealth of lessons learnt that European countries can learn from. Furthermore, guidance on identifying, recognising and reporting OECMs in the international policy arena has already been developed (IUCN-WCPA 2019; FAO 2022, Jonas et al. 2023). There's ample opportunity to review the existing guidance and adapt it to the EU context. This guidance should further translate into establishing national processes for identifying OCEMs, keeping in mind the identified best practices from countries that have started the process, including the need for stakeholder engagement through a participatory process, complementing strong communication efforts about OECMs.

In some cases, an effective way of approaching the process is to identify categories of areas with potential for OECMs, and then follow with the assessment of single sites (Stolpe et al. 2024). Member States could further prioritise the assessment of those potential areas with highest biodiversity value or those that would maximise the connectivity of the protected area network. To make the process both cost-effective and efficient, it is recommended to start with areas that appear to be clear-cut cases, such as large sites run by NGOs (Stolpe et al. 2024).

3.2.4. Potential OECMs in Europe

Since the adoption of the Biodiversity Strategy and the associated targets, Member States started looking for areas that could qualify for OECMs based on the criteria given above. To review the application of international OECM guidelines and explore how OECMs relate to existing EU directives and policies, the European Environment Agency (EEA) commissioned a scoping study in 2021[30]. The study drew preliminary conclusions that the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the Floods Directive (FD) could be useful in identifying potential OECMs, and identified a number of measures taken under these directives that are relevant to OECMs. It also emphasised that any effort to automatically mass recognise all sites under one directive as OECMs would be misleading as Member States have different level of biodiversity conservation mainstreamed into the implementation of the directives (Lázaro et al 2021).

While each area should be assessed on a case-by-case basis to evaluate if it meets the criteria and can contribute to the 30% target, it's worth listing general terrestrial categories that countries can use as

[29] https://protectedplanet.net/en/thematic-areas/oecms?tab=OECMs

[30] Request for services for specific contract 3417/B2020/EEA.58150, Implementing Framework Contract EEA/NSS/17/002/Lot 3

guidance when starting the identification process. Some of these potential OECMs will be presented and discussed at the seminar, and this list is by no means exhaustive:

- Privately managed sites (managed by private bodies (e.g. NGOs) or individuals)
- Military sites (those not already designated under Natura 2000)
- Forest reserves
- Hunting reserves
- Newly restored areas under the existing and potential (Nature Restoration Law) restoration obligations that are not formally protected;
- RAMSAR sites (in countries where not legally recognised as protected area systems)
- Community commons [31]
- Water catchment areas maintained in a natural condition to provide a source of water, but deliver conservation
- Spiritual, cultural or religious sites
- Urban parks managed for public recreation but sufficiently natural and large enough to deliver conservation
- Privately managed areas with a restoration or conservation objective but not part of the formal PA network

Specific examples for many of these categories can be found in Stolpe et al. 2024.

3.2.5. Cases and best practices

As mentioned above, the concept of OECM is relatively new and is therefore not yet explicitly mentioned in LIFE applications and descriptions of project activities and outcomes. However, the core idea of OECM, i.e. the inclusion of areas with actions outside protected areas that achieve positive and sustainable long-term results for biodiversity conservation, has been included in many LIFE projects since 2014, when the 'Integrated Project Environment' (IPE) strand was established under the LIFE funding scheme.

Both the Integrated Projects (IPE) and the Strategic Projects for Nature (SNAP), which replaced the IPE from 2021, are characterised above all by their broader scope and integrative approach compared to the traditional LIFE-Nature projects. IPE and SNAP operate on a much larger scale, often encompassing entire regions and areas within and outside of NAs, multiple sectors, and extensive networks of stakeholders.

The concept of IPEs and SNAPs is de facto largely consistent with the characteristics of the OECM.

[31] https://uicn.fr/les-autres-mesures-de-conservation-par-zone/

- *Firstly*, they require the full involvement of stakeholders, including public authorities, private organisations, non-governmental organisations and local communities. This collaborative approach is crucial to achieving integrated environmental objectives.
- *Secondly*, complementary measures (CMs) play a crucial role in IPEs and SNAPs. These measures, which are financed outside the LIFE funds, are designed to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of the main project activities. While the core activities of IPEs and SNAPs mainly focus on protected areas (at least at the level of the Natura 2000 framework), CMs often extend to larger landscapes far outside the PA. This allows projects to promote ecological connectivity, involve surrounding communities and integrate conservation efforts with other land uses, thereby promoting a more holistic approach to environmental management.
- *Thirdly*, IPEs and SNAPs allow and even encourage the mobilisation of additional funds to increase the impact and sustainability of the project, and to use private sources of financing, including corporate funds, for nature conservation activities. The aim of involving private donors is not only to improve financial sustainability, but also to promote public-private partnerships and encourage companies to take responsibility for the environment and play an active role in nature conservation and environmental management.

One outstanding example is the PAF-Wild Atlantic Nature LIFE IP (LIFE18 IPE/IE/000002) – a nine-year integrated project that works with farmers, local communities and landowners to enhance the multiple services of Irish SAC network of raised bogs and adjacent areas. A pilot initiative and action of the project is the establishment of a Nature results-based agri-environmental payment scheme (RBPS) that directly links farmers' agri-environment payments to the ecological condition of their land and captures the level of environmental services provided. In this way, good environmental management is rewarded and improvement on lower-scoring lands is incentivised. Meanwhile, over 820 farmers across 63,000 ha of Natura 2000 and neighbouring land participated in the RBPS, with more than €3m in direct payments to farmers. The learnings informed the development of the Irish Department of Agriculture's results-based Agri Climate Rural Environment Scheme Cooperation Project (ACRES CP). There are now 20,000 farmers participating in the ACRES CP programme (2023-2027), covering an area of 1,160,000 ha, including over 85% of Ireland's blanket bog SACs, with a total budget of €750 million.

Similar or comparable approaches using public-private partnerships, stewardship or private and business financing schemes are also applied by other integrated and strategic LIFE projects, such as PAF-NATURALIT (LIFE16 IPE/LT/00001), LIFE IP Peatlands and People (LIFE19 IPC/IE/000007), LIFE21-NAT-PL-LIFE4WadersPL (LIFE21-NAT-PL-LIFE4WadersPL/101069516), or LIFE21-IPN-BE-B4B LIFE (LIFE21-IPN-BE-B4B-LIFE/101069526).

It is worth noting, however, that there are also numerous traditional LIFE-Nature projects that have implemented specific measures using OECM approaches. It is evident that land stewardship is mainly used for nature conservation in Spanish and Italian projects. A selection of the most relevant projects (across all Member States and all BG regions) implemented after 2014 is provided in Annex II of this document.

4. References

Dudley, N., Kopsieker, L., Costa Domingo, G., Jonas, H., and Lázaro, C. 2021. An emerging conservation approach: Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures. IIEP.

European Commission (EC). 2022, Criteria and guidance for protected areas designations. Commission staff working document. Brussels SWD (2022)23 final

European Environment Agency (EEA). 2020a. State of nature in the EU. Results from reporting under the nature directives 2013–2018, Technical report No 10/2020. European Environment Agency, Copenhagen.

European Environment Agency (EEA). 2020b. The European environment — state and outlook 2020. Knowledge for transition to a sustainable Europe 2019. 496 pp. ISBN 978-92-9480-090-9 doi:10.2800/96749

FAO. 2022. A handbook for identifying, evaluating and reporting other effective area-based conservation measures in marine fisheries. Rome. https://doi.org/10.4060/cc3307en

Heinonen, M. and Alanen, A. 2022. Suojelualueverkostoa tukevat luonnon monimuotoisuutta turvaavat alueet: Suomessa OECM-työryhmän ehdotus. Ministry of the Environment, Helsinki.

IUCN-WCPA Task Force on OECMs. 2019. Recognising and reporting other effective area-based conservation measures. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.

Jonas, H., MacKinnon, K., Marnewick, D. and Wood, P. 2023. Site-level tool for identifying other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). First edition. IUCN WCPA Technical Report Series No. 6. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.

Lázaro, C., Dudley, N., Jonas, H., and Lewis, E. 2021. Assess the potential of other effective area-based conservation measures as a driver for landscape-level conservation and connectivity in the EU. UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), the Institute for European Environment Policy (IEEP), and Trinomics.

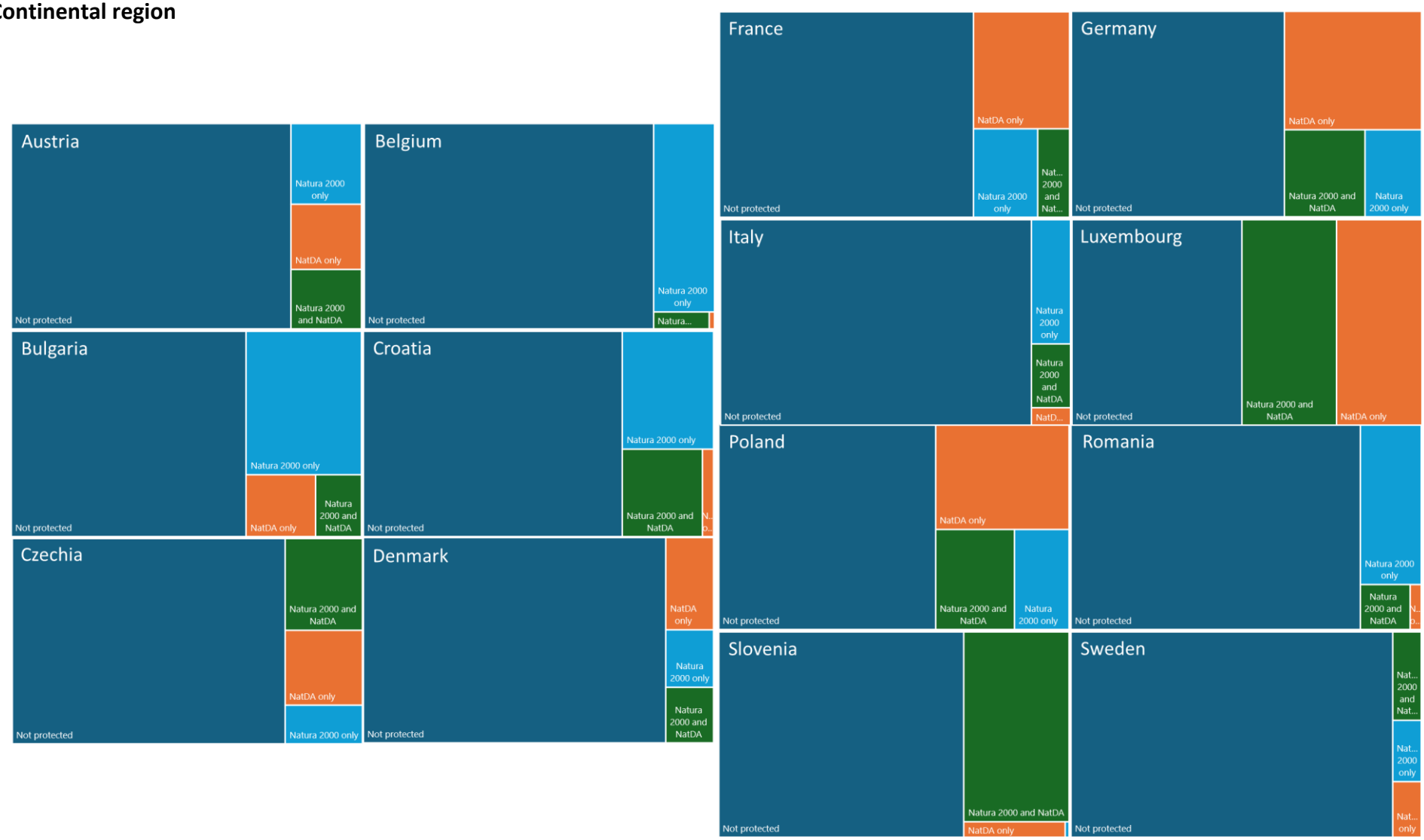
Naumann, S., Noebel, R., Fuchs, G. and Roscher, S., 2021. Protected area management in the EU - Supporting the advancement of the Trans-European Nature Network. ETC/BD report to the EEA

Stolpe, G., Howland, E., and Upton, J. 2024. OECMS in Europe: The way forward, IUCN WCPA Issues Paper Series No. 1, Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.

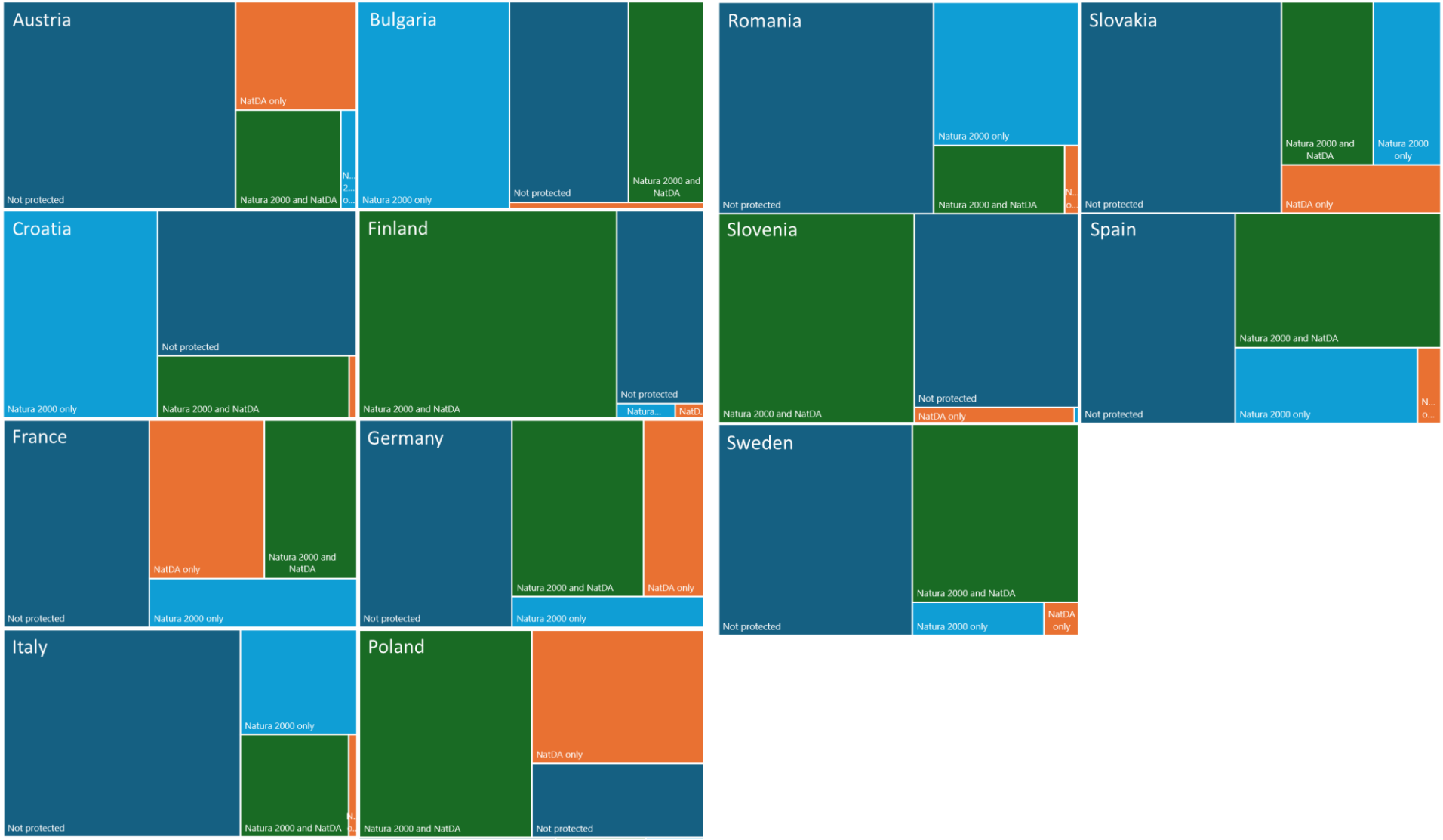
ANNEXES

Annex I - Charts illustrating the share of protected area type in each of the regions discussed at the seminar per Member State

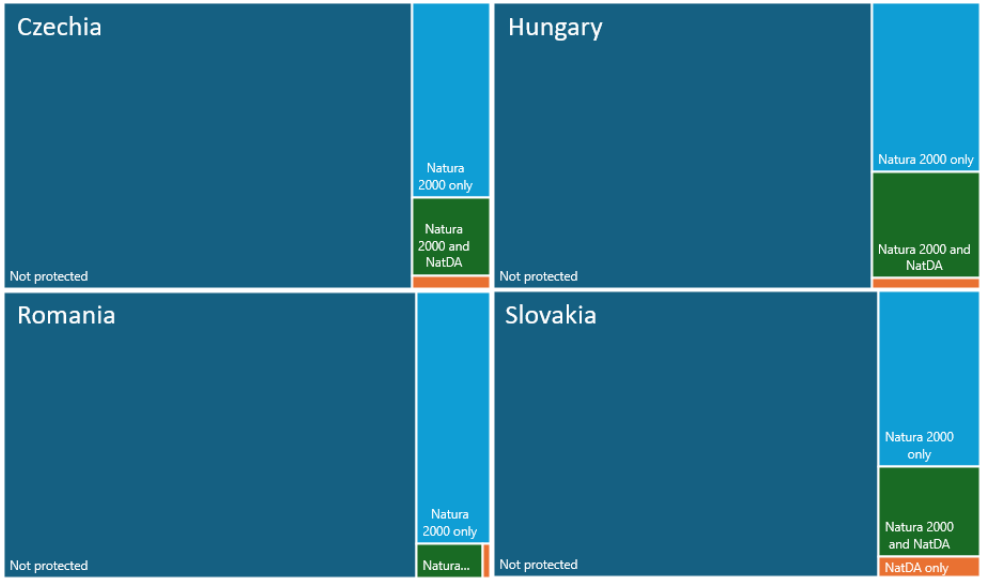
Continental region



Alpine region

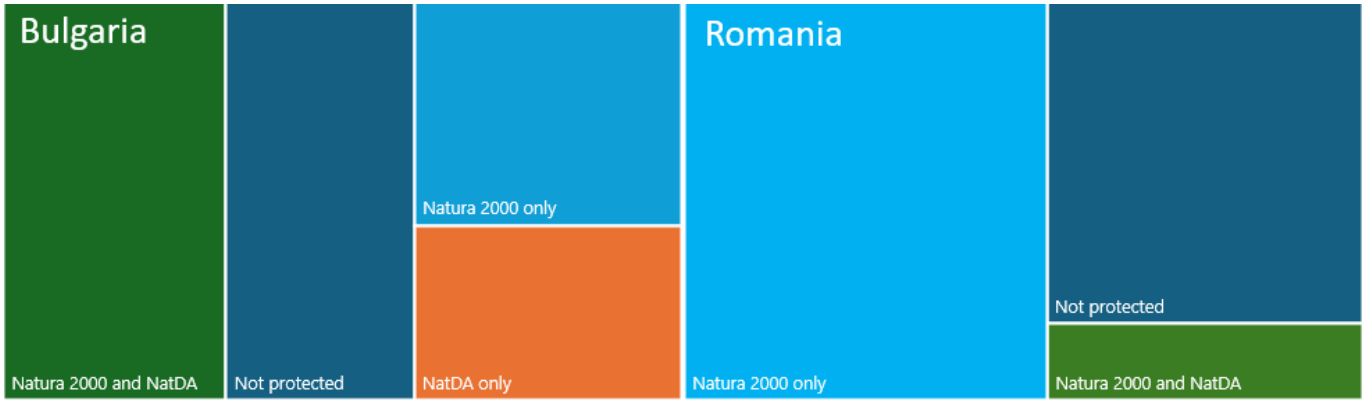


Pannonian region



Steppic region

Black sea region



Annex II - List of LIFE projects

LIFE projects funded between 2015 and 2023 dealing with grassland management and restoration in Continental, Alpine, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea regions.

MS	*LIFE Ref.*	*Acronym*	*Dates*	*Total Budget*	*Project Title*
BG	LIFE14 NAT/BG/001119	LAND for LIFE	01/09/2015 - 31/08/2021	3,425,418 €	Restoration and sustainable management of Imperial Eagles foraging habitats in key Natura 2000 sites in Bulgaria
SI	LIFE14 NAT/SI/000005	LIFE TO GRASSLANDS	01/11/2015 - 31/10/2020	3,898,579 €	LIFE Conservation and management of dry grasslands in Eastern Slovenia
ES	LIFE15 NAT/ES/000805	LIFE OREKA Mendian	01/09/2016 - 31/12/2022	3,743,704 €	Conservation and management of Basque mountain grasslands
DK	LIFE16 IPE/DK/000006	NATUREMAN	01/10/2018 - 31/03/2026	17,417,232 €	The Farmer as a Manager of Nature: aiming at a favourable conservation status for Natura 2000 sites by making nature management a sound branch of farming
BG	LIFE16 NAT/BG/000856	LIFE IAS Free Habitats	02/10/2017 - 03/10/2022	850,611 €	Collaborative management for conservation of forest and grassland habitats negatively affected by IAS in Bulgaria
CZ	LIFE16 NAT/CZ/000639	LIFE České středohoří	01/08/2017 - 31/12/2023	2,452,784 €	Active conservation of thermophilous habitats and species of Community interest in the České středohoří hills
DE	LIFE17 GIE/DE/000466	LIFE BooGI-BOP	01/07/2018 - 31/12/2022	1,724,039 €	Boosting Urban Green Infrastructure through Biodiversity-Oriented Design of Business Premises
HU	LIFE17 IPE/HU/000018	LIFE-IP GRASSLAND-HU	01/01/2019 - 31/12/2026	17,258,306 €	Long term conservation of Pannonian grasslands and related habitats through the implementation of PAF strategic measures
BE	LIFE17 NAT/BE/000445	LIFE Green valleys	01/09/2018 - 31/08/2025	8,318,632 €	Green valleys: connecting habitats conservation with long term biomass management and multi-stakeholder approach
IT	LIFE17 NAT/IT/000596	LIFEorchids	01/09/2018 - 31/10/2023	1,631,357 €	Improving the conservation status of critically endangered orchid communities in selected habitats in Northwestern Italy
SK	LIFE17 NAT/SK/000589	LIFE SUB-PANNONIC	01/09/2018 - 31/12/2024	3,112,940 €	Conservation of subpannonic dry grassland habitats and species
SK	LIFE17 NAT/SK/000621	LIFE Microtus II	01/09/2018 - 31/08/2025	5,586,121 €	Restoration of habitats for root vole *Microtus oeconomus mehelyi
BE	LIFE18 NAT/BE/000576	LIFE Nardus & Limosa	15/07/2019 - 30/11/2025	10,505,608 €	Life Nardus & Limosa, large scale restoration of Nardus grasslands & conservation of meadow birds in DeKempen (BE-NL)

CZ	LIFE18 NAT/CZ/000832	LIFE SouthMoravia	01/09/2019 - 31/12/2025	1,320,000 €	Protection of priority grassland habitats in the SCIs of the South Moravian Region
FR	LIFE18 NAT/FR/000698	LIFE VALBONNE	01/09/2019 - 31/08/2026	4,577,483 €	Restoration of priority habitats and species of Community Interest in the Valbonne military camp
CR	LIFE18 NAT/HR/000847	Dinara back to LIFE	15/01/2020 - 15/11/2023	1,296,509 €	Management planning and restoration of Dinara dry grasslands to save biodiversity and support sustainable development
IT	LIFE18 NAT/IT/000803	LIFE DRYLANDS	02/09/2019 - 30/04/2025	2,203,028 €	Restoration of dry-acidic Continental grasslands and heathlands in Natura 2000 sites in Piemonte and Lombardia
IT	LIFE18 NAT/IT/000920	LIFE DIOMEDEE	01/09/2019 - 30/06/2024	1,402,228 €	Protection of seabirds and habitats in Tremiti (Diomedee) Islands and other Apulian SCI's through actions against IAS
IT	LIFE19 GIE/IT/000977	LIFE_GRACE	01/09/2020 - 31/12/2025	1,378,727 €	GRAsslands Conservation Efforts through usage
BE	LIFE19 NAT/BE/000093	LIFE Connexions	01/01/2021 - 31/12/2027	15,175,531 €	Priority actions for grasslands, forests and associated species connexions in Wallonia (BE) and Great East region (FR)
DE	LIFE19 NAT/DE/000871	LIFE "helle Eifeltler"	01/01/2021 - 31/12/2027	4,690,177 €	Promotion of Violet Copper (Lycaena helle) and Marsh Fritillary (Euphydryas aurinia) in the Northern Eifel
FR	LIFE19 NAT/FR/000828	LIFE COTEAUX GASCONS	01/10/2020 - 31/12/2025	3,524,968 €	Restauration and preservation of the ecological continuity of Gascons Hills
IT	LIFE19 NAT/IT/000848	LIFE PollinAction	01/09/2020 - 31/03/2025	3,293,690 €	Actions for boosting pollination in rural and urban areas
RO	LIFE19 NAT/RO/000602	LIFE TransilvaCooperation	01/09/2020 - 31/12/2024	596,275 €	Demonstrating cooperative approach for good management of Natura 2000 grasslands at landscape scale in Transylvania
SK	LIFE19 NAT/SK/000895	LIFE endemic PANALP	01/09/2020 - 28/02/2027	5,279,511 €	Conservation of endemic species and dry grassland habitats in the contact zone of Pannonian and Alpine bioregions
DE	LIFE20 NAT/DE/001504	LIFE 4 Siegerlandscapes	01/01/2022 - 31/12/2027	4,177,980 €	Siegerland´s cultural and natural landscapes
FR	LIFE20 NAT/FR/000080	LIFE SOS Crau Grasshopper	01/09/2021 - 30/09/2025	1,919,745 €	LIFE SOS Crau Plain Grasshopper: adaptive habitat management, breeding and reintroduction programme
FR	LIFE20 NAT/FR/001515	LIFE TERRA MUSIVA	01/09/2021 - 01/09/2026	6,106,375 €	Conservation of threatened habitats and species which form the Garrigues Gardoises' mediterranean ecological mosaic
HU	LIFE20 NAT/HU/001404	LIFEforBUGS&BIRDS	01/09/2021 - 31/12/2027	3,394,616 €	Innovative management of Pannonic salt steppes and loess steppic grasslands to benefit plants, insects and birds
IT	LIFE20 NAT/IT/001076	LIFE ShepForBio	01/09/2021 - 31/12/2027	3,228,451 €	Shepherds for Biodiversity in Mountain Marginal Areas

SI	LIFE20 NAT/SI/000253	LIFE FOR SEEDS	01/09/2021 - 31/12/2026	5,351,723 €	Conservation of priority grassland habitats in Slovenia through the establishment of seed bank and in situ restoration
SK	LIFE21-NAT-SK-LIFE 4 STEPPE BIRDS/101074480	LIFE21-NAT-SK-LIFE 4 STEPPE BIRDS	01/12/2022 - 30/11/2028	6,657,660 €	Conservation and return of steppe birds to lowlands of Slovakia
BE	LIFE21-NAT-BE-LIFE HARWIN/101074162	LIFE21-NAT-BE-LIFE HARWIN	01/01/2023 - 31/12/2028	8,212,275 €	HAbitat Restoration in the WINgevalley: ecological restoration and endangered species recovery in a fragmented landscape
DK	LIFE22-NAT-DK-LIFE-ORCHIDS/101113801	LIFE22-NAT-DK-LIFE ORCHIDS	01/09/2023 - 31/12/2028	5,470,395 €	Restore and connect existing and new EU Priority dry grasslands (6210*, 6120*, 6230*) to secure favorable conservation status of habitat types and species (orchids, butterflies, and pollinators)

LIFE projects funded between 2014 and 2023 on aspects relevant to OECMs (stewardship, private land and private funds, businesses, areas outside protected areas). Note that the list includes projects across all of the biogeographical regions as only very few are in the CPSBS and Alpine regions.

MS	***LIFE Ref.***	***Acronym***	***Dates***	***Total Budget***	***Project Title***
ES	LIFE14 NAT/ES/000699	Life Anillo Verde	01/10/2015 - 31/12/2020	2,568,132 €	Green Belt of Bay of Santander: connecting nature and city
ES	LIFE14 NAT/ES/001094	LIFE Olivares Vivos	01/10/2015 - 31/05/2021	2,856,005 €	Olive Alive: Towards the design and certification of biodiversity friendly olive groves
ES	LIFE15 NAT/ES/000734	LIFE STEPPE FARMING	01/09/2016 - 28/02/2021	1,765,255 €	Sustainable farming in SPAs of Castilla-La Mancha for steppe birds conservation
ES	LIFE15 NAT/ES/000802	LIFE Ricoti	15/09/2016 - 30/09/2021	3,347,601 €	Conservation of the Duponts lark (Chersophilus duponti) and its habitat in Soria (Spain)
ES	LIFE16 NAT/ES/000573	LIFE OSO COUREL	01/07/2017 - 30/04/2021	1,640,000 €	Actions to favour Cantabrian brown bear expansion to new territories in Serra do Courel (Galicia, Spain)
IT	LIFE17 NAT/IT/000596	LIFEorchids	01/09/2018 - 31/10/2023	1,631,357 €	Improving the conservation status of critically endangered orchid communities in selected habitats in Northwestern Italy
ES	LIFE17 NAT/ES/000184	LIFE-SALINAS	01/09/2018 - 30/09/2022	1,336,825 €	Conservación de los hábitats y aves acuáticas en el LIC y ZEPA ES0000175 "Salinas y Arenales de San Pedro del Pinatar"
UK	LIFE18 NAT/UK/000995	SWAforLIFE	01/10/2019 - 30/09/2026	6,137,268 €	SWAforLIFE: Scottish Wildcat Action Phase 2 Wildcat recovery through threat mitigation and translocation

ES	LIFE19 NAT/ES/000906	LIFE Cerceta pardilla	01/01/2021 - 31/12/2025	6,370,453 €	LIFE Coordinated actions for the recovery of the marbled teal (Marmaronetta angustirostris) in Spain
ES	LIFE19 NAT/ES/000913	LIFE BEARS WITH FUTURE	01/10/2020 - 31/03/2025	2,580,000 €	Improving key food resources and preventing winter conflicts for Cantabrian brown bears under climate change scenarios
PT	LIFE19 NAT/PT/000414	LIFE LxAquila	01/09/2020 - 01/09/2025	1,928,385 €	Stewardship network for the conservation of peri-urban Bonellis eagles
ES	LIFE20 NAT/ES/001172	LIFE FARMINGBARDENAS	01/10/2021- 30/09/2025	2,171,205 €	Conservation strategy for steppe birds in Bardenas Reales (Navarra, Spain)
ES	LIFE20 NAT/ES/000035	LIFE EL HITO	01/10/2021- 31/12/2024	3,108,400 €	Restoration and expansion of "El Hito", a Priority salt flat and wetland (Spain)
ES	LIFE20 NAT/ES/001477	LIFE Iberian Agrosteppes	01/09/2021- 31/08/2026	3,315,951 €	Sustainable agrarian approaches for agro-steppe species and habitats conservation in Nature 2000
IT	LIFE21-CCM-IT-LIFE-ClimatePositive/101074589	LIFE21-CCM-IT-LIFE ClimatePositive	01/08/2022- 31/07/2027	3,456,677 €	Promoting SMART associations and innovative financing for responsible forest management and carbon sink enhancement
SK	LIFE21-NAT-SK-LIFE-Metamorphosis/101074487	LIFE21-NAT-SK-LIFE Metamorphosis	01/09/2022 - 31/03/2029	5,498,521 €	Developing best practices in butterfly conservation in Central and Eastern Europe
LT	LIFE16 IPE/LT/000016	PAF-NATURALIT	01/01/2018 - 31/12/2027	17,000,044 €	Optimizing the management of Natura 2000 network in Lithuania
ES	LIFE15 NAT/ES/000805	LIFE OREKA Mendian	01/09/2016 - 31/12/2022	3,743,704 €	Conservation and management of Basque mountain grasslands
EE	LIFE20 NAT/EE/000074	WOODMEADOWLIFE	01/11/2021 - 31/12/2026	6,697,642 €	Restoring and promoting a long term sustainable management of Fennoscandian wooded meadows in Estonia and Latvia
PL	LIFE21-NAT-PL-LIFE4WadersPL/101069516	LIFE21-NAT-PL-LIFE4WadersPL	01/09/2022 - 31/12/2027	9,445,068 €	Recovery of wet grassland wader populations in Poland through creation of large-scale conservation areas
BE	LIFE21-IPN-BE-B4B-LIFE/101069526	LIFE21-IPN-BE-B4B LIFE	01/01/2023 - 31/12/2031	36,297,528 €	Belgium for Biodiversity
DE	LIFE19 IPE/DE/000004	LIFE IP GrassBirdHabitats	01/11/2020 - 31/10/2030	27,061,079 €	Conservation of wet grassland breeding bird habitats in the Atlantic Region
IE	LIFE19 IPC/IE/000007	LIFE IP Peatlands and People	01/10/2020 - 30/09/2027	27,368,976 €	LIFE IP Peatlands and People - Irelands Climate Action Catalyst
NL	LIFE19 IPE/NL/000011	LIFE IP PAF All4Biodiversity	09/03/2020 - 08/03/2026	16,271,076 €	LIFE IP PAF Biodiversity recovery approach for N2000 sites and surroundings, in cooperation with agricultural and other land users

DE	LIFE15 IPE/DE/000007	Atlantic region DE	01/10/2016 - 30/09/2026	16,875,000 €	The exemplary implementation of the EU 2020 target with a focus on oligotrophic habitats on sand in the Atlantic region of Germany
FI	LIFE17 NAT/FI/000181	Beetles Life	01/08/2018 - 31/07/2023	2,689,942 €	Beetles Life - One small step for a man, one giant leap for the charismatic flagship species
ES	LIFE16 NAT/ES/000235	AQUILA a-LIFE	01/10/2017 - 30/09/2022	4,752,383 €	Accomplish Western Mediterranean Bonelli's Eagle recovery by working together for an electricity grid suitable for birds