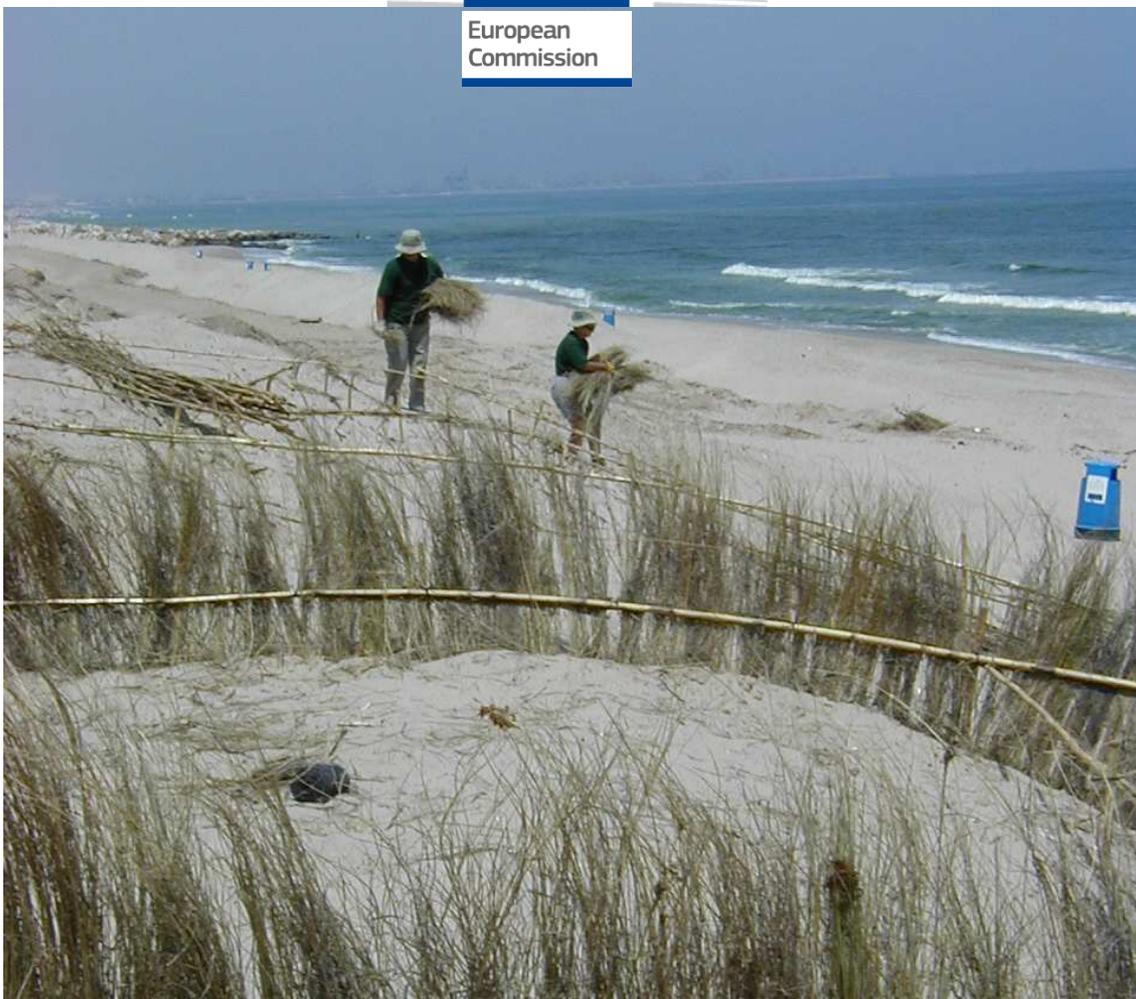




European
Commission



Establishing conservation measures for Natura 2000 Sites

*A review of the provisions of
Article 6.1 and their practical
implementation in different
Member States*

Establishing conservation measures for Natura 2000 Sites

This document reflects the views of the European Commission services and is of a non binding nature.

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ESTABLISHING CONSERVATION MEASURES FOR NATURA 2000 SITES

Introduction

This document has been prepared to assist Member States in the implementation of Article 6.1 of the Habitats Directive regarding the management of SACs. It explains the various options available for establishing the necessary conservation measures in line with the provisions of Article 6.1 and examines, on a practical level, how these can best be implemented in a range of different circumstances, as illustrated by good practices from various Member States.

The implementation of Article 6.1 is central to achieving the objectives of the Habitats Directive since it is the primary measure available under the Directive for introducing positive conservation measures to help maintain or restore habitats and species of Community interest at a favourable conservation status.

The provisions of Article 6.1 apply only to SACs but analogous provisions apply to SPA by virtue of Article 4.1 and 4.2 of the Birds Directive which require that Member States ensure the species mentioned in Annex I and regularly occurring migratory bird species are subject to special conservation measures concerning their habitat in order to ensure their survival and reproduction in their area of distribution. This means that SPAs are subject to a similar protection regime as SACs. This document may thus be also useful for establishing conservation measures in SPAs.

The document is based on a detailed analysis of a series of fact sheets submitted by the Member States on their management approaches and planning experiences in Natura 2000 sites¹. A number of other documents have also been consulted that are relevant to the preparation and implementation of Natura 2000 management plans (see Key References at the end of this document).

The Commission has recently published two notes that provide further guidance to Member States in setting Conservation Objectives for Natura 2000 sites and on the Designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). This document takes account of those notes and incorporates some relevant elements from them.

This document complements other interpretative guidance documents prepared by the Commission on the provisions of Article 6². The overall objective is to encourage a better understanding of the provisions of article 6.1 and a greater sharing of practical experiences between Member States and between different organisations.

As such, it reflects only the views of the European Commission and is not of a legally binding nature. Under the principle of subsidiarity it is for Member States to determine the measures to be taken to manage their Natura 2000 sites in accordance with the terms of the Habitats Directive. The present guidance is therefore not prescriptive in its intent, but rather aims to offer a useful source of information and advice to help Member States implement their obligations under Article 6.

¹ 24 Member States have provided such fact sheets.

² See: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/guidance_en.htm

1. What does Article 6.1 require?

The aim of the Habitats Directive is to "contribute towards ensuring bio-diversity through the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora in the European territory of the Member States to which the Treaty applies"³. The Directive requires that "A coherent European ecological network of special areas of conservation shall be set up under the title Natura 2000. This network, composed of sites hosting the natural habitat types listed in Annex I and habitats of the species listed in Annex II, shall enable the natural habitat types and the species' habitats concerned to be maintained or, where appropriate, restored at a favourable conservation status in their natural range"⁴.

Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive (92/43/EEC) plays a crucial role in the management of Natura 2000 sites and determines the relationship between the conservation of the habitats and species and other types of land use within these designated areas. It has three main sets of provisions. Article 6(1) makes provision for the establishment of the necessary conservation measures. Article 6(2) makes provision for avoidance of habitat deterioration and significant species disturbance. Its emphasis is therefore preventive. Article 6(3) and (4) set out a series of procedural and substantive safeguards governing plans and projects likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site. Within this structure, it can be seen that there is a distinction between Article 6(1) and (2) which define a general regime and Article 6(3) and (4) which define a procedure applying to specific circumstances.

Article 6(1) establishes a general conservation regime that must be established by the Member States for all special areas of conservation (SAC) and which applies to all the natural habitat types of Annex I and the species of Annex II present on the sites, except those identified as non significant in the Natura 2000 Standard Data Form. The implementation of Article 6(1) is therefore not optional: the necessary conservation measures must be established for all SACs.

Article 6(1): "For special areas of conservation, Member States shall **establish the necessary conservation measures** involving, if need be, appropriate management plans specifically designed for the sites or integrated into other development plans, and appropriate statutory, administrative or contractual measures which correspond to the ecological requirements of the natural habitat types in Annex I and the species in Annex II present on the sites"

Often this will require the implementation of positive and pro-active measures, involving if need be management plans and statutory, administrative or contractual measures, which aim to contribute to achieving the general objective of the Directive. In that regard, Art. 6(1) is distinguished from the three other paragraphs of Art. 6, which focus instead on preventive measures to avoid deterioration, disturbance and significant effects in the Natura 2000 sites.

Article 6(2): "Member States shall take appropriate steps to avoid, in the special areas of conservation, the deterioration as well as disturbance of the species and habitats".

³ Article 2(1).

⁴ Article 3.

Legal interpretation as regards article 6.1

A court ruling (Case C-508/04) has stated that a Member State cannot escape from taking all the necessary conservation measures in Natura 2000 sites. *“It is apparent from Article 6(1) of the Directive that the ‘necessary conservation measures’ must be adopted in all cases, and not ‘if need be’⁵. In Article 6(1) the words ‘if need be’ concern only management plans and cannot be understood as a general restriction on the obligation to adopt the necessary statutory, administrative or contractual measures....*

The Directive requires the adoption of necessary conservation measures, a fact which excludes any discretion in this regard on the part of the Member States Moreover, mere administrative practices, which by their nature are alterable at will by the authorities and are not given the appropriate publicity, cannot be regarded as constituting fulfilment of the obligations owed by the Member States in the context of transposition of a directive”.

Article 6.1 concerns the **SACs specifically**, it does not apply to the Special Protection Areas (SPAs)⁶, unlike Article 6, paragraphs 2, 3 and 4, which also apply to areas designated under the Birds Directive. However, as already mentioned above, Articles 4.1 and 4.2 of the Birds Directive introduce a similar approach for the management of SPAs to that set out in Article 6.1.

1.1 The conservation concept

The overall conservation concept appears, *inter alia*, in the sixth recital of the Directive which reads: *“Whereas, in order to ensure the restoration or maintenance of natural habitats and species of Community interest at a favourable conservation status, it is necessary to designate special areas of conservation in order to create a coherent European ecological network according to a specified timetable”*; and in its eighth recital: *“whereas it is appropriate, in each area designated, to implement the necessary measures having regard to the conservation objectives pursued”*.

Article 1 states that for the purpose of the Directive **“Conservation means a series of measures required to maintain or restore the natural habitats and the populations of species of wild fauna and flora at a favourable status”**.

The **conservation status** is also defined in the Directive (article 1).

- For a natural habitat, conservation status means *“the sum of the influences acting on a natural habitat and its typical species that may affect its long-term natural distribution, structure and functions as well as the long-term survival of its typical species within the territory referred to in Article 2”* (article 1e).
- For a species, the conservation status means *“the sum of the influences acting on the species concerned that may affect the long-term distribution and abundance of its populations within the territory referred to in Article 2”* (article 1i).

⁵ The Austrian Government contended that the obligation laid down in Article 6(1) was not to adopt conservation measures in all cases, but only the ‘necessary’ conservation measures. In any event, where such measures were required in addition to the obligations and prohibitions to be laid down pursuant to Austrian law, they were indeed taken by the competent authorities of the Province in order to achieve a favourable conservation status.

⁶ A regime laying down special conservation measures for the SPAs classified under the ‘Birds’ Directive, is set in Art. 4, paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Birds Directive.

The conservation status of a natural habitat will be taken as 'favourable' when:

- its natural range and areas it covers within that range are stable or increasing, and
- the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
- the conservation status of its typical species is favourable as defined below.

The conservation status will be taken as 'favourable' when:

- population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and
- the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and
- there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

1.2 Conservation measures

Member States must adopt the conservation measures necessary to achieve the general aim of the Directive as set out in its Article 2.1: "...ensuring bio-diversity through the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora in the European territory of the Member States to which the Treaty applies". There is therefore a **result obligation**. Article 2.2, in particular, specifies the objective of the measures to be taken under the terms of this Directive: "*Measures taken ... shall be designed to maintain or to restore, at a favourable conservation status, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest*".

The general aim of the Natura 2000 network in relation to the conservation of natural habitats listed in Annex I and habitats of species listed in Annex II is set out in article 3 of the Habitats Directive, which specifies that it "...shall enable the natural habitat types and the species' habitats concerned to be maintained or, where appropriate, restored at a favourable conservation status in their natural range".

As regards the objectives of the measures that must be implemented in the Natura 2000 network, these are also referred to in Article 1(I) of the Habitats Directive which states that: *Special Area of Conservation (SAC) means a site of Community importance designated by the MS through a statutory, administrative and/or contractual act where the necessary conservation measures are applied for maintenance or restoration, at a favourable status, of the natural habitats and/or the populations of species for which the site is designated.*

Member States must designate SCIs as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and apply the necessary conservation measures required under Article 6.1 **within six years** of the SCI being adopted as a Site of Community Importance (SCI) by the Commission (in accordance with article 4.4). SAC designation therefore triggers the implementation of Article 6.1 and it can be understood from this that the six year period between the adoption of SCI and designation of the site as an SAC is foreseen to be used to establish the necessary conservation measures so that they are ready to be implemented once the sites is designated an SAC.

This was confirmed by the Macaronesia case (C-90/10) which found that a Member State had failed to fulfil its obligations “*by failing to adopt and apply, in accordance with Article 6(1) and (2) of Directive 92/43/EEC, the appropriate conservation measures and a protection system to prevent the deterioration of habitats and significant disruption to species, ensuring the legal protection of the special areas of conservation corresponding to the sites referred to in the Decision 2002/11/EC*”, which had approved the SCI Community list more than six years ago. It is therefore advisable that Member States start identifying the necessary conservation measures well before this deadline.

The necessary conservation measures in a Natura 2000 site should be related to the **conservation objectives** to be pursued in the site and must correspond to the ecological requirements of the habitats and species for which the site is designated. Conservation measures are the actual mechanisms and actions to be put in place for a Natura 2000 site with the aim of achieving the site's conservation objectives.

The general objective of achieving Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) for all habitat types and species listed in Annexes I and II of the Habitats Directive needs to be translated into site-level conservation objectives, which are a set of specified objectives to be met in a site in order to make sure that the site contributes in the best possible way to achieving FCS at the appropriate level (national or regional level, taking into account the natural range of the respective species or habitat types).

This will involve an assessment at the site level of the degree to which the habitat or species present on the site needs to be maintained, or, where necessary, restored in order to make sure that the site contributes to achieving the overall conservation targets of the Habitats Directive (which may be set at a more strategic level – eg at regional, national, biogeographical or EU level).

1.3 Ecological requirements

According to Art. 6.1, conservation measures in SACs must correspond to the ecological requirements of the natural habitat types in Annex I and the species in Annex II present on the site.

The **ecological requirements** involve all the ecological needs, including both abiotic and biotic factors, which are deemed necessary to ensure the conservation of the habitat types and species, including their relations with the physical environment (air, water, soil, vegetation, etc.). These requirements rest on scientific knowledge and should be defined on a case-by-case basis, which means that the ecological requirements can vary from one species to another within a site but also for the same species from one site to another.

However, it is not necessary to establish specific conservation objectives or conservation measures for species or habitat types whose presence on the site is non-significant according to the Natura 2000 Standard Data Form [i.e. all species indicated as having an insignificant population size and density⁷ in relation to the populations present within the national territory (population size category D), habitat types indicated as having an insignificant representativity⁸ (category D)].

⁷ Criterion B(a) of Annex III of the Habitats Directive: Size and density of the population of the species present on the site in relation to the populations present within national territory.

⁸ Criterion A(a) of Annex III of the Habitats Directive, representativity, should be linked to the interpretation manual of Annex I habitat types since this manual provides a definition, a list of characteristic species and other relevant elements. The degree of representativity gives a measure of 'how typical' a habitat type is.

2. Ways to implement article 6.1

According to the Provisions of Article 6.1 of the Habitats Directive, the necessary conservation measures can involve:

- *appropriate management plans specifically designed for the sites or integrated into other development plans, and*
- *appropriate statutory, administrative or contractual measures which correspond to the ecological requirements of the natural habitat types in Annex I and the species in Annex II present on the sites”.*

The choice is left to the Member States, in conformity with the principle of subsidiarity. Management Plans are widely used in the EU countries, but other measures are also successfully applied and in many countries the different options are used in combination for the management of Natura 2000 sites (see examples below).

2.1 Management plans for Natura 2000 sites: advantages and benefits

Many Member States use management plans as a tool to guide managers and other interested parties in dealing with the conservation of Natura 2000 sites. In general management plans at site level are used to formulate the site's conservation objectives together with the measures necessary to attain these objectives (although other instruments can be used as well provided that the aim of those instruments are also to implement the conservation objectives).

Management plans can also function as a tool to lay down the respective responsibilities of the different socio-economic stakeholders, authorities and NGOs in implementing the necessary conservation measures that have been identified.

Management plans can be stand-alone documents or can also be 'integrated into other development plans', in conformity with the principle of integration of the environment into other Community policies. In the case of an integrated plan, it is important to ensure that clear targets and conservation measures are set for the relevant habitats and species concerned within that site.

Management plans are a useful tool for ensuring the implementation of article 6.1 provisions is done in a clear and transparent way, enabling all stakeholders to be informed about what Natura 2000 sets out to achieve and inciting their active participation in this discussion. Management plans may also help to get funding for the measures and achieve better integration into other plans.

If management plans are chosen by a Member State, it will often make sense to establish them before concluding the other measures mentioned in Article 6(1), particularly the contractual measures. A management plan can provide a useful starting point for the specific details of contractual measures.

Advantages of using management plans

- A management plan makes clear the role and objectives of the area e.g. in meeting a range of targets.
- It identifies the necessary conservation measures, i.e. what needs to be done to maintain or restore the habitats and species for which the sites are designated to a good state of conservation.
- It is a practical tool for site managers & staff: (a) planning work (b) priority/target setting (c) resource allocation (staff, time & money).
- It provides for consistency and continuity for the managing organisation. It informs future managers of what was done and why. The people involved in management can understand the reasons for the work they are doing.
- The preparation process is a means of communication with “stakeholders” and securing their support and involvement in the management of the designated area.
- It identifies the type of data and information needed for evaluating progress towards the objectives through monitoring and recording. It provides a tool for monitoring.
- Management plans can be used to enforce relevant measures, primarily preventive measures to avoid deterioration, when these plans are approved under legally binding instruments.
- A management plan can make clear what “avoiding deterioration” means in practice, indicating exactly where the relevant species/habitats are found and in what condition they are.
- It can provide useful information for impact assessments.
- Management plans can be also useful to make available the necessary resources to implement the conservation measures and achieve the sites’ conservation objectives, e.g. as a tool for efficient application of subsidies and funding.

It must however be noted that existing management plans for other protected area categories (eg. National or Natural Parks, etc.) are not always sufficient to address the management of Natura 2000 sites and should therefore be adapted to the specific conservation objectives pursued in these sites in function of the species and habitats of Community interest present. Furthermore, the boundaries of other types of protected area and those of the Natura 2000 site may not be coincident.

Although management plans for Natura 2000 sites are only suggested in the Habitats Directive, these plans seem to be a preferred option for most Member States and are even considered obligatory in many of them.

In many countries (about a half of the countries and regions that have provided fact sheets - see annex I) management plans are required for all Natura 2000 sites, while in other Member States these are only required for some sites, for instance only for SCIs but not for SPAs (e.g. Cyprus), only for areas where there are conflicts between land use practices and conservation objectives that need to be resolved (e.g. some regions in Austria), or for those sites that are selected on the basis of a specific set of criteria (e.g. Rheinland-Pfalz, Germany).

Different types of plans are currently used in the Member States to establish the necessary conservation measures in Natura 2000 sites:

- Management plans for individual sites or for a group of sites.
- Sectoral management plans, which set conservation objectives and specific measures for Natura 2000 sites which are relevant to that particular sector, e.g. forestry, agriculture, water, etc.

The majority of the countries/regions within the EU develop **single-site** plans, but there are also examples of **multiple-site** (or even regional) plans:

- Multiple-sites plans are developed in some countries and regions when there is an overlapping of sites (e.g. in Bulgaria, Ireland, Luxembourg and Lower Austria), or for a series of small Natura 2000 sites (e.g. in Tyrol, Austria and Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany).
- For marine sites, a multiple site management plan was used in Belgium for the period 2009-2012, with a number of “policy options” related to water quality, disturbance, fishery measures, in view of the operational conservation objectives.

Furthermore, **conservation plans for certain species or habitats** occurring in only a few Natura 2000 sites are also used in some MS (eg. *Lynx lynx*, *Barbastela barbastela*, *Cypripedium calceolus* in Lithuania; *Crex crex* and *Bombina variegata* in Trento region, Italy, etc.). These action plans represent another approach to implementing conservation measures. These plans usually assess the conservation status of the species and habitats concerned, outline conservation priorities and define the necessary conservation measures for those species and habitats in all sites where they occur.

These plans are designed to take into account the specific ecological requirements of the habitats and species targeted and the threats that affect them. Depending on the level of detail, these can propose and define conservation measures in different sites and locations and serve as a tool to implement the necessary conservation measures in particular Natura 2000 sites.

2.2 Statutory, administrative and contractual measures

Among **statutory, administrative or contractual measures**, a variety of measures may be considered appropriate to achieve the overall aims of the Directive. In principle, this involves active management having a positive effect but, in some cases, it can also involve measures requiring no action (passive management or non-intervention management).

On the other hand, these measures are not necessarily new measures, since existing measures can also contribute to achieve the conservation objectives of the site.

- *Statutory measures usually* follow a pattern laid down in procedural law and can set specific requirements in relation to activities that can be allowed, restricted or forbidden in the site.
- *Administrative measures* can set relevant provisions in relation to the implementation of conservation measures or the authorisation of other activities in the site.
- *Contractual measures* involve establishing contracts or agreements usually among managing authorities and land owners or users in the site.

Among the measures involving positive actions, agri-environmental or sylvi-environmental measures serve as a good example to illustrate how socio-economic requirements can be taken into account when establishing agreements which benefit Natura 2000 sites.

Agri-environmental agreements with farmers within the Rural Development Regulation are used as a contractual measure aiming at maintaining a favourable conservation status of certain habitat types (eg. meadows, pastures) and species across a suite of

sites. Forest-environmental measures can also be used to establish contracts and agreements with forest owners on the management of the forest to favour the conservation of habitats and species.

The complexity of the necessary conservation measures may also require other kinds of contracts and agreements and other types of specific measures, including voluntary conservation measures. As mentioned above, Member States use the different options indicated in the Habitats Directive to tackle the management of Natura 2000 sites (see examples below).

Examples of different management options in EU countries

Denmark

In Denmark, management plans are obligatory for all Natura 2000 sites. The Ministry of Environment starts the elaboration of the plans and is responsible for their formal approval. The Natura 2000 plan is legally binding upon the authorities, and all other plans (spatial as well as sectoral plans) must take into account the provisions of the Natura 2000 plans. Management plans for all Natura 2000 sites have been prepared (246 plans so far), except for a few new marine Natura 2000 sites which have been recently listed as SCIs and for which draft plans will be elaborated in 2013.

The planning phase was initiated by a six-month public consultation period where the Ministry of Environment presented the Natura 2000 planning concept. Following the Natura 2000 plan, local action plans are drafted by local authorities and state land owners, which are also subject to public consultation.

The drafting of the Natura 2000 plans is coordinated at the central level by the Agency for Nature in the Ministry of Environment and steered by an overall steering committee headed by the Director of the Agency. At the regional level, various Natura 2000 project leaders were in charge of drafting Natura plans under the responsibility of a regional director within the Ministry.

The Danish approach integrates responsibilities for private and municipal land, state land owners and other ministries. All authorities are in principle obliged to implement the management actions for which they are responsible and on their respective land. In order to ensure their involvement, the Danish Agency for Nature held technical hearings with the municipalities, as well as consultations and coordination meetings with implementing partners (e.g. ministries dealing with agriculture, defence, traffic in marine areas). Information meetings are also held with various stakeholders at all levels (central, regional, local) to inform about progress.

A number of measures can be agreed upon on a voluntarily basis with land owners and stakeholders. Agreements are accompanied by compensation when relevant and on the basis of individual contracts signed between the landowners and relevant local authorities. However if it is not possible to reach an agreement, the Danish legislation includes the necessary provisions to implement the necessary measures. Relevant state and municipal authorities are responsible for the follow up of action plans. For the implementation of the Natura 2000 plans a total budget of 240 million EUR is reserved in the government budget in a first planning phase from 2010 to 2015.

France

The Environmental French Code defines the basic principles for the management planning of Natura 2000 sites in France, in particular through the requirement of a “document of objectives” (DOCOB) for each site, which is drawn up with the active involvement of local stakeholders through a steering committee that is specifically set up for that purpose.

The Environmental Code specifies different types of management measures which may be applied to conserve the habitats and species of Community interest present on each site. The DOCOB also lays down sustainable development objectives for each site.

The DOCOB includes an assessment of the conservation status of the habitat types and the species present in the site, an overview of the human activities that take place in the Natura 2000 site, and an analysis of their effects on the habitats and species of Community interest. These assessments are used to identify the conservation objectives and the management measures to be undertaken in the site. These include contractual measures, administrative, regulatory or land holding measures, as well as measures for communication and awareness-raising and for monitoring and improving the scientific knowledge that is relevant for the management of the site.

Concerning contractual measures, standard specifications are set out in the DOCOB for the practical implementation of management operations, which usually derive from a consensus established through local consultation.

The DOCOB can also include a voluntary Natura 2000 Charter, which comprises all the undertakings and recommendations that may be applicable to the site, and to specific habitats or environments. Signing up to a Natura 2000 Charter ensures the owners or rights-holders carry out their activities in a way that respects the conservation objectives of the site, and adheres to the overall objective of Natura 2000.

This is a voluntary system, which does not imply any compensatory payment in return. It indicates a strong commitment to the conservation objectives for the site's natural habitats and species. Any individual or corporate body, public or private, with rights *in personam* or *in rem* over land included in the site, may sign up to the site's Natura 2000 Charter, for a duration of 5 years.

The DOCOB is the reference point for the implementation of all the measures required for the conservation of the site, and particularly for the signing of contracts and Natura 2000 Charters, as well as for the coordination and awareness raising activities which the lead organization responsible for implementing the DOCOB will take on. It is also a reference point for evaluating the management of the site, the conservation status of the habitats and species, and the impacts of any possible development programmes or projects.

An Environment Ministry Circular (DNP/SDEN 2007-3, of 21/11/2007) specifies the contents of the DOCOB and the conditions for funding its development or implementation on the site.

Slovenia

In Slovenia, management planning of Natura 2000 sites is done through sectoral management processes (e.g. in forestry, water, fishery and game management plans). A National Natura 2000 Site Management Programme (2007-2013) has set the conservation objectives for habitats and species together with the conservation measures for each site.

The Programme defines –on a site-by-site basis– the necessary measures in relation to forestry, hunting, fishing, agri-environment, water management and nature conservation to achieve conservation objectives. It also defines which sectoral policy is appropriate and how this sectoral policy should be adapted to protect a site.

The Slovenian Natura 2000 Management Programme is an example of an integrated approach to the implementation of the necessary conservation measures required for the Natura 2000 sites via other sectoral programmes and EU funding programmes. Special attention has been put on the interactions between the Rural Development Plan 2007-2013 and the Natura 2000 Management programme 2007-2013.

United Kingdom

In the UK, Natura 2000 sites on land are mostly underpinned by designation under national legislation as 'Sites of Special Scientific Interest' (SSSI) in England, Wales and Scotland and as 'Areas of Special Scientific Interest' (ASSI) in Northern Ireland. SSSI/ASSI designation provides a legal framework for both regulating the use and development of land and securing positive management through agreements between landowners and the nature conservation agencies.

Pursuant to this in *England*, a range of conservation measures, including appropriate management plans for SACs have been established, for example Forestry Commission Management Plans (including forest design plans) and National Nature Reserve Plans.

A range of other mechanisms for ensuring appropriate management of terrestrial Natura 2000 sites through the underpinning SSSI legislation are also used. These include:

- statutory statements on 'Views about Management';
- management agreements;
- compulsory management measures (management schemes/notices.)

Agri-environment schemes are also widely used to implement management of Natura 2000 sites.

In *Scotland*, for the Natura 2000 sites (underpinned by SSSI), a Site Management Statement (SMS) is considered to perform the function of a site management plan. SSSI notification must be accompanied by an SMS but it does not form part of the statutory notification documents. The SMS provides management advice which outlines how the protected natural features of the SSSI can be conserved and enhanced.

In *Northern Ireland*, a statement of 'Views about Management' (VAMs) exists for ASSIs, which guide appropriate management.

In *Wales*, all Natura 2000 sites have a management plan which states the site's conservation objectives and identifies the actions/management considered necessary to either maintain the habitats and species in a favourable conservation status, or restore them. Each plan forms the basis of an action plan which identifies the range of measures (e.g. statutory, contractual, administrative, scientific) needed and the partners/ stakeholders responsible for taking forward each measure.

3. Development and implementation of the necessary conservation measures in Natura 2000 sites. Roles and responsibilities

One of the challenges that Member States may have when preparing and implementing the management of Natura 2000 sites is about defining responsibilities. This task should be carried out and supported effectively, e.g. by developing management authorities, or arranging extra funds and guidance.

Environmental Authorities at the national, regional or local level are usually responsible for preparing the conservation management of the Natura 2000 sites. The way these bodies organise the management planning varies among the MS. They either organise the management themselves, or they can delegate the preparation to specialised contractors, local authorities, NGOs or working groups consisting of stakeholders, and then approve the management plans or conservation measures prepared and supervise their implementation.

Regarding Natura 2000 marine sites, in several countries the national authorities bear the responsibility for developing and implementing the sites management although in those countries the terrestrial part of Natura 2000 is managed by the regional authorities (e.g. Germany and Belgium). Steering committees can be set up to implement concrete management measures in the marine areas (eg. in Belgium).

Some countries delegate the implementation of the management to local communes, although the management plans are developed under the responsibility of an environmental or nature protection agency (e.g. in Denmark and Latvia). The implementation of the measures can also be carried out by external contractors and in some Natura 2000 sites, the management can be delegated to so-called “custodians”, which are responsible for the implementation of the necessary conservation measures.

Examples of roles and responsibilities in the development and implementation of conservation measures in Natura 2000

Flanders (Belgium)

According to a Flemish decree of 1997 on nature protection a “Nature Directive Plan” (NDP) must be made for every Natura 2000 site. The Flemish Agency for Nature and Forests is responsible for developing the NDP for every site and a special commission is set up to involve all relevant stakeholders in the process from the beginning and help produce the plans.

NDPs have to be formally approved by the Flemish Government after public consultation and are legally binding for all authorities, including local authorities, and also for the landowners. The implementation of NDPs can be done through different kinds of instruments, such as contracts with stakeholders, restrictions on activities, subsidies, regulation of land use, etc.

Netherlands

The preparation of management plans is obligatory for all Natura 2000 sites and is carried out with the cooperation of several authorities at different levels. 12 Provinces and three ministries are together responsible for the writing of 166 Natura 2000 management plans in the country. The management plans are written and adopted in the region of the site. In every site, one of the central or provincial governmental bodies takes the lead. For overall solutions a decision board is formed, which is chaired by the DG of Nature and the region. An independent coordination office is involved in the production of decision notes that address general issues and it coordinates the interaction between all authorities and sectors involved in the Natura 2000 sites, which are frequently consulted and take part in developing and decision groups.

The opinions of scientific experts, stakeholders and NGO's are taken into account during the process. The management plans are adopted by mutual consent among all governmental bodies involved in the site. Plans are publicized by the governmental body that has the lead in each specific area. In some cases, the stakeholders meet every year to monitor the plan development.

Rheinland-Pfalz (Germany)

Management plans must be developed and implemented for all Natura 2000 sites. The upper nature conservation authorities (SGD) are responsible for the development of management plans. Regarding forest areas they cooperate closely with the forestry authorities.

The competent authority (SGD) commissions the management plans development to external planning offices. The State Office for the Environment, Water and Trade Control (LUWG) supports the process. A working group is set up with delegates from the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Consumer Protection, the nature conservation authorities, the LUWG and other experts, e.g. from the forest authorities.

From the beginning of the planning procedure all relevant user groups and stakeholders are informed by mail and consultations, and these groups are involved in the development of the plans as well. The ministry is responsible for the coordination of the process for the development of management plans in general. Technical contribution on forests is given by the forest authorities. The LUWG is responsible for the elaboration of maps and together with the SGD it sets out the requirements regarding the contents and technical details. The plans are mandatory for the authorities but not for the land owners. The implementation of the plans is usually done through negotiated agreements and contracts with the land owners.

The application of regulatory instruments is also possible. For non-forest sites the authorities can sign a contract with so-called "biotope-custodians" (*Biotopbetreuer*) which contribute to the site management. This formula is aimed at reaching a voluntary implementation by the land users with support of funding programs (like environmental contracting/*Vertragsnaturschutzprogramm*). The forest authorities are responsible for the implementation of the management plans within forest sites.

Hesse (Germany)

Management plans must be developed and implemented for all Natura 2000 sites. The management plans consist of two parts: a) inventories, usually prepared by contractors, following the instructions laid down in a special guidance document; and b) measures needed to maintain or improve the conservation status of habitats and species occurring in the Natura 2000 site, which are usually prepared by the lower agriculture or lower forest enforcement agencies of the rural districts. Taking into account the results of the inventories and following special guidance documents, these agencies evaluate the necessary measures in the different parts of the SAC to maintain or improve the status of habitats and species occurring in the site.

Usually the necessary conservation measures are proposed for all particular areas/spots in the site where the relevant habitats and species occur. Regional councils (*Regierungspräsidien*), grouping different interests such as farming, water, fishery, forest and nature conservation, make the contracts for the elaboration of the management plans and supervise the results. Other people involved in the process include: scientific experts, administration deputies (also from other sectors), stakeholders, NGOs (including e.g. horse or canoe clubs), different land users and anyone (also private people) who may be interested.

The proposed measures are implemented through forest management plans, agri-environmental contracts and sometimes by water management plans. Regional councils entrust suitable institutions (such as lower agriculture and forest administration, NGOs) with the implementation and control of the measures. For the implementation of the planned measures, contracts are established with stakeholders on a voluntary basis; if need be and no other solution can be found, other possible means are used (e.g. buying land in public property) when the land users don't want to cooperate. A monitoring system is set up to evaluate whether the measures are producing the expected results. All people involved in the implementation of the conservation measures meet regularly to discuss the results achieved and, if need be, the measures are adjusted.

Spain

There is a division of responsibilities between the regional governments (Autonomous Communities), which are responsible to produce and approve management plans for terrestrial Natura 2000 sites and the National Government, namely the Ministry of Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs, which bears the responsibility of developing and approving the management plans for sites in marine areas under the national jurisdiction, except in areas where there is continuity with a terrestrial site managed by the regional government.

The environmental authorities start the process informing other administration departments and affected local entities about the beginning of the plan writing and introducing the team responsible for this duty. The plans are usually prepared with the assistance of specialist consultants, and often with the cooperation of scientific experts, other administrations, stakeholders, NGOs, and other relevant institutions or persons. In general, stakeholders and other sectors and authorities are consulted on drafts. All proposals, comments, recommendations or allegations must be properly considered and answered by the administration, and the final document must integrate the relevant conclusions.

Funding for the writing of management plans comes from the public budget although participation of stakeholders is usually done at their own expenses. Management Plans have to be published in official journals and then must be implemented immediately. Normally, they are implemented directly by the environmental authority (regional or national) and usually the regional governments have provincial units which provide the staff for the management of the Natura 2000 sites following the management plans.

There can be different ways for the implementation of the different actions defined in the plans. Regulation control is normally done by government personnel. In case of lack of staff or resources or for some specialized actions, these can be contracted with consultants, companies or stakeholders.

4. The process for management planning. Key steps and activities

There is already a wealth of published literature on management planning for protected areas. This section is intended to draw out some key principles and lessons from existing approaches, with specific reference to the requirements of Article 6.1.

The process for establishing the necessary conservation measures for Natura 2000 sites is very important not only to achieve good results in the identification and definition of the relevant measures but also to allow for their successful implementation. Some key steps can be taken into account when preparing management planning for Natura 2000 sites, which are described below.

4.1 Preliminary analysis

A useful first step involves an analysis of the circumstances and the needs, in order to adequately prepare and conduct the process. These are some key questions that may be helpful in view of the preparation of the process:

- What are the main features of the site (both in relation to natural values and the socioeconomic context)?
- What do we want to achieve and how do we want to achieve it?
- Who are the relevant stakeholders?

- What may be the main constraints and difficulties for setting conservation measures?
- What should be the main steps/stages and how long can the whole process take?
- How much will it cost? What can be the benefits?

4.2 Compilation and analysis of relevant information on the site

Firstly, it is necessary to consider the conservation objectives for the site as set in the site's designation, which usually involves setting targets for the habitats and species present in the site, taking into account their ecological requirements, and the main ecological processes in the site, including their relations with relevant abiotic parameters (e.g. hydrology), etc.

It is also crucial to understand the interactions between conservation objectives and the other land use activities that are carried out, considering the main socio-economic drivers in the site. This requires the identification of the main land uses and activities that can influence the conservation status of relevant habitats and species. At this stage, it is also appropriate to gather information about all relevant stakeholders that should be involved or consulted in the management planning process.

Some existing activities can make a positive contribution to the conservation of the site's key natural features, others may have no effect on the habitats and species that led to the site designation. There can also be other activities that may have some negative effects on the qualifying interests. This analysis allows envisaging potential conflicts and possible ways and means to solve them.

It is useful to identify and map the precise location of the key natural features (habitats and species) and the existing and planned socio-economic activities in the site. These maps are useful to discuss with stakeholders about the site management needs.

4.3 Participation, consultation, information and communication at different stages

Public participation is fundamental in planning and preparing the conservation management of a Natura 2000 site in order to take into account the views of the people that live and work or use the site. There is a tendency among the general public to view the designation of a Natura 2000 site as a restriction on the economic development of their community, and the preparation and implementation of management planning can provoke a certain resistance in the local population. Public participation can provide an excellent opportunity to create a social atmosphere more favourable to environmental conservation.

Participation is essential if the different stakeholders are to be committed to the plan, through developing a sense of ownership and the identification of people with their surroundings. It is known that people tend to take responsibility for what is regarded as their own. Participation should be carried out throughout the process of management planning and the relevant management instrument should be made available for public consultation prior to its eventual approval and publication.

Early consultation and involvement of stakeholders from the first stages is an essential part of the process for management planning, which usually involves a multidisciplinary and professional approach. The main steps that could be followed to achieve an effective participation are the following:

- Identify all the local actors and relevant stakeholders taking into account the main land uses and socio-economic features of the site.
- Decide when and how they should be involved.
- Involve them as appropriate, taking into account their interests and interactions with the site conservation objectives, and how can they contribute to the necessary conservation measures.

Appropriate communication with all relevant stakeholders is a crucial aspect in order to make them aware of the importance of participating in the process and the role they can play. It is important to communicate the conservation objectives for the site to all relevant stakeholders at an early stage in the process, informing about the importance of the site for the conservation of certain habitats and species in a clear manner that can be easily understood by people living in or using the area. This will help them understand the importance of taking steps to ensure proper management of the site and facilitate their involvement in the process.

Current good practice in many EU MS involves ensuring the active contribution of all relevant stakeholders in management planning and an effective public consultation that reaches all the people that may be interested in and concerned by the management of the site. Some Member States are used to setting up **steering groups or committees** to develop management plans (e.g. France, Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, Latvia, etc.). These steering committees usually involve the local authorities concerned and representatives of the land owners, users and main operators in the Natura 2000 site.

Depending on the features of the site, these steering groups or committees may also include representatives of public works managers, professional bodies and organizations involved in natural heritage conservation, agriculture, forestry, marine cultures, fishing, hunting, extraction activities, sport and tourism, as well as organisations devoted to environmental protection. In Germany (e.g. Baden-Württemberg) the involvement of all state authorities directly concerned (agriculture, forestry and water authorities), other concerned institutions, stakeholders, NGOs, etc. is done through an **advisory board**, in which the development objectives and the conservation measures for the site are discussed.

As regards **consultation**, this is usually made on drafts prepared by the authorities but all comments, suggestions or recommendations received are taken into account and the final document must integrate the relevant conclusions of this process.

The way the consultation is made varies depending on the country. In some regions of Austria and Germany, there are "**round table**" discussions of 10-15 stakeholders for each management plan, and the local public is informed about the results of the plan through public information sessions or even through individual talks, depending on the size of the site. In Bulgaria, the organization responsible for management planning has to organize **seminars, workshops** and other events to involve the public and the parties concerned in the development of the management plan. The results of these events shall be recorded and represent part of the documentation related to the management plan.

Organizing effective public consultation requires an efficient organization of the process and the collaboration of the different policy levels, as well as sufficient staff and budget and using effective communication tools and means. When communication is not effectively reaching its target and stakeholders don't receive all the relevant information, conservation measures will get little support and collaboration from locals will be hampered.

Examples of Stakeholders involvement

Latvia

In Latvia stakeholders are involved in the work of a steering committee and invited to informative meetings as well as to public hearings on the proposed (draft) management plan. The main stakeholders are defined in a Regulation⁹ that sets the procedure for developing management plans, including: representatives of local authorities, state institutions responsible for nature conservation, forest management and rural development, and NGOs.

All the public potentially interested in the development of a particular management plan is invited via mass media to a first informative meeting organized by the producer of the management plan. Everybody may supply proposals for the management plan and the steering committee has to evaluate all the proposals received and analyse the possible use of natural resources within the site and any other issue connected with the site management. At least three meetings of the steering committee must be organized. The steering committee has to approve the drafts and the final management plan. Everybody can provide comments to the draft of the plan during the public hearing.

Slovakia

According to the nature protection law, the planned conservation measures are negotiated with relevant stakeholders. The Ministry of Environment (or regional environmental offices) informs land owners/users as well as municipalities and relevant state institutions about the preparation of the management plan. These stakeholders may deliver written comments within 30 days, which are duly analysed. One or several meetings are organized to present and discuss the conservation measures and the comments received. Relevant NGOs are also involved in the process upon request.

4.4 Identification and preparation of the necessary conservation measures

The conservation measures for the site shall correspond to the ecological requirements of the natural habitats and species significantly present on it in order to ensure their favourable conservation status. They must be as clear as possible, realistic, quantified and manageable.

The language used in the description of the conservation measures must be clear in order to make them widely understandable. When preparing the conservation measures, the following questions should be considered:

- What is the current state of the habitat type and species present on the site?
- What is their role and contribution to the integrity of the site and the coherence of the network?
- What are the main problems or threats on those habitats and species, what are the direct and indirect causes of those threats?
- What are the main socio-economic activities, the key stakeholders and their interests in the site and around the area? What can be their role and their contribution in the implementation of the conservation measures?

An overall objective should be to achieve integrated management of the sites, which means taking into consideration all relevant interests of stakeholders and seeking to integrate those as far as possible with the achievement of the conservation objectives.

⁹ Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr.686. Noteikumi par īpaši aizsargājamās dabas teritorijas dabas aizsardzības plāna saturu un izstrādes kārtību

The definition of conservation measures requires appropriate technical expertise (experts in the relevant species and habitats, ecological requirements and processes, etc.) to allow considering the range of possible measures for achieving the site objectives, identifying those which are essential and those which have various alternative options, so that local interests can adapt these measures within the overall limits of the plan.

Some essential measures may need to be implemented following the specifications defined by the experts in habitats and species conservation, without significant room to manoeuvre. However, in other cases, it will be possible to select from a range of possible measures. It may be possible to avoid a certain threat through various different measures and these can be selected and agreed by all of the various interested parties. All stakeholders will feel more involved in the plan if they have been able to take part in it, preparing at least some of it. Furthermore, it is a means of ensuring that the optional measures available are of maximum benefit and interest for the owners and users of the site.

Conservation measures should be defined with the highest possible detail in order to facilitate implementation by managers and allow the identification and avoidance of possible conflicts. In some MS (e.g. Luxembourg), the level of detail of the conservation measures is defined in relation to landownership, size of the area, etc.

Detailed maps are very useful in the management planning process. These can identify the precise location of the key features in the site (habitats and species, their relations and interactions with land uses and activities, etc.) and the areas where the conservation measures should be implemented.

It may be useful to set some zoning for the area, e.g. to divide the site into zones which will identify the distinct parts of the site where different measures will be applied, according to the species and habitats found within it.

These maps are also useful to communicate and agree with landowners the site management. For instance, in Salzburg (Austria) every landowner/landuser can know from the Management Plan what habitats and what proposed actions are relevant on their plots. Likewise in Wales, UK, the plan for each site is available on the internet with links to large scale maps showing the Natura 2000 site boundary and 'management units' within the site, which can be referenced back to particular conservation objectives and management prescriptions in the plan.

4.5 Identifying and resolving possible conflicts

When defining the necessary conservation measures for each Natura 2000 site, conflicts may arise between nature conservation and other human activities. Nature conservation can have significant consequences for other land use activities and hence for the landowner and users, who therefore could probably disagree to these land use changes. Some of the conflicts that may occur along the process can be linked to:

- an ambiguous formulation of conservation objectives,
- unclear definition of the conservation measures and the specific sub-sites where the measures must be implemented,
- the decision on which land use activities may have negative effects,
- the identification of conservation measures that depend on regulation of activities carried out in the site.

Requirements should be set by the authorities in order to avoid vaguely-formulated objectives, unclear responsibilities and unverifiable management efforts. Many Member States do not quantify the conservation objectives, but only qualify the conservation objectives of species and habitats with terms as 'good' or 'best' conservation status to be achieved, which are words that are interpretable in various ways by various stakeholders. When such concepts are not further specified, the danger exists that it leads to unverifiable situations and conflicts between stakeholders.

Guidance about the formulation of conservation objectives and measures can be very useful to improve this aspect. In the UK for example, there are national guidelines for defining what constitutes 'favourable condition' of all Habitats Directive Annex I/II habitat types and species for which SACs have been designated. Similar guidelines exist for the designated bird populations of SPAs.

In order to guarantee that the different stakeholders, especially those not involved directly with environmental management, may understand the legal environmental obligations, the proposed conservation objectives and measures for each site, as well as the opportunity which the appropriate management of the site might entail, it may be necessary to build their capacity, for example through providing them with training and information. This will make easier to reach an agreement with them on management issues. It is advisable to carry out this activity prior to the negotiation stage.

In many cases, the level of information does not need to be especially detailed or technical, in fact there may be advantages in keeping the information simple and in plain language. For example, conservation objectives can be accompanied by a 'vision' statement which describes in straightforward language, possibly supported by photographs or illustrations, what type of habitat conditions a SAC is trying to achieve. This can be particularly useful for habitats that require active management intervention, as it enables land owners and managers to 'see' what the designation is trying to achieve, how they can contribute to it, and what the damaging effects of inappropriate use and management might be.

Even though stakeholder consultation doesn't avoid completely the conflicts, generally this seems to minimize them. For example in Flanders (Belgium) and France, stakeholders are involved in defining conservation objectives and measures for species and habitats in order to encourage active participation and to give stakeholders a sense of ownership of nature conservation.

Examples of conflict management

In **Upper Austria**, a White Book provides information on possible conflicts between the conservation objectives and the activities of people and enterprises located in the Natura 2000 sites.

In **Sicily (Italy)**, the Management Plans contain a specific territorial analysis regarding the possible conflicts and the coherence with other sectors' planning activities. In accordance with the results of such analysis, the Management Plans propose concrete on site actions, regulations, compensation payments and habitat and species monitoring to deal with every identified conflict related to existing or planned land uses on the sites.

In **Flanders (Belgium)**, since 2006 all stakeholders were involved in a broad participatory process for setting the conservation objectives for Natura 2000 sites. In 2009, conservation objectives were approved by the Flemish government for all Natura 2000 sites in Flanders.

A working group was subsequently set up with all stakeholders for the evaluation of the existing policy in the Natura 2000 sites and the development of new policy for the implementation of the conservation objectives in the sites. As these stakeholder groups have been involved in the formulation of regional conservation objectives for species and habitats, they are already informed and will be better placed to assist in the communication and translation of the objectives to individual (local) landowners and users.

4.6 Adoption, legally binding character and communication

Once the management plans or the conservation measures are developed, the next step is to get their approval by the competent authority (either national, regional or local). However, the approval of the Management Plans/Conservation Measures makes them legally binding only in about half of the EU countries considered in this document (24 MS). In some countries and regions (e.g. in some parts of Austria) the management plans are either just legally binding for public land owners or not legally binding at all, where the measures should be implemented through private contracts.

In other countries or regions (e.g. Denmark and some regions in Spain), the plans are binding for nature conservation authorities and other involved authorities but not for private landowners, while in some parts of Italy, Management Plans are binding for both private and public bodies.

As regards communication and information, in most countries the conservation measures established for the sites are available for the general public (usually on websites or official registers), but in a few cases these measures are not public or there is only limited information available for the public. In some countries, for instance the whole management plan is not made available to the general public if they contain sensitive information, e.g. detailed location of threatened habitats and species. It is advisable that Management plans and the conservation measures set for Natura 2000 sites are publicly available and known by all people who live in the area.

Some examples of information on management planning publicly available

Austria

In Upper Austria the legal act, containing activities that are in compliance with the conservation objectives and appropriate conservation measures, is available to the general public, as well as the management plan of the site. In some regions (e.g. Voralberg) short, illustrated and easy to read versions are provided for the layperson. In Salzburg, management plans are available for information purposes both at the department for nature protection and at the local communities. Recent management plans also contain a short "layman's version".

Hungary

The Transition Facility project provides information about the process for the preparation of management plans and includes 20 Natura 2000 management plans produced, which can serve as an example for the preparation of further plans for Natura 2000 sites. (www.naturaterv.hu).

5. The principal ingredients for conservation management planning

Different types of management instruments have already been described in the previous sections. They can widely differ depending on the site's key features and conservation needs, and on the countries' legislative and institutional framework. There are however a number of key components that should not be missed. These are briefly described below.

5.1 Conservation objectives and targets

Broad conservation objectives aiming at achieving Favourable Conservation Status of habitats and species should be considered at an appropriate level, such as for example the national or the biogeographical level. This general objective needs however to be translated into site level conservation objectives.

Site level conservation objectives define the target status of each species and habitat for which a site has been designated so that the site in question contributes to its maximum to achieving the overall objective of achieving FCS for these species and habitat types at a national, biogeographical or EU level. By the same logic, identifying the contribution of a site to the achievement of a FCS for the habitats and species concerned at a higher level (eg national, biogeographical) can provide the basis for setting site level conservation objectives.

Conservation objectives should be properly defined and recorded at site level in the relevant management instruments for Natura 2000 sites (e.g. management plan, statutory statement, etc.). In some countries and regions, the definition of favourable conservation status of species and habitats is under development, and the lack of suitable information about the status of species and habitats for many sites can hinder the formulation of proper objectives and the definition of the necessary management measures for Natura 2000 sites, as well as the feasibility of monitoring.

When setting conservation objectives for the management of Natura 2000 sites, the provisions of the Habitats Directive (articles 1 and 4) should be taken into account.

*Article 1(1): Special Area of Conservation (SAC) means a site of Community importance designated by the MS through a statutory, administrative and/or contractual act where **the necessary conservation measures are applied for maintenance or restoration, at a favourable status, of the natural habitats and/or the populations of species for which the site is designated.***

*Article 4(4): Once a site of Community importance has been adopted in accordance with the procedure laid down in paragraph 2, the Member State concerned shall designate that site as a special area of conservation as soon as possible and within six years at most, establishing priorities in the light of the importance of the sites for the **maintenance or restoration, at a favourable conservation status, of a natural habitat type in Annex I or a species in Annex II and for the coherence of Natura 2000, and in the light of the threats of degradation or destruction to which those sites are exposed.***

Objectives that are vaguely formulated or not properly specified in management plans or other management instruments may be interpreted in various ways, which could lead to conflicts between stakeholders.

Current practice in EU MS shows that the level of detail as regards the description of the conservation objectives may be different, for instance depending on the specific characteristics (including the size) and the complexity of the activities and problems existing in the site (e.g. in Austria, Denmark, Estonia, France, etc). In some countries there is a minimum level of detail required by law, like in Lithuania. In other countries, there is a case-by-case approach.

Examples of conservation objectives set at site level

Czech Republic

A standardised structure is used for preparing management plans named “*Souhrny doporučených opatření*” (Set of Conservation Measures). In general, the detail of conservation objectives and management activities described in management plans depends on the specific needs in the site. For some target species/habitats only general recommendations are established, while in other cases the management prescriptions are described in detail and the exact plots where they should be applied are specified.

Lithuania

A Standard model for Natura 2000 management plans approved by the Ministry of Environment requires rather specific description of goals and targets for each specific area and their expression in measurable parameters. The plans must include the following aspects: targets, goals of the plan and implementation measures; institutions responsible for implementation of measures and their roles; analysis of the resources and financial needs for the implementation of management measures and available funding sources; monitoring and updating of the management plan.

Sweden

The objectives for habitats and species shall specify the following parameters: habitat area, population size for species, necessary structures and functions and presence of typical species. Priorities should be established if necessary (this is however rarely done).

Wales, UK

Each designated ‘feature’ (in the case of Natura 2000, these are the habitat types or species populations graded A to C on the standard data form for SACs, or the qualifying bird populations for SPAs) has one conservation objective, which consists of two parts:

- A vision for the feature, which is a composite statement of all the conditions that must be satisfied for the feature to be considered to be in a favourable conservation status on the site (e.g. covering extent/population size, range, quality attributes, etc).
- A set of ‘performance indicators’ which are targets (or target ranges) for quantifiable attributes of the feature or factors or processes affecting the feature. These indicators are the basis on which the conservation status of the feature will be judged (favourable or unfavourable) on the basis of monitoring. In many cases the performance indicators represent only a subset of the overall objective, since they are constrained by resources/practicalities of monitoring.

Marine areas in Belgium

For marine areas in Belgium, the conservation objectives were vaguely described in the designation Royal Decrees, so a first point to address is the definition of what FCS would mean for the marine species and habitat types at the ‘national scale’, before the conservation objectives at national or site level can be defined.

5.2 The necessary conservation measures

Conservation measures in Natura 2000 sites are the actual mechanisms and actions to be put in place to achieve the site conservation objectives. In practice the conservation measures on a given site should have a clear reference to the site's conservation objectives. According to Article 4.4 of the Habitats Directives the conservation measures must be identified, established and applicable at the time of SAC designation.

As for the conservation objectives, the level of detail of the conservation measures may be variable depending on the site characteristics and problems. In Salzburg (Austria), for example, the level of detail depends on the size of the site; for small and middle sized sites (up to several hundred hectares) the conservation objectives and measures are broken down into the parcels of lands. In Latvia, conservation objectives and actions should be planned for each protected species and biotope. Each action should be described with as much detail as possible (when, where, how) and also prioritized and justified.

The necessary conservation measures should be designed with sufficient detail to ensure an efficient implementation. The precise location and a description of the means and tools required for their implementation should be provided. An adequate work plan indicating the time of implementation and assigning the roles and responsibilities for those involved in their implementation should also be provided. The work plan should be flexible enough to allow its review and adaptation when required, e.g. on the basis of the results of the measures already implemented.

It is important also to set a timeline to review the conservation measures taken, in terms of their suitability for, and progress towards, achieving the conservation objectives, in order to check appropriateness, measurability and implementation.

Based on current practice in EU countries, the main conservation measures and the instruments for their implementation most frequently used in Natura 2000 sites are briefly described below.

Types of measures

Different types of measures may be necessary in Natura 2000 sites, including restoration activities that require works to be carried out at certain specified times, such as works to restore the hydrology of a wetland, re-planting some species, re-introduction or re-enforcement of populations, installations or infrastructure needed, etc.

Regularly recurring actions may also need to be implemented periodically in the site to maintain or improve the conservation status of some habitats or the population of certain species. This type of actions may include, for instance, mowing or grazing grasslands, regular scrub clearance, management of hydrological regimes for wetland areas, etc. Surveillance, wardening and guarding activities may also be necessary to ensure adequate protection of some areas.

The preparation of the necessary measures requires careful planning and the elaboration of detailed blueprints and technical specifications to ensure their correct implementation.

Monitoring is usually also part of the planned conservation measures, as there is a need to follow-up and evaluate the results achieved in order to assess the efficacy of the measures and introduce the necessary adjustments when needed.

Finally, the implementation of conservation measures in Natura 2000 sites is often best achieved if it is accompanied by appropriate information and raising awareness of the population living in the area and especially of the main stakeholder and interest groups concerned by the actions or involved in their execution.

Awareness-raising is also especially useful where sites are open to access and use by third parties, i.e. persons who are not landowners, tenants or public authorities. Raising awareness and understanding among those who use these areas can be one of the most important management approaches.

Principal instruments and means to implement the necessary measures

The conservation measures in Natura 2000 sites are carried out using different means and instruments that are described below, based on existing experience in EU member states.

- Contracts/Agreements with land owners/users

Contracts with landowners or users is an instrument used for site management in many Member States, and is amongst others related to agri-environmental, rural or regional development schemes. It is very often a preferred option in certain circumstances, especially for proactive and recurring measures like mowing, instead of classical nature protection, licensing and the enforcement of restrictions.

Contractual measures often involve a relationship between competent authorities and individual landowners and are usually limited to individual land-holdings which are normally smaller than the site. Landowners or users may be paid for carrying out some measures or for reaching certain conservation targets, or can receive tax exemption if they comply with certain good practices. They may also be given compensation when certain activities are restricted or reduced. In most Member States such contracts are based on voluntary participation, which is an advantage for obtaining the support of the local community but may pose a challenge to implement the necessary measures in specific sites.

In some countries there are also *Letters of intent*, or *Charters* which represent a more flexible strategy than a contract, to ensure some commitment of the stakeholders, although it is not enforceable.

The main challenges for the implementation of the necessary conservation measure through this mean are the following:

- It can not be imposed on unwilling landowners or users.
- When Natura 2000 sites are situated in rural regions that suffer depopulation, it is very difficult to involve landowners that live elsewhere, with little or no interest in rural life.
- In some Member States there is not a budget available for implementing the contracts.

Examples of contracts/agreements on land use

France

In France different types of management contracts can be signed depending on the management activities. The DOCOB must include one or several standard specifications to be applied to the Natura 2000 contracts planned, indicating for each contractual action the objectives pursued, the application range, the habitats and species concerned and the expected costs. A decree of the minister of the environment sets up the list of contractual actions eligible to a financial compensation from the State. Contracts include a precise description of the obligations of the contractor (paid or unpaid), the total budget and how it is calculated, details of funding, indicators for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the measures, etc.

A Natura 2000 Charter is also established for each Natura 2000 site, which can be signed up by the landowners and users on a voluntary basis to comply with the conservation objectives of the site without receiving any payment or compensation (see also section 2.2). While signing a Natura 2000 charter does not involve any financial payment, it does however initiate the right to benefit from exemption on land tax on unconstructed property, and also allows access to certain public funds (particularly in connection with forestry, where a Natura 2000 charter agreement constitutes a guarantee that woods and forests will be managed sustainably). Signing up for a Natura 2000 charter and signing contracts are complementary approaches; they may however take place independently of one another.

Denmark

As a starting point, a number of measures can be agreed upon on a voluntarily basis with land owners. Agreements can involve compensation when relevant and it is expected that individual contracts are signed between the landowners and relevant local authorities. However, if it is not possible to reach an agreement, the Danish legislation also includes relevant provisions to allow implementing the necessary measures.

United Kingdom

National legislation used to implement Article 6.1 enables the statutory nature conservation agencies to enter into 'management agreements' (contracts) with landowners, who are remunerated for managing sites in ways that further the achievement of the site conservation objectives. These contracts are voluntarily entered into by landowners and usually seek to achieve an acceptable compromise between the economic use of the land and management for habitat/species conservation. The power to establish management agreements is in addition to other regulatory controls preventing the carrying out of damaging operations.

- Regulation of land use and restriction of activities

The provisions on regulation of land use and restrictions on activities (e.g. over urban development, industrial activity, hunting, etc.) are usually specified as part of the conservation measures in the management instruments applied to Natura 2000 sites.

In some countries, the activities that can influence the favourable conservation status of species and habitats are identified and specifications on allowable or restricted activities are set, which can be used when licences are given by the management authority to landowners and users. For example, in Ireland there is an "activities requiring consent" (ARCs) process. ARCs are activities for which landowners/land users need to get permission before they can be undertaken on a site. In Scotland (UK), as part of the statutory notification package, all owners and occupiers of SSSIs

are also issued with a list of Operations Requiring Consent (the ORC list). These are operations or activities which have the potential to adversely affect the features of the SSSI.

Some examples of the type of activities that can be considered for restrictions or regulations are the following:

- visitor access
- grazing, mowing, burning, removal of scrubs, etc.
- use of invasive species
- hunting and fishing activities
- water management, etc.

Regulation of land use and restrictions on activities in Natura 2000 sites can be accompanied by compensation payments in some countries, which compensate the costs or benefit losses for the landowners or land users or that develop the concerned activities (e.g. in Baden-Württemberg, Germany).

- Acquisition of land or rights

In many countries, land purchase is used for nature protection, particularly in cases where it is difficult to convince landowners and land users to stop certain damaging activities. This may be the case where the competent authorities cannot engage landowners to protect some degraded habitats by stopping or restricting certain practices that cause habitat degradation. As a consequence it may be necessary to buy the land or the rights from private holders, to ensure the conservation of the habitat in Natura 2000 sites.

In Flanders (Belgium), like in other Member States, the government has the first right to buy land that is designated under Natura 2000 for a market-conform price. Also expropriation of land is a legal instrument that can be used for nature conservation in some countries when management plans, contracts, or other conservation instruments do not work and the defined objectives are not observed.

In other cases, land is purchased by nature conservation agencies or NGOs to create nature reserves (e.g. in UK) where there is a high degree of direct management control, which helps balance the sites' multiple objectives, including habitat/species conservation, recreational access, education, research, environmental monitoring and to act as examples or 'show-cases' for protected area management.

- Conservation and restoration activities carried out by site managers and/or stakeholders

Implementation of conservation and restoration measures that are necessary to maintain or improve the conservation status of certain habitats and species in the Natura 2000 site are usually (and more efficiently) carried out with skilled staff and appropriate methods. In general, these measures are paid and supervised by the site managers with different funds made available for the site management.

Habitats restoration or re-creation involving works on the ground and very specific measures required for the conservation of certain species (e.g. planting native species, supplementary feeding, nests installation and protection) can be quoted as typical examples.

Awareness raising and publications, applied studies and inventories, monitoring, etc. are also usually promoted by the site managers involving experts and NGOs with appropriate skills and experience in relation to the natural values present in the site.

LIFE funds have greatly contributed to the implementation of ad-hoc conservation measures in Natura 2000 sites that otherwise could not have been funded by other instruments due to their specificities.

Developing guidelines for the preparation of conservation measures and management plans

Guidelines are a useful tool for those involved in management planning of Natura 2000 sites. Guidelines for the elaboration and approval of management plans have been developed by many Member States. Some countries have very detailed guidelines on different aspects such as:

- Contents for writing management plans (e.g. Belgium, Denmark, Hungary, Italy, Wales, etc.).
- Management planning process (e.g. in Denmark, a set of guidelines have been prepared for the development of the management plans and further guidance for the planning process is delivered in terms of about 50 answers to FAQ).
- Conservation measures for specific habitats and species (e.g. in Belgium, a *vademecum* on the kind of conservation measures required for habitat types and species is available).
- Conservation objectives (e.g. in Denmark, guidance on the drafting of overall conservation objectives at site level is available).
- Monitoring and evaluation (e.g. in Czech Republic, guidelines on monitoring and evaluation of the conservation status of target species and habitats within Natura 2000 sites are in preparation).
- Potentially damaging operations (e.g. in Ireland, guidelines on “activities requiring consent - ARCs” process are in preparation).
- Potential benefits and opportunities for socio-economic development in relation with nature protection (e.g. France)

Some countries have also adopted these guidelines through official acts, decrees, or ordinances.

5.3 Resources for implementation. Cost estimates and identification of possible financial instruments

The evaluation of costs and benefits derived from the implementation of Natura 2000 site is only possible if the management is properly planned. The area of socioeconomic influence of each site shall be properly identified. The sectors of economic activity and their relations and interactions with the natural environment should be analysed to allow determining possible losses and income arising out of the site management. This can also be useful to determine the actual need for financial support and make available the relevant subsidies, compensation payments, etc.

Relevant information about the resources needed to implement the conservation measures should be always included in management plans and other management instruments. Most of the countries develop management measures or plans that include information about estimated costs for administration, implementation and monitoring of the planned activities, compensation payments, etc., and in some cases

they can also identify possible financing sources. This information is also useful to allocate funds from different support schemes. Some prioritisation for the implementation of measures is allowed in the light of the resources available.

Just as important as the financial resources are the human resources. For proper planning of Natura 2000 sites it is essential to have the people with appropriate skills among those involved in designing and implementing the measures.

Examples on management cost estimates

Estonia

The planned activities for Natura 2000 sites include estimated budgets that are set for five years. These serve as a basis for different activities (restoration and management of habitat types as well as species habitats, establishment and restoration of infrastructure for visitors, raising awareness) and support schemes (subsidy for semi-natural habitats and subsidy for private forest land owners and agricultural land users).

France

There is an estimate of the cost of Natura 2000 contracts in most DOCOBs, but since the European financing framework changes every 7 years, payment opportunities are not always mentioned or up to date.

Poland

Cost estimated must take into account:

- the costs of obtaining existing data and information, (e.g. maps, GIS layers, land records, etc.);
- the costs of the field inventory and assessment of the condition of the objects of protection. Currently in Poland most of the areas are not sufficiently known, so this is usually a significant cost item, usually accounting for 50-70% of the entire budget for the management plan;
- the costs of "planning-related" measures, including above all measures in the social communication sphere in support of the planning process (e.g. meetings, Core Stakeholder Group, negotiations, advertising materials, etc.).

5.4 Monitoring, evaluation and review of management plans and conservation measures

Monitoring in relation to the management of Natura 2000 sites is essential to follow up the effective implementation of the planned conservation measures and to assess their results. Monitoring and surveillance activities are referred to in the Habitats Directive (article 11 and 17):

Article 11: *“Member States shall undertake surveillance of the conservation status of the natural habitats and species referred to in Article 2 with particular regard to priority natural habitat types and priority species.”*

Article 17: *“Every six years from the date of expiry of the period laid down in Article 23, Member States shall draw up a report on the implementation of the measures taken under this Directive. This report shall include in particular information concerning the conservation measures referred to in Article 6(1) as well as evaluation of the impact of those measures on the conservation status of the natural habitat types of Annex I and the species in Annex II and the main results of the surveillance referred to in Article 11. The report, in accordance with the format established by the committee, shall be forwarded to the Commission and made accessible to the public”.*

Monitoring programmes to assess the conservation status of habitats and species of EU interest are currently under way in many Member States. According to the guidelines for the implementation of article 17, the assessments must be made in every country at the biogeographical level, considering their whole distribution area. The assessments of the conservation status within Natura 2000 was voluntary in the last reporting period and only a few Member States used this possibility. However, article 17.1 requires information concerning the conservation measures referred to in Article 6.1 as well as an evaluation of the impact of those measures.

Monitoring activities in Natura 2000 sites in relation to the proposed conservation measures should have two purposes:

- to assess the actual implementation of the planned conservation measures;
- to assess the effect of the measures on the conservation status of target habitats and species.

Guidelines and appropriate monitoring schemes should be considered when preparing the site management and the necessary conservation measures. The monitoring mechanisms should include measurable and clearly verifiable objectives, and could include a system of indicators to facilitate the follow-up and evaluation of results.

Some relevant issues to consider in the preparation of monitoring mechanisms are:

- the identification of key habitats and species for observation and the relevant parameters and attributes to follow up their status and trends,
- the periodicity and means for implementing the monitoring activities,
- the methodology for the evaluation of the results achieved,
- relevant indicators on the implementation of measures and their results,
- reporting needs, etc.

As regards the review of management plans and measures, it should be carried in an appropriate time to allow adapting the site management to possible changes, taking into account the conservation objectives and the type of measures and circumstances in each Natura 2000 site.

The life time of management plans prepared for Natura 2000 sites in the different Member States varies between 3 and 20 years, depending on the country or region and, to some extent, on the kind of area. In general, Management plans for forests tend to be valid for a longer period (10-20 years) than those for wetlands and fishery-related areas (approximately 5 years).

In some countries (e.g. Estonia and the Czech Republic), management plans foresee an earlier, internal revision based on the results of a site level monitoring of the effectiveness of the management measures. Adequate monitoring and a well established working procedure are prerequisites in such cases.

Examples of monitoring and review of management plans

Latvia

Management plans are valid for 5-15 years based on the results of the monitoring programmes and indicators used to evaluate the results of each planned measure. All protected areas are subject to a State Monitoring Program. Any individual or legal person might submit to the Nature Conservation Agency proposals for the review and updating of planned measures.

5.5 Integration of conservation measures into other policies, plans and activities

Some countries organise the management of their sites exclusively through the implementation of management measures in other sectoral plans (e.g. Slovenia and some regions in Italy and Germany). In such cases, site management is already integrated in certain sectoral plans but this in itself doesn't always guarantee that the necessary conservation measures will be fully implemented via the relevant plans.

In order to ensure an effective implementation of the conservation measures identified in the site management instruments it is necessary to enable their effective integration in other relevant plans and policies (e.g. those related to hunting, forestry, spatial planning, water management, fishing, etc.).

The relevant provisions to make this integration possible can be included in the site management instruments. This has to do with the enforcement of the measures, which is compulsory for legally binding instruments, but also with using a more coordinated approach in the management of Natura 2000 sites.

There is a variety of situations in the instruments used by different EU Member States, which goes from the legal adoption of the measures, which makes them legally binding and compulsory for all those involved in the implementation of the various activities in the site, to just a mere information and technical input that must or can be taken into account in the planning of other activities.

Some examples on how Natura 2000 management plans and conservation measures are integrated into other plans and policies are presented below.

Examples on the integration of conservation measures in other plans and policies

Belgium

For marine sites, the management plans foresee the necessary collaboration with other competent authorities to integrate the objectives of the Natura 2000 network in the other sea-uses like fishing, sand/gravel extraction, military activities, etc. These are thus not "management plans" in the traditional sense but more "implementation plans" to agree with the stakeholders on the major issues to be addressed and the way forward.

In Flanders, for every Natura 2000 site, a "Nature Directive plan" (NDP) must be made. This management plan is a legally binding document which must be integrated into all other plans (forest management plans, spatial plans, etc).

Slovenia

Management planning of Natura 2000 sites is done through the sectoral management processes (forestry, water, fishery, game management plans). For this purpose a Natura 2000 Operational Programme (2007-2013) was adopted by the Government in 2007, which states that forest, agriculture, water management, fishery and hunting sectors have to respect the sites' objectives, measures and guidelines set in the Programme and incorporate them in their planning concerning Natura 2000 sites. It also states that the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry for the Economy should incorporate the measures into their financial and operative planning.

Hungary

Once the management plans are prepared, the national park directorates and the environmental authorities try to ensure the incorporation of their management prescriptions into land use development plans, forest plans, water management plans, etc. The prescriptions of Natura 2000 management plans, although not compulsory, are also considered in the appropriate assessments of other plans and projects and in land use contracts on lands owned by the state and managed by the national park directorates. Some of the prescriptions of Natura 2000 management plans are obligatory if those prescriptions are regulated by other legislation on land use (e.g. on grassland and forest management).

Ireland

Management plans and/or conservation objectives must be taken into consideration when agri-environmental schemes are being drawn up for farmlands that are in SACs or SPAs. The conservation objectives for a particular Natura 2000 site must also be taken into account in all appropriate assessments of plans and projects. These include County Development Plans, which are statutory plans that are drawn up by local authorities.

Lithuania

The provisions of the management plans are usually integrated into forestry management plans, afforestation plans and other land use plans that are prepared after the approval of the Natura 2000 management plan. However there may be some practical problems when other land use plans were approved earlier.

Portugal

Management of Natura 2000 areas is integrated into other land use planning instruments, including forest, agriculture and coastal zone planning instruments. In those areas where conservation objectives are dependent on forestry and agricultural management, the necessary conservation measures are included in the Integrated Territorial Intervention programmes implemented under Rural Development Program (EARDF). The measures are carried out by partnerships in the forestry and agriculture sectors, especially with land owners and managers, aiming at maintaining a favourable conservation status of target species and habitats. Regarding the coastal zone, the land planning instruments include the conservation objectives and the measures to be carried out in areas included in the maritime protection zone.

United Kingdom

Sectoral plans which are the responsibility of other authorities must respect the conservation requirements of Natura 2000 sites in their area. In many cases this is achieved through the application of Article 6.3 (assessment of plans and projects) to land use and sectoral planning processes. Furthermore, there is an increasing emphasis in practice in the UK on seeking to address Natura 2000 requirements as early as possible in the inception and design stages of plans and projects, so that conflicting objectives 'down the line' are as far as possible avoided. The application of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to projects and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to plans also provides opportunities to build in Natura 2000 considerations into decision making at an early stage.

6. Financing Natura 2000 conservation measures: setting the framework, allocating appropriate resources and providing incentives for stakeholders

The Commission has set out its views on the importance of Union funding for biodiversity and nature protection in the current multiannual financial framework, and stated that this needs a strengthened integrated approach that ensures the integration of the priorities of Natura 2000 action frameworks into the national and regional programmes of EU sectoral funds¹⁰. Opportunities for funding Natura 2000 have been included in each of the relevant EU funds for the 2014-20 financing period.

The Commission has also declared its intention to promote the use of innovative approaches and market-based instruments including private funding to support Natura 2000 management, although it recognises that these sources are likely to account for only a small proportion of the overall funding of the Natura 2000 network in the nearer future, and core public funding from the EU and Member States will continue to be required to deliver the conservation benefits of the network.

For the good progress and development of the site management, it is necessary to ensure capacity in terms of staff and funding. This requires an appropriate estimate of the resources needed to carry out all the necessary conservation measures in the site, which is an important aspect to be considered in the management planning (see also section 5.3).

It is crucial to identify the financial needs for appropriate management of the Natura 2000 sites in order to optimise their contribution to the conservation of habitats and species of Community interest. As regards the financial resources usually available for the preparation and implementation of management measures in Natura 2000 sites, they can come from national, regional, and EU funding (e.g. EAFRD, EFRD, EMFF LIFE, Interreg, etc.).

While the main responsibility for financing Natura 2000 lies with the Member States, Article 8 of the Habitats Directive explicitly links the delivery of necessary conservation measures for Natura 2000 to EU co-financing. Although a range of EU policy instruments potentially provide funding for Natura 2000 management, in practice not enough funding is being allocated or accessed by Member States: it is estimated that currently only a fifth or less of the funding that would be necessary is actually being made available¹¹. A range of constraints, such as limited integration of Natura 2000 into the national funding priorities and lack of sector recognition or stakeholders' capacity, hinder the uptake of opportunities provided by the EU co-financing framework.

In order to ensure a better use of the opportunities available for managing Natura 2000 sites under EU funds, particular attention will need to be paid to more strategic multi-annual planning approach to Natura 2000 financing. The Commission, in agreement with the Member States has promoted the elaboration of **Prioritized Action Frameworks** at country level, which identify the strategic priorities and the measures to be carried out for the period 2014-2020 as well as the funding instruments that may be

¹⁰ European Commission Communication on 'A budget for Europe 2020' COM(2011) 500 final, Part I (and the environment and climate policy fiches COM(2011) 500 final, Part II)

¹¹ European Commission (2011) *Commission working paper on financing Natura 2000. Investing in Natura 2000: Delivering benefits for nature and people*. SEC(2011) 1573 final, 12.12.2011, European Communities. SEC(2011) 1573 final

used to implement those measures¹⁰. This initiative could improve the uptake of the integration approach for Natura 2000 in all EU funding lines at the national level as well as clarify which actions should be financed under each EU funding line. It can also help national budgets to contribute more specifically to fill funding gaps for activities that cannot be financed from EU funds.

Prioritised action frameworks serve as strategic planning tools to strengthen the integration of Natura 2000 financing into relevant EU financial instruments for the next programming period. It will be necessary to integrate the results of the strategic planning into the relevant operational programmes of the different funding instruments.

There is already some good experience with the use of EU funds to finance Natura 2000. Rural and Regional development programmes have funded conservation measures and management of Natura 2000 sites in many countries and regions. However, the fact that Natura 2000 management, rural development and agriculture are often under different administrations can make more challenging the access to the different funding opportunities. For instance, the eligibility conditions set for CAP funds are usually set by Agriculture authorities, which do not always take properly into account the Natura 2000 circumstances and needs.

Some EU funds such as LIFE+ have been very important to finance actions that are undertaken by private bodies or NGOs. The authorities or the site managers can also help stakeholders, either with their understanding and implementation of the appropriate conservation measures or with the access to funding.

It is also possible to find some good experience with using other ways of funding different from EU funds, such as subsidies of foundations (e.g. Germany, Estonia) and funds of state forest enterprises (e.g. Lithuania).

Financing Natura 2000 management. Some examples

Sardinia, Italy

The Sardinian Regional Operational Programme for the programming period 2007-2013 has been used to fund actions and activities that are either envisaged in the approved management plans or consistent with them.

Scotland

The management of Natura 2000 sites is often supported (financially and otherwise) by the Scotland Rural Development Programme, and in particular the Rural Development Contracts–Rural Priorities Scheme.

Baden-Württemberg (Germany)

Agri-environmental measures support the implementation of foreseen measures in management plans. About €10 million per year are available, with an increasing trend due to progress in the compilation of management plans.

Estonia

The resources for the implementation of the necessary conservation measures come from the state budget, from the foundation Environmental Investment Centre, from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) as subsidies for private forest owners and agricultural land users as well as subsidies for management of semi-natural habitats.

Lithuania

Financial resources for Natura 2000 usually come from state budget, EU structural funds, ERDF, EFF, national Special Forestry Program, funds of state forest enterprises and other national resources. There is no special financial program at national level for the implementation of management plans and conservation measures.

Spain

Regional budgets are used for financing Natura 2000 management and there are opportunities from the Rural Development funds. However, environmental and agricultural bodies are usually different and the eligibility conditions for funding are not always the most suitable for putting in place the particular management measures for a site. There is not a proper coordination among both administrations to make funding readily available to Natura 2000 management.

Ireland. Agri-environmental schemes currently in place are used for the management of Natura 2000 sites. Two schemes are administered by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (DAFF) and provide a higher level of payments for the management of land inside Natura 2000 sites than that outside. A separate scheme, run by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) pays farmers for work, costs and/or losses incurred in the management of land within target areas, including Natura 2000 sites. Agri-environmental planners must take management plans for Natura 2000 sites into account when drawing up farm plans. Farm plans can still be produced, even if a site plan is not available; however, the site's conservation objectives must be considered.

Italy

In some regions of Italy, the management plans have to evaluate the costs of each action and plan the access to funds and/or available incentives. In Abruzzo, moreover, there are special incentives for voluntary actions, which are not legally binding.

Luxembourg

Financing of Natura 2000 management measures stem from the core budget of the administration as well as from annual budgets allocated to local communities and NGOs for implementing nationally relevant conservation measures. These measures are defined on an annual basis in collaboration with the Ministry. A specifically dedicated agricultural subsidy program is also in place since 1998 in order to promote agricultural practices in accordance with Natura 2000 conservation objectives. Currently, 4500 ha of agricultural land is being managed according to these programs.

France

While signing a Natura 2000 charter does not involve any financial payment, it does however initiate the right to benefit from exemption on land tax on un-built property, and it also allows access to certain public funds, particularly in connection with forestry, where a Natura 2000 charter agreement constitutes a guarantee that woods and forests will be managed in a sustainable way.

Poland

Poland has introduced some economic mechanisms that may be used for Natura 2000 management, such as agri-environmental programmes, i.e. payments (originating in 80% of cases from European Union funds) to farmers in return for the voluntary application of specified methods of farming. The introduction and utilization of such instruments is a suitable method for protecting agricultural landscapes (e.g. extensive meadow-pasture landscapes and the species associated with them). In view of their voluntary character, however, these mechanisms do not guarantee the protection of specific areas of the meadow or pasture ecosystem.

Sweden

Compensation payments by Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) funds are usually available for sites with forest habitats, since forestry activities must be restricted or adapted to ensure the preservation of the habitats in favourable status. For sites with semi-natural habitats, management is financed via the RDP if possible; other conservation measures may be financed via specific funding provided by SEPA, e.g. for management of protected areas. For Natura 2000 sites, management plans can be developed specifically or as parts of other plans.

Denmark

For the implementation of the Natura 2000 plan a total budget of 240 million EUR is reserved in the government budget to implement the sites management plans in a first planning phase from 2010 to 2015.

Hesse (Germany)

Management plans include cost estimates and an annual budget (about 3 million € per year) is available to establish contracts with different kinds of land users in Natura 2000-sites. In addition, agri-environmental measures and special contracts for forests are also funded for the implementation of the conservation measures included in the management plans.

7. Key references

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8. Guidelines for Natura 2000 management planning from different countries

Austria

<http://www.noel.gv.at/Umwelt/Naturschutz/Natura-2000.html>
<http://www.tirol.gv.at/themen/umwelt/naturschutz/natura2000-tirol/>

Bulgaria

Practical guidelines for the management planning of Natura 2000 sites available at http://greenbalkans.org/article_files/124202945178.pdf

Czech Republic

A commented SCM (Set of Conservation Measures) template approved by the Ministry of the Environment is available for both SCMs for SPAs and SCIs.

Overview of general documents describing management principles for habitat types and species of Natura 2000. http://www.mzp.cz/cz/evropsky_vyznamne_lokality

Denmark

A set of guidelines have been prepared for the development of the management plans. Available at: http://www.naturstyrelsen.dk/NR/ronlyres/4F397BE1-4B44-4D83-896F-1EF7A5149891/113208/Retningslinjer_Natura2000.pdf

Further guidance for the planning process is delivered in terms of about 50 answers to FAQ public available at: http://www.naturstyrelsen.dk/Naturbeskyttelse/Natura2000/Natura_2000_planer/Mere_materiale_til_hoeringen/.

France

Documents and references can be found at: <http://www.espaces-naturels.fr/Natura-2000/Elaboration-des-DOCOB>

Germany

Baden-Württemberg

Manual for the preparation of management plans for Natura 2000 sites in Baden-Wuerttemberg: <http://www.lubw.baden-wuerttemberg.de/servlet/is/13930/?shop=true&shopView=11169>

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

Manual 'Management planning in Natura 2000 sites': http://www.service.m-v.de/cms/DLP_prod/DLP/Foerderfibel/Schutz_der_natuerlichen_Ressourcen/Landschaft_Flora%2c_Fauna_und_Landschaftspflege/Naturschutzmassnahmen/Foerderungen/Managementplaene_%28FoeRi_MAN%29/Content/FachleitfadenFoeRiMa.pdf

Sachsen-Anhalt

Requirements for the development of management plans in Saxony-Anhalt. <http://www.sachsen-anhalt.de/index.php?id=45443>

Hungary

A standard template for Natura 2000 management plans is provided in Gov. Decree 275/2004 (X. 8.) (<http://www.termeszetvedelem.hu/jogszabalyi-hatter>)
Methodological guidance: <http://www.termeszetvedelem.hu/utmutato>

Italy

Manuale per la gestione dei siti natura 2000. Ministero dell'Ambiente e della tutela del Territorio. Available at: http://www.regione.veneto.it/NR/rdonlyres/7E020003-4484-4108-B012-8682DC574E31/0/manuale_gestione_siti_natura2000.pdf

Lithuania

Standard model of a management plan:

http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=341205

Netherlands

A general format for the content of management plans and a checklist of management plans are available at: <http://www.natura2000.nl/pages/homepage.aspx>

Spain

Directrices de conservación de la Red Natura 2000. Available at:

http://www.magrama.gob.es/es/biodiversidad/temas/red-natura-2000/Directrices_de_Conservación_de_la_Red_Natura_2000_tcm7-171818.pdf

Sweden

Handbook on Natura 2000 provisions. Available at:

<http://www.naturvardsverket.se/Documents/publikationer/620-0131-0.pdf>

UK (Wales)

The Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) has a standardised approach to management planning for protected sites and has published Natura 2000 management plans and guidance on management planning:

<http://www.ccw.gov.uk/landscape--wildlife/protecting-our-landscape/special-sites-project.aspx>

For further information, see also Annex 2 (Summary compilation of information included in the Fact Sheets on Natura 2000 Management Planning in the Member States)

ANNEX 1

Check list of key aspects to be considered in Natura 2000 management instruments

Description and analysis of the area

Key features: habitats and species present in the site and their ecological requirements, interrelations, ecological functions and structure.

Land use activities and their influence on the maintenance and restoration of key features present in the site.

Socio-economic characteristics in the area: population, employment, productive activities, resources, etc. The area of socioeconomic influence of each site shall be properly identified. The sectors of economic activity and their relations and interactions with the natural environment should be analysed.

Identification of key stakeholders concerned by the site management.

Map and reference to the respective formal SAC designation act.

Conservation objectives

Definition of conservation objectives for all key features in terms of maintenance, improvement or restoration of all habitats and species present on the site (except those identified as non significant in the Natura 2000 Standard Data Form).

Appropriate parameters and attributes should be used for the specification of the conservation status to be achieved for all habitats and species present in the site, e.g. coverage, structure, functions, typical species, etc. for habitats; population, range, reproductive parameters, etc. for species.

References to higher level conservation objectives (national, regional) where such objectives exist.

Conservation measures

Description of the necessary conservation to achieve the conservation objectives defined for all key features in the site, including technical specifications, location, extent, costs, etc.

Conservation measures should be established for all habitats and species present on the site (except those identified as non significant in the Natura 2000 Standard Data Form). Where certain habitats and species do not require any conservation measure in a site, this should be clearly specified and explained.

Establishing some kind of zoning for the implementation of the conservation measures may be useful in some cases. In any case, appropriate mapping of the location of key features targeted and of the conservation measures is useful for correct implementation and communication with relevant stakeholders.

Ways and means of implementation

Definition of management structures and means to ensure proper participation of all relevant stakeholders in the design and implementation of conservation measures.

Description of economic and human resources needed for the implementation of conservation measures.

Identification of roles and responsibilities in the implementation of conservation measures and overall management of the site.

Establish a detailed time planning for the implementation of the conservation measures, including the consultation and involvement of key stakeholders.

Monitoring and review

Describe monitoring systems to be used to follow-up the implementation and assess the results achieved, including appropriate indicators.

Establish the time when the planning for the implementation of conservation measures shall be reviewed. Consider the need to review the conservation measures as a whole as well as the possibility to review some measures at a certain point in the face of new threats and uncertainty, changes in the stakeholders involved, etc.

Financing

Estimate the financial resources needed to carry out all the necessary conservation measures in the site.

Identify possible financial instruments to be used for the proposed conservation measures, from national, regional, and EU funding sources (e.g. EAFRD, EFRD, EMFF, ESF, LIFE+, Interreg, etc.).

Consider the Prioritized Action Framework for Natura 2000 financing and the strategic priorities set. Integrate the conservation measures and their financial needs into the relevant programmes (e.g. Rural Development Programmes, other Operational Programmes for EU funds).

Consider the mobilisation of other possible funds, including innovative financial mechanisms.