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Programme
Office for
Central
Europe

*Implementation of Natura 2000
in New EU Member States of Central Europe*
Assessment Report



IUCN Programme Office for Central Europe

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in New EU Member States of Central Europe*
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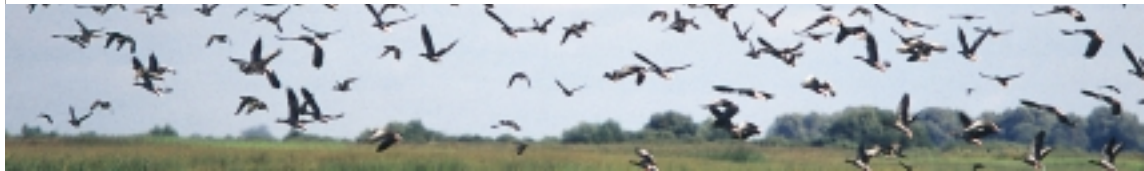
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landbouw, natuur en
voedselkwaliteit

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Wiesław Lipiec

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Introduction

"Nature conservation is everybody's business", stated Valli Moosa, the president of The World Conservation Union – IUCN, during the Third World Conservation Congress in Bangkok, November 2005. "We will succeed if we continue to broaden our scope and involve more people". It is not only governments that are interested in nature protection, but also civil society including environmental NGOs and the "users" of environment and nature – farmers and entrepreneurs – that need to be involved and interested in protecting the natural resources which they are using.

The EU's Natura 2000 is a special nature protection system giving the right to use and protect nature at the same time. Landowners and users should be informed on time by governments about the planned introduction of the Natura 2000 system and protection measures should also be discussed with them. Only through such a smooth implementation, accommodating the rights and interests of each interest group, can nature be sufficiently protected for current and future generations.

The implementation of Natura 2000 in the New EU Member States of Central Europe is a long process which began with the signing of Accession Treaties in the beginning of the 1990s and it will continue for the next few years. Environmental NGOs were extremely interested and have been lobbying for proper designation and implementation of Natura 2000 sites with the involvement of civil society. This publication, prepared by several experts from nature protection organisations, gives a picture of this process. One year after 1st May 2004, the biggest enlargement in the history of the EU, is maybe too early to assess how successful the implementation of Natura 2000 in the New EU Member States of Central Europe has been, but it gives examples of good practice in the designation process and public consultations; it also illustrates where problems can appear and how to avoid them. We hope that it can be one of many useful publications supporting the implementation of Natura 2000, with mutual benefit for nature and society.

The text below is based upon questionnaires sent out to NGOs of eight new Central European Member States of the EU. The responses were collected from February until May 2005; please bear in mind that many elements of Natura 2000 could have changed in the meantime, since the process of implementation is very dynamic. Please note that comments are subjective and according to the individual authors of the questionnaires, which have been edited together to form a country-by-country panorama.

About this report

The IUCN Office for Central Europe co-ordinated the project “Integrating Natura 2000, rural development and Agri-environment Programmes in CE” from 2002 to 2004, in the time of the fastest and most profound changes in the legal system in all areas of the economy and environmental protection which influence nature and nature conservation.

At the beginning of the project in 2002 everybody involved in nature conservation believed that the different sectoral subsidies paid by Central and Eastern Europe states for rural areas would be changed to structural support after accession to the EU, in order to provide integrated rural development. It was vital for IUCN's constituency to be part of this process in the pre-accession phase. IUCN wanted to find mechanisms to ensure that nature conservation would be integrated in the rural development programmes, supporting financial mechanisms and projects (e.g. SAPARD). To achieve our aims we invited to the discussion the experts from environmental and agriculture NGOs as well as representatives of ministries of agriculture and environment.

During the project's implementation important events and decisions took place such as the Mid Term Review in 2002 and the decision to reform the Common Agricultural Policy in 2003, the celebration of 10 years of Natura 2000 in the EU-15 in 2002, the biggest enlargement of the EU in 2004 and the 25th anniversary of the European Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) in 2004.

In the project led by Avalon in partnership with a consortium which included IUCN Office for Central Europe, the 10 accession countries have developed Agri-environment Programmes (as required by SAPARD and the *acquis communautaire*). This process, amongst others, is Phare-access financed.

During this period the governments of the accession countries have developed National Rural Development Plans and Agri-environment Programmes. IUCN as well as many other environmental NGOs was concerned in particular with the introduction of safeguards for biodiversity into National Rural Development Plans, therefore the activities of the project were focused on the relations between the future Natura 2000 sites and Rural Development Plans, focusing on Agri-environment Programmes in particular as financial instruments for implementation of the Natura 2000. An important step in this process was an international conference entitled “Integrating Natura 2000, Rural development and Agri-environment Programmes in Central Europe”, held in the Biebrza national park in Poland in 2003. The rationale behind the conference was to find ways to achieve the overall aim of conserving biodiversity linked to agriculture, using the synergy between Natura 2000 and Agri-environment Schemes as part of the Rural Development Plans. One year before the implementation of Natura 2000 in the New EU Member States of Central Europe we foresaw that the often-isolated Natura 2000 sites would not be enough to conserve biodiversity on their own. One year after the enlargement we are sure that Natura 2000 can not rescue all the biodiversity in the New Member States facing so many changes, especially in agriculture and water management. Natura 2000 and nature need responsible human activities, wise decisions of the politicians, effective financial mechanisms for the users of nature as well as dialogue of all stakeholders, primarily environmentalists with farmers, foresters, fishermen and water resources managers.

One year after magic date of 1st May 2004 is maybe still too early to assess the implementation of the *acquis communautaire* in all areas of real life, but the environmental NGOs are still trying to do their best to serve nature with their knowledge, experience and work on the ground. The text of the report is based upon questionnaires sent out to NGOs of eight new Central European Member States of the EU. Please note that comments are subjective and according to the individual authors. We address our candid gratitude to our colleagues working actively in the field in Central Europe for their valuable contribution to the project and this publication.

We hope that the readers of this report will use the information for further support and development of Natura 2000 and nature generally, as a collective and co-operative effort from as many individuals as possible is needed to ensure effective protection of our shared living heritage.

Dorota Metera, Wojciech Piwowarski, Tomasz Pezold

Compilers of the Report

1. Designation procedure for Natura 2000 sites

The designation process was assessed by the experts as “good” only in Slovakia, as “sufficient” in the Czech Republic and Hungary, as unlikely to be sufficient in Poland and as more or less sufficient in the other countries, but almost all were delayed. This indicates that nature protection was not a high priority in the integration process comparing to other sectors of the economy.

Czech Republic

Since 1999 it has been evident that the complexity and volume of the work concerning Natura 2000 had been underestimated on the national level, including the co-operation and official communication with the European Commission. Much of preparatory work has been carried out since 1999. It was decided then that “standardised mapping” should be used to identify the relevant biotopes in the territory of the Czech Republic. This very ambitious undertaking has involved:

- creating, discussing and publishing of a list of pSPAs together with an information brochure for the public; the information brochure was partially completed and then put on hold because the relevant amendment of the Nature Protection Law had not been introduced on time.
- regarding pSCIs, the relevant mapping had been carried out for only 2/3 of the Czech territory by the deadline for national proposals for Natura 2000. The European Commission did not extend the deadline as the Czech authorities had requested. Despite the

remaining 1/3 of the territory having been mapped by the end of 2004, the obtained results could only partially be implemented into the national proposal, and just a preliminary selection of the Natura 2000 sites was submitted to the European Commission (an additional nomination of the sites is supposed to be made during the final stage of the approval process). The whole nomination process for Natura 2000 was led by the Ministry of the Environment. On a regional level, the co-operation between regional officials and specialists was satisfactory.

Estonia

The Ministry of the Environment co-ordinated the preparation of pSCIs, including adjustments in legislation and designation of sites. NGOs, experts and scientific institutions carried out fieldwork, made scientific inventories and proposed the sites. 15 County Environmental Departments prepared the county lists of pSCIs and organised public hearings.

A national programme called “Estonian NATURA 2000” has been adopted by the government, which outlines actions for 2000–2007. The timetable for most relevant actions was the following:

- gathering and evaluating existing data – March 2001;
- preliminary list of pSCIs and SPAs – March 2001;
- additional inventories on species and habitats – September 2001;
- analysis of coverage (overlapping) and linkages between existing protected areas, pSCIs and SPAs – December 2001;
- analysis of the lists in County environmental departments – March 2002;
- additions to the list – November 2002;
- hearings and negotiations with stakeholders – March 2002;
- publication of the list – March 2002;
- final preparations for adoption of the list – December 2002.

The earlier activities were carried out roughly according to the above timetable, but by the end the Ministry was about a year behind schedule. Hearings and negotiations with stakeholders took place only in 2003–2004.



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Despite a huge delay, the Estonian government managed to present the list of Natura 2000 sites to the European Commission by 1st May 2004.

Hungary

The Natura 2000 site designation procedure was carried out in two major steps. Firstly, a consortium was established, including the Ministry of the Environment and Water, ÖKO Ltd, ADAS Consulting Ltd, CEEN Consulting, the Ecological and Botanical Institute of the Hungarian Scientific Academy, MME/BirdLife Hungary, and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. This consortium made an assessment of available and recently-collected information and prepared a proposal for SPAs and pSCIs in the framework of a PHARE project called “Preparation for Implementing the Habitats Directive¹ in Hungary”. This proposal included proposed sites, procedures for developing regulations and communication of results. The main results of the project were published in a series of three books.

Secondly, based on these preparations, the ten National Park Directorates and the Ministry made a more detailed strategic designation plan including local information from national parks, researchers and NGOs. There were some misunderstandings during the consultation, and some problems with data provision, but finally these procedures provided a sufficiently well-designed network covering 21% of the country’s area.

Latvia

The research project was carried out by the Danish consultancy company DARUDEC, Latvian Fund for Nature and Latvian Ornithological Society between 2001 and 2004. During the project, research on potential Natura 2000 sites was carried out, the list of proposed Natura 2000 sites was prepared, and a Natura 2000 database was created. Afterwards the list was submitted to the Ministry of the Environment. The research project was carried out by the Latvian Fund for Nature and the Latvian Ornithological Society between 2001 and 2003.

NGOs submitted the list of proposed Natura 2000 sites to the MoE. The list contained:

- existing national Specially Protected Nature Territories where species or habitats of Community interest were found;

- proposals for amendments of borders of existing SPNTs;
- proposals for establishing new national SPNTs for species or habitats listed in the Habitats Directive or the Birds Directive².

In February – March 2003, several regional seminars were organised by the MoE in order to inform and consult landowners, municipalities and other stakeholders on the proposed new protected territories and border amendments of existing ones. It was followed by a stakeholder negotiation process on proposals, carried out by the Nature Protection Board (with visits to municipalities in April – August, 2003).

In addition, the “Propose a Territory!” campaign was launched in March 2003, which carried on until the end of May 2003. The main goal of this campaign was to raise public awareness about the process of establishing the Natura 2000 network. People were invited to suggest new potential Natura 2000 sites that they would find valuable for nature protection. In total more than 50 proposals were received. Information on the proposed territories was analysed by NGO experts from the EMERALD project.

Then newly-proposed SPNTs were approved by the Government (the last one in April, 2004) and the list of proposed Natura 2000 sites was then finalised, approved by the Minister of the Environment and submitted to the European Commission.

Lithuania

Designation procedures are defined in the Law on Protected Areas and Territorial Planning: there must be a public hearing and all interested parties may take part. This procedure was followed. NGOs and research institutions took part in site selection and preparation of the list. Municipalities were not so involved in the designation process, as their role was to officially approve the sites.

The designation process was more inclusive and transparent in the beginning, but later on it became less open and NGOs were more or less eliminated from the procedures.

Poland

The Natura 2000 designation procedure was co-ordinated by the Ministry of the Environment. Work started with a pilot project called “Implementation of the

¹ Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora

² Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds

Birds and Habitats Directive in the Karkonoski Park Narodowy and Krkonoski Narodni Park” which aimed to test procedures of identifying Natura 2000 sites in two national parks on the Czech-Polish border.

A project entitled “Conception of the Natura 2000 network in Poland” started in February 2000, which developed a preliminary concept of the Natura 2000 network and verified data of existing protected areas and areas from the CORINE biotopes and CORINE Land Cover databases.

Most of the Natura 2000 sites was selected in the framework of a project entitled “Implementation of a Natura 2000 network in Poland”, carried out by a consortium of institutions (the National Foundation for Environmental Protection, UNEP/GRID-Warsaw, the Department of Ornithology of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Nature Conservation of the Polish Academy of Sciences). Other naturalists from the scientific community and NGOs were also involved in this phase on their own initiative.

The main tasks of the project covered *inter alia* verifying and completing a list of sites proposed in the earlier project; consulting with nature conservation authorities; formulating the main principles of conservation for particular habitat types and species; defining the scope of work for preparing management plans for the sites; indicating ecological corridors linking major Natura 2000 sites and formulating guidelines; preparing standardised documentation for designated sites. The list of sites proposed after this stage consisted of 420 sites covering approximately 18% of Poland’s land territory.

The next project was launched after the Treaty of Accession was adopted, when new habitat types and species were added to the annexes of the Directives. As a result, 39 new sites were added to the existing proposal.

During the last stage, at the beginning of 2004, the list of 141 SPAs and 323 pSCIs with 28 sites proposed by NGOs was consulted with communes (local authorities) as well as with representatives of other stakeholder groups for such as the State Forests or the Regional Boards Water Management. After this process, the Ministry of the Environment decided to reduce the original number of sites. The criteria of this selection were not presented to the public. The final list submitted to the European Commission was made up of 72 SPAs (7,8% of the country’s area) and 184 pSCIs (3,7% of the country’s area).

Recently the Ministry has finalised a PHARE twinning project in co-operation with France. Manuals for conservation of natural habitat types and species as well as pilot management plans have been developed. The project also carried out information-based activities to raise awareness about the network.

Slovakia

After the negotiation processes in 1998–1999, where the most active players were the Ministry of the Environment and the State Nature Conservancy, work started to include and co-operate more closely with universities and NGO experts, mainly in proposing amendments to the Annexes of the Directives. Both governmental institutions realised that establishing the Natura 2000 network would be a real test for Slovakia and they would need the support of all relevant experts.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands offered support to the Slovak Republic in this difficult task through a project entitled “Establishment of the Natura 2000 network in the Slovak Republic”, funded under PIN-MATRA (Programme on International Nature Management in Pre-accession Countries). With the help and guidance provided by Dutch experts, the Slovak Republic started to create solid foundations for its Natura 2000 network. This was mainly due to the thorough approach chosen by the Ministry of the Environment, the State Nature Conservancy and the NGOs. A consortium of nine institutions and organisations was involved, which included the International Agricultural Centre, SOVON, AVALON, the Daphne – Institute of Applied Ecology, the Institute of Botany of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Landscape Ecology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, the Faculty of Natural Sciences of the Comenius University, the Society for the Protection of Birds in Slovakia (SOVS – Slovak Birdlife partner) and the Group for the Protection and Research of Owls and Birds of Prey in Slovakia.

The overall objective of the project was to contribute to full compliance with international agreements concerning nature protection and securing the natural heritage of the country on a long-term basis. The immediate objective of the project was implementing of the Birds Directive and providing the first stage of implementation of the Habitats Directive, including legal compliance and capacity for development of the Natura 2000 network before the end of 2003. The objectives of the project were to be achieved through working towards the three identified aims:



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- organisation and capacity building;
- database and inventory development;
- raising awareness.

This was the key project for the establishment of Natura 2000, in which NGOs were deeply involved. After the project finished, NGOs carried on co-operating with governmental institutions to prepare the final SPAs and pSCIs lists. Co-operation on implementation of Natura 2000 also continued after 1st May 2004.

Slovenia

Because the government was unprepared, the designation of Natura 2000 sites started late and the procedure was rushed. Communication on site designation was planned in advance but was insufficient. Communication

of information about Natura 2000 was carried out by governmental institutes (e.g. nature conservation and forestry). Public participation was possible in this process, but it was of insufficient quality because it was mainly carried out in areas that have little inhabitants, and generally in small areas with few problems so the more serious issues and fundamental problems did not arise until the very end of the process. During the final phase representatives of all local governments were invited to participate with their comments. The extent to which these remarks were considered by the central authorities is unknown. DOPPS-BirdLife Slovenia communicated Natura 2000 sites (SPAs only) to the public independently of the governmental authorities, starting long before the government exercise, so as to pre-sensitise local people about bird habitats and Natura 2000 and thus to increase effectiveness of the scheme.

2. Designation methods for Natura 2000 sites

The methods used to designate sites were graded as “very good” in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, “unlikely to be sufficient” in Poland and “sufficient” or “more or less sufficient” in other countries. The involvement of local nature protection organisations in the designation of sites increased the possibilities of obtaining good-quality data.

Czech Republic

The process of designation and evaluation of the Natura 2000 sites (selected on the basis of mapping the territory of the Czech Republic) used the following methods:

- designation of the pSPAs: all available long-term ornithological knowledge and observations (nest locations and migration routes) were exploited;
- designation of the pSCIs: only large and high-quality habitats were designated for the remaining 1/3 of the territory of the Czech Republic (see *section 1*). Criteria set out in Annex III of the Habitats Directive and the abundant knowledge on species expansion (mainly animal species) was used for the designation.

On the national level, regional co-ordinators and groups of specialists dealing with specific groups of animals were established. The weak point of this designation and evaluation process was that the selection of sites (based strictly on the mapping), did not consider the long-term evolution of the sites and their development potential.

Estonia

Data and information for site designation largely came from experts from the University of Tartu, the Institute of Zoology and Botany, the Estonian Agricultural University (who also participated in Natura 2000 field work and compiled the handbook on Natura 2000 habitats in Estonia). Several databases which were compiled by NGOs were used for designation, for example a database on semi-natural grasslands compiled by the Estonian Semi-natural Community Conservation Association (ESCCA). The database of habitat inventories of the Estonian Fund for Nature has practically not been used at all, except in published materials. The

Ministry of the Environment and environmental departments of county administrations have launched their own small-scale inventories. Several pilot projects for testing methodologies were completed, such as: the “Inventory of species and habitats protected by international conventions and directives in Estonia”; “Implementation of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives in Lääne and Rapla counties”; “Implementation of the Natura 2000 network in Estonia regarding freshwater and brackish water species and habitats”. Five projects have been financed since 2001 under the LIFE Nature programme, which have also contributed to the establishment of Natura 2000 sites. Two new LIFE projects began at the end of 2003.

Inventories are clearly insufficient for some invertebrates. Although there are satisfactory inventories for most land-based habitats, there is a gap in knowledge regarding marine habitats. The scientific representativeness of proposed Sites of Community Importance has not been evaluated by academic institutions. Also, socio-economic aspects in designating Natura 2000 sites were not analysed or considered.

Hungary

The designation of SPAs was based on the BirdLife IBAs “C” criterion method. The method was used for the whole country. The designation was made in a partnership by the Ministry, the National Park directorates and MME/BirdLife Hungary. After this a few amendments were made, but the final result is close to the first agreement.

The preparation for designation of pSCIs included a country-wide survey, data collection and monitoring programmes, i.e. the Hungarian Biodiversity Monitoring Programme; a programme for creating the National Ecological Network; a survey of legally defined fens and alkali habitats; a country-wide programme for collecting habitat/species/plant data; and the CORINE Habitat Mapping Programme developed from the results of CORINE Land Cover Project. The assessment resulted in consistent GIS databases (EVITA). Based on the analyses of the databases, the expert group gave a proposal for pSCI sites. The final step of designation was made by experts from the national parks authorities.

Latvia

In order to meet the EU requirement to choose locations for Natura 2000 sites by the time of accession to the EU, the solution was to use the existing system of Specially Protected Nature Territories (SPNTs) as a basis for the new Natura 2000 network and to adjust it to the demands of the EU Directives. New sites where protected species and habitats were found were first designated as national SPNTs and afterwards as potential Natura 2000 sites. To establish the Natura 2000 network, an inventory of SPNTs and selection of new protected territories was made by experts within a Danish–Latvian project entitled “Analysis of the Specially Protected Nature Territories (SPNTs) in Latvia and Establishing EMERALD/Natura 2000 Network”. Territories for the Natura 2000 network were selected according to the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers “Criteria for Selecting Sites Eligible for Identification as Sites of Community Importance (Natura 2000) in Latvia”. These Regulations are developed according to Annex III of the Habitats Directive. According to the Article 2 of this Regulation, for European Specially Protected Nature Territory (Natura 2000), considering scientific information, territory can only be designated as such if it complies with the following criteria:

- if the territory contains one or more types of specially protected habitats, which are protected by national legislation and one or more specially protected species or their habitats;
- if the factors mentioned in Articles 3 and 4 of these regulations apply (e.g. representation of a specially protected habitat type in correspondent territory; quantity and density of population of a specially protected species in correspondent territory cf. quantity and density of the population of the species across the whole of Latvia etc.), and the territory is or could be important for further protection and conservation of specially protected habitats or species and their habitats;
- the territory is designated as Specially Protected Nature Territory or a micro-reserve according to the national legislation.

The Latvian Ornithological Society was sub-contracted to designate bird areas (SPAs). The experts were responsible for the collection of data on the Birds Directive species within existing SPNTs and for identification of potential sites to establish new SPNTs.

The Latvian Fund for Nature was sub-contracted to designate pSCIs. The experts involved were responsible for collecting data on habitats and species except for birds.

Lithuania

A selection of potential sites was made by research institutions, administrative staff from protected areas and NGOs. The Ministry of the Environment issued an order concerning selection criteria. Up to 2–4 years of research was carried out, including mapping of habitats. Data were also used from previous years. Almost all sites were selected on the basis of scientific data. But an issue was that only part of the selected sites were designated, and some were already protected on national level. A very small number of new sites were designated as SPAs or pSCIs. Similar methods and criteria for selection of SPAs were used to identify Important Bird Areas, but limited resources could not ensure detailed investigation of all the potential sites, which is why the methodology was not applied correctly in some cases.



Arne Ader

Poland

The first stage of the designation process was mainly based on a CORINE biotopes project carried out between 1992 and 1996. Results of this project were added to with information on species and habitats of Community importance. Afterwards, sites meeting the criteria of the Birds and Habitats Directive were identified.

The selection of sites was based on existing data. Because of gaps in knowledge, the selection was only done relatively well with regard to birds and more spectacular and well-researched species. There was no inventory of natural habitat types and existing knowledge was definitely not enough in this case since division into natural habitat types represents a new approach in nature protection which was not considered before. The problem was also that some new data were not published and access to it was difficult. For these reasons, the quality of outputs

such as SDFs and maps is relatively low. Indicative maps of sites in the scale 1: 100 000 and 1: 50 000 were produced. The approach to designation of sites was to select a few large areas covering in many cases many different habitats and species.

Because of the above-mentioned low quality of produced materials there will be a need to improve them in the future. This is foreseen to be done while the management plans are being prepared. This includes *inter alia* verification of SDFs based on field inventories, production of detailed maps and GIS databases with detailed descriptions of borders.

Slovakia

The Natura 2000 Centre at the State Nature Conservancy is operational with a well-equipped meta-database on species and habitats. Here, data developed in other institutions have been collected and processed, and the data can be used to plan management activities in EMERALD/Natura 2000 sites. For preparation of the SPAs and pSCIs it was necessary to review the quality of all existing databases, as well as their accessibility and usefulness. The databases held by the Slovak partners of the consortium – grasslands and peatlands (Daphne), the database of phytocenological records (Institute of Botany), the databank of Slovak fauna (Faculty of Natural Sciences of the Comenius University), the database of IBAs and the database of

bird distribution in Slovakia (SOVS) – were reviewed at the early stages of the project. The databases at the SNC (D-FYTO and D-ZOO) were also reviewed.

Data included in these databases and also relevant “soft” information (i.e. the present structure of protected areas, the National Ecological Network, Ramsar sites, IBAs, Wetland Shadow List) were used to identify potential network of Natura 2000 sites in Slovakia. Gap analyses guided field research in 2001 and 2002.

The data held by the Ministry of Agriculture in forest databases were reviewed as regards their scope and their format in summer 2002. Late access to forest databases prevented more comprehensive fieldwork being carried out in forests within the framework of the project, but SNC was also working on this issue later on and suitable data were provided for the list of pSCIs.

Slovenia

Most of the pSCIs were proposed by experts working in different institutions and also by NGOs. The methodology was defined by the Ministry of the Environment. Methods were selected according to the habitat and/or species involved. DOPPS-BirdLife Slovenia carried out a designation of SPAs according to criteria adopted by BirdLife International and recognised by the European Commission³. The methodology of designation was applied to the whole country.



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³ In 1988 the European Court of Justice in ruling against the Netherlands confirmed these criteria as the best expert reference.

3. The status of national Natura 2000 networks

This section concerns official lists of proposed Sites of Community Importance (pSCIs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) submitted to the European Commission, as well as comments on the selection.

Czech Republic



Proposed Sites of Community Importance in the Czech Republic (Czech Ministry of the Environment)



Special Protection Areas in the Czech Republic (Czech Ornithological Society and Czech Ministry of the Environment)

Submitted to the European Commission on 15th March 2005 (statistics in the table below include 3 additional pSPAs which have not yet been submitted to the European Commission).

Natura 2000 sites:	Number	Area (ha)	% of country area
SPAs	41	~623 000	7.9
pSCIs	864	~718 000	9.1
Total	905	~1 065 000	13.5

Out of the 41 designated SPAs, the Czech government has so far approved 38 (and only those were submitted to the European Commission, the remaining 3 are still subject to further discussion). Each SPA has to be formally established by a special government regulation.

The government approved the 864 pSCIs on 22nd December 2004. The majority of these sites are located in the two thirds of the Czech Republic's territory where biotopes had been preliminarily mapped (see section 1); only 44 pSCIs have so far been identified in the remaining area (one third of the Czech Republic's territory) with the designation and evaluation procedures still to be completed. More than half of the sites have an area of fewer than 40 hectares. Several large areas (such as the Šumava and the Beskydy mountains) were designated as the Natura 2000 sites due to the presence of large mammals there. It is expected that when approval process is finalised, all pSCIs will be enacted by means of one comprehensive Czech government regulation.

Estonia

Submitted to the European Commission on 1st May 2004.

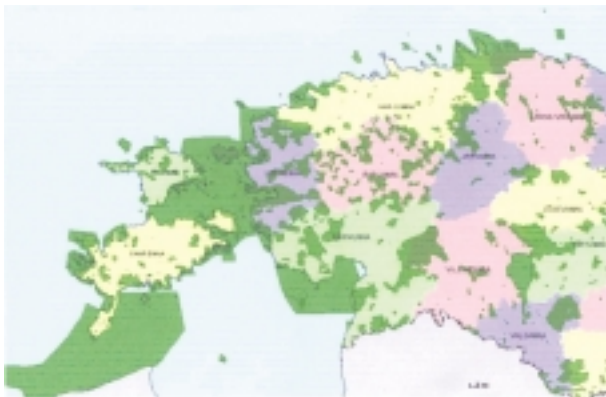
Natura 2000 sites:	Number	Area (ha)	% of country area ⁴
SPAs	66	1 236 808	12
pSCIs	509	1 058 981	10
Total	490 ⁵	1 422 500	14

- the entire Estonian territory is 45 215 km², but more than 50% of this is coastal sea, which is not included into the official (land-based) Estonian territory. The problem is that the official marine border is not fixed;
- sites with temporary legal protection⁶ cover 898 420 ha (451 sites);
- the area of sites with temporary legal protection which were sent to the European Commission covers 886 800 ha;
- the area of Natura 2000 sites located on existing protected areas is 535 700 ha;
- 730 700 ha are marine Natura 2000 sites, 72 194 ha of this on existing protected areas.

⁴ Only inland area taken into consideration

⁵ Part of sites sent to the European Commission, the remaining 85 will be sent later.

⁶ It refers to the sites, which have not been protected in national nature conservation system. Up to approval these sites have a temporary legal protection, according to Act on Nature Conservation. 39 areas are located fully on protected areas, which have already protection rules, therefore these areas do need temporary protection.

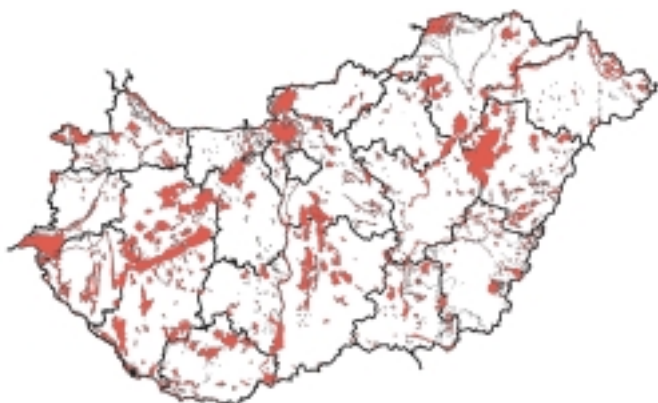


Proposed Sites of Community Importance in Estonia
(<http://maps.ekk.ee/natura>)

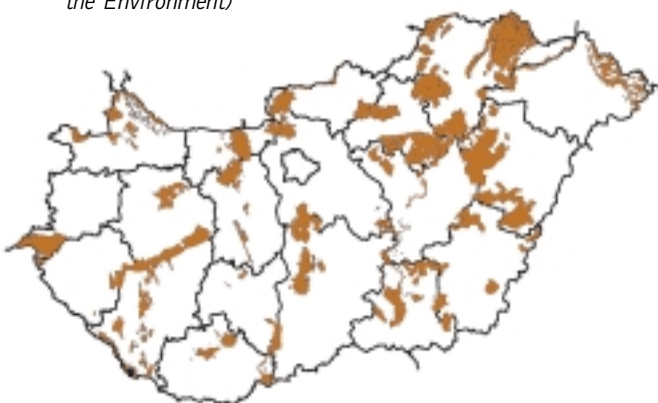
Hungary

Submitted to the European Commission in October 2004.

Natura 2000 sites:	Number	Area (ha)	% of country area
SPAs	45	1 191 784.31	12.8
pSCIs ⁷	457	1 237 784.74	13.3
SPAs & pSCIs ⁷	10	159 572.04	1.7
Total	512	1 975 158.52	21.2



Proposed Sites of Community Importance in Hungary
(MME BirdLife Hungary, basing on data from the Ministry of the Environment)



Special Protection Areas in Hungary (MME BirdLife Hungary, basing on data from the Ministry of the Environment)

The list of sites of Natura 2000 network was submitted 5 months after the deadline because of the slow consultation process with other ministries (the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Ministry of Defence). The sites included fulfil previous expectations and cover 21.2% of the country's area, making the Hungarian network one of the most comprehensive in Europe. However during the consultation process, the Ministry of the Environment and Water was able to make agreements with other ministries regarding the network by adding certain questionable amendments to the regulations.

Latvia



Nature Conservation in Latvia (Latvian Environment Agency)



Proposed Sites of Community Importance and Special Protection Areas in Latvia (Latvian Ministry of the Environment)

The Latvian Natura 2000 list of sites with natural habitats of European importance was approved by the Minister of the Environment. Four of the designated sites are Strict Nature Reserves, 3 are National Parks, 38 are Nature Parks, 9 are Nature Monuments, 9 are

⁷ only if the same borders

Submitted to the European Commission on 26th April 2004.

Natura 2000 sites:	Number	Area (ha)	% of country area
SPAs	5	3 009	~0.05
pSCIs	238	98 872	~1.5
SPAs & pSCIs	93	672 308	~10.4
Total	336	774 189	11.98

Protected Landscape Areas, 250 are Nature Reserves and 23 are Micro-reserves. According to the national legislation, all Natura 2000 sites have legally protected status. National legislation prescribes that only sites that are designated as national Specially Protected Nature Territories or Micro-reserves can be included in the List of proposed Natura 2000 areas. 93 Natura 2000 sites correspond both to the Habitats Directive and to the Birds Directive.

Lithuania



Proposed Sites of Community Importance in Lithuania
(Lithuanian Ministry of the Environment)



Special Protection Areas in Lithuania
(Lithuanian Ministry of the Environment)

Submitted to the European Commission in a few parts.
The first part was submitted at the end of April 2004.

Natura 2000 sites:	Number	Area (ha)	% of country area
SPAs	61	508 900	7.8
pSCIs	271	12 000	2
Total	332	no data	no data

Some of the SPAs and pSCIs are overlapping, and so the Ministry of the Environment cannot give a total number and percentage of potential Natura 2000 sites.

In general, the percentage coverage of SPAs is more or less sufficient – 7.8% of total country area. The number of pSCIs seems to be high, but the percentage of country coverage is very low – only 2%. The problem is that pSCIs were selected as small sites, mostly in areas which were already protected. In many cases, pSCIs are selected within the area of distribution of certain habitat type, but there are no buffer zones.

The Ministry of the Environment tried to avoid designating large areas, with many landowners or users, who would potentially not be satisfied with Natura 2000 protection status. In many cases, relevant areas (or some problematic parts of the areas) were excluded from the list and the sites which caused least problems were designated.

Poland

Submitted to the European Commission on 1st May 2004.

Natura 2000 sites:	Number	Area (ha)	% of country area
SPAs	72	3 312 800 [2 433 400 terrestrial]	7.8 of terrestrial area
pSCIs	184	1 171 600 [1 171 600 terrestrial]	3.6 of terrestrial area
SPAs & pSCIs	8 ⁸	378 978	no data
Total	248	no data	~10,3



Tomasz Pezold

⁸ Number included also in numbers of SPAs and pSCIs



*Proposed Sites of Community Importance in Poland
(Polish Ministry of the Environment)*



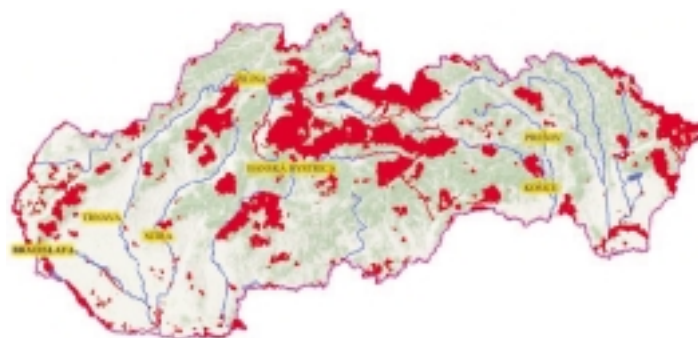
*Special Protection Areas in Poland
(Polish Ministry of the Environment)*

The total list contains 248 sites (this includes 8 sites which consist of SPAs and pSCIs within the same borders i.e. where SPA and pSCI overlap completely), covering in total 10.3% of Poland's terrestrial territory. According to the NGOs' assessment, the list is definitely insufficient and according to scientific criteria needs to be significantly increased (see section 6).

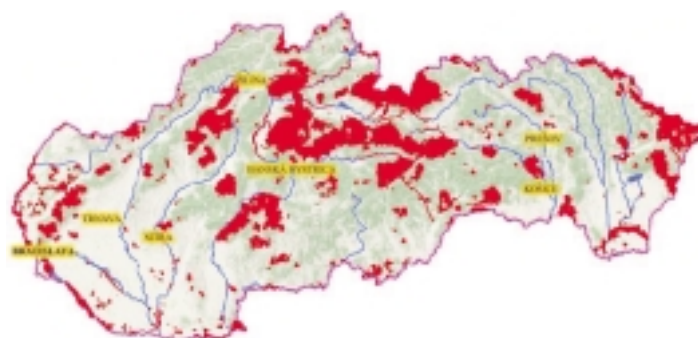
Slovakia

Submitted to the European Commission 1st May 2004

Natura 2000 sites:	Number	Area (ha)	% of country area
SPAs	38	1 220 563	25.2
pSCIs	382	571 191	11.72
Total	no data	~1 426 102	28.9 (estimated)



*Proposed Sites of Community Importance in Slovakia
(State Nature Conservancy Slovakia, www.sopsr.sk)*



*Special Protection Areas in Slovakia
(State Nature Conservancy Slovakia, www.sopsr.sk)*

The future Natura 2000 sites that have been proposed by the government cover some 28.9% of the country's territory. Much of this substantial amount is made up of areas important for birds. According to NGOs' analysis, a substantial number of areas – 474 sites – are missing from the list of proposed Sites of Community Importance; the pSCIs in the current proposal cover only 11.72% of the country's territory.

Proposed Special Protection Areas were discussed with the relevant stakeholders prior to their approval by the government on 9th July 2003. The list of bird sites includes a total of 38 SPAs, covering 25.2% of the country's territory. Some 55.15% of the territory of the proposed SPAs overlap with currently protected areas.

List of Proposed Sites of Community Importance were prepared and discussed with stakeholders in the autumn of 2003 and submitted to the government on 17th December 2003. Approval of the list by the government was delayed for a few months, mainly due to opposition from the Ministries of Agriculture, Economy and Finance. Only on 17th March 2004 did the government finally approve the list, after three months of media pressure arising from NGO's activity, pressure

from the Ministry of the Environment, and (probably most importantly), pressure from the European Commission, which threatened to withhold Structural Funds if the country did not fully observe EU environmental legislation. Among the list of pSCIs there are 382 sites, covering 11.72% of the territory (86.1% of the sites overlap with existing protected areas).

Slovenia



*Proposed Sites of Community Importance in Slovenia
(Slovenian Ministry of the Environment)*



*Special Protection Areas in Slovenia
(Slovenian Ministry of the Environment)*

Slovenia is the country with the largest percentage of Natura 2000 sites in the EU. As a result of the uncertainty as to what designation of these sites will bring to people, there is weak support for this kind of nature protection. Legal procedures in these sites are undefined. Thus we can say that the Natura 2000 network is not yet functional in Slovenia.

Submitted to the European Commission in June 2004

Natura 2000 sites:	Number	Area (ha)	% of country area
SPAs	26	498 046	22.8
pSCIs	260	639 878	32
Total	286	733 092	36



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4. NGO participation in the Natura 2000 designation process

The participation of NGOs in the designation process ranged from “very good” in Slovakia, to “unlikely to be sufficient” in Estonia and Poland. The governments could use the activities of NGOs more effectively, because with their involvement it would be easier to promote Natura 2000 and the general idea of nature protection and sustainable use of natural resources in a better and more successful way.

Czech Republic

The preparation of the pSPAs was developed by an NGO – the Czech Society of Ornithology – which also had responsibility for co-ordinating other issues.

Regarding biotope mapping for pSCIs identification, the specialists were engaged on the basis of individual personal contracts. Only highly qualified biologists participated, many of them being members of the environmental NGOs, with a majority from the Czech Federation of Nature Protection. The activity of some NGOs was concentrated on the development of a parallel “priority list”.

Estonia

Although the Ministry of the Environment had formally invited NGOs into the process, it was quite selective in choosing with whom to co-operate. The Estonian Ornithological Society was contracted by the Ministry

of the Environment to analyse favourable conservation statuses of Annex I species as well as to prepare documentation for Special Protection Areas; the Estonian Semi-natural Community Conservation Association database was used to designate semi-natural communities; Wildlife Estonia did the main job of designating fish species and freshwater habitats. Aside from a couple of environmental organisations which were contracted to provide information to the Ministry of the Environment regarding specific habitat types (mainly grassland and water habitats), involvement of NGOs in site designation was unlikely to be sufficient. For example the Estonian Fund for Nature, despite having the most extensive database on Estonian habitats, was practically excluded. Unfortunately, there has been an unco-operative attitude from both sides. At the beginning (1998–2001) several NGOs were involved in “Natura Council” activities, but the last stage of designation of Natura 2000 sites took place largely within the Ministry of the Environment, without the involvement of several stakeholders. Apart from data gathering, consolidation and consultation, NGOs should have been more actively involved in raising awareness, which until now has been clearly beyond the capacity of the relevant authorities.

Hungary

MME/BirdLife Hungary participated in the designation process of SPAs. There was no participation of NGOs in the overall process of pSCIs designation, but local NGOs helped in the designation with consultation and providing data for both SPAs and pSCIs.

Latvia

The Latvian Ornithological Society was sub-contracted for designation of SPAs, and the Latvian Fund for Nature was sub-contracted for designation of pSCIs. These are the most active and largest nature protection NGOs in Latvia. They represent almost all experts in the field of protected species and habitats. Most of the sites that were proposed by these NGOs were designated as national SPNTs and included in the list of proposed Natura 2000 sites. The Ministry of the Environment amended some borders for several sites as a result of the stakeholder consultation process.



Levente Veszteg

Lithuania

In the beginning of the designation process, NGOs took an active role, e.g. they could suggest sites, deliver data, take part in public hearings. Later on the role of NGOs became downgraded and involvement decreased. It is difficult to assess why NGOs were eliminated from the final selection process. However, in general NGO participation was quite active.

Poland

Polish NGOs could have been much more involved and their capacity used more effectively. Although NGOs undertook activities concerning designation of Natura 2000 sites, they did so mainly on their own initiative and were not invited officially by the government to take part in the process. Because of the government's lack of willingness to involve NGOs and lack of information on the designation process, NGOs very often worked in opposition to the government.

Many of the NGOs supported the designation process by providing scientific data and proposing new sites. They also disseminated information. Although the scale of those activities was low, it was an important step, taking into consideration the lack of an information dissemination campaign concerning Natura 2000.

The most important activity carried out by NGOs is the Polish Natura 2000 Shadow List prepared by a coalition of NGOs (WWF Poland; the Polish Society for Nature Protection "Salamandra"; the Naturalist Club; the Polish Society for the Protection of Birds), which could be crucial for proper implementation of the network (see also *section 6*). At the time of writing, the list was being analysed by the Ministry of the Environment and most of sites included on it will probably be sent as an official governmental proposal to the European Commission.

Slovakia

NGO participation in the Natura 2000 designation process was very good. The Daphne-Institute of Applied Ecology together with the Society for Bird Protection



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in Slovakia (the Slovak BirdLife partner), were the key partners of the Ministry of the Environment and of the State Nature Conservancy during the whole designation process. A consortium of several other NGOs and institutes was responsible for preparing the scientific proposal of SPAs and pSCIs as well as other connected topics such as communication and raising awareness. They also had the opportunity to comment on the preparation of the new Act on Nature and Landscape Protection, prepare several conferences and meetings, as well as prepare information and expert materials.

Slovenia

SPAs were on the whole designated by DOPPS-BirdLife Slovenia. All existing NGOs in the field contributed as much as they were able to. NGOs are not yet developed enough in Slovenia: beside DOPPS-BirdLife Slovenia there is no NGO with a sufficient number of volunteers to carry out this kind of work. In most cases, collaboration between experts and NGOs was established either on a formal or an informal level.

5. The involvement and participation of local communities in the Natura 2000 designation process

The designation process took place mostly without proper communication with local communities. It was assessed as unlikely to be sufficient or definitely insufficient in all countries concerned. Although it is clear for everybody that EU law should be enforced in order to ensure a good status of biodiversity, ultimately landowners are responsible for managing their own land. They should be informed on time about the law which will be implemented and its consequences. Future land management methods should be negotiated with them to ensure successful implementation of the Natura 2000 system.

Czech Republic

Local communities were involved too late in the process of Natura 2000 designation. It was caused mainly by the following:

- the new law on nature protection fixing the EU Natura 2000 legislation was approved with a great delay in 2004;
- the authorities tried to ensure that the process of habitat mapping and designation was managed by biologists and specialists, without the influence at this stage of political interests, intervention or pressure;
- nevertheless during the "pre-negotiations", the objections of local communities were dealt with (e.g. corrections of the borders of sites) and also the main stakeholders in the territories were informed and invited to participate (important landowners and users).

Estonia

Involvement and participation of local communities in the Natura 2000 designation process has been insufficient. Distribution of information to local communities has largely been the responsibility of the Ministry of the Environment's regional departments. Official public hearings were organised at the last minute and only three weeks were allowed for review and comments. Materials (posters, pamphlets and films) should have been distributed more widely.

Issues concerning nature conservation are regarded as marginal, except for direct stakeholders (mostly landowners in proposed areas). Difficulties with landowners arise

from the obscurity of the legal and financial backgrounds for Natura 2000 areas – the mechanism of compensations or subsidies is not yet clear.

In the near future, communication work targeted at landowners and local communities must be improved. Widespread criticism and opposition to the Natura 2000 network, including largely negative reports in the press, have been almost inevitable given the hurried process of public consultation. Without improved communication and awareness-raising regarding the implications and potential benefits of Natura 2000, the process of implementation in Estonia is likely to be as difficult.

Hungary

During the designation process, local communities were only involved through some nature conservation NGOs; thus community participation was weak. Local communities were informed of the Natura 2000 network, the designation process, the proposed sites, the reasons, aims and their possible future benefits by the so-called "NGO Natura 2000 coalition" (CEEWEB, MME/BirdLife Hungary, the National Society of Conservationists and WWF Hungary). MME/BirdLife Hungary organised a travelling exhibition, published information materials and organised media events. CEEWEB and the National Society of Conservationists organised workshops for municipalities. During 2004, the NGO coalition published leaflets for farmers and organised a series of local information fora for stakeholders with the support of the Ministry of the Environment and Water.

Latvia

Regional seminars aiming to inform landowners, municipalities and other stakeholders and to canvass their opinions took place only in 2003, the third and final year of the EMERALD project. In addition, the "Propose a Territory!" campaign was launched at the end of May 2003.

Co-operation with the State Forest Service and the "Latvian State Forests" State Stock Company (SSC "LSF") started during the second year of the project.

The State Forest Service (local departments) and SSC “LSF” (regional branches) were involved in order to provide information on the distribution of certain species or habitats. The representatives of the State Forest Service also participated in field inventories and further negotiations in the site designation process.

The public negotiation process was short and formal. Due to lack of positive awareness-raising, most of the landowners were against the establishment of new protected areas. These objecting opinions of landowners or municipalities were taken into account and the proposed borders were changed as a result. In a few cases where features of high nature value were involved, the authorities in charge of site designation nevertheless proceeded with designation.

Lithuania

Local municipalities were not involved in the actual site selection or designation, but were asked to endorse sites, in line with their obligations according to the law: they could either agree or disagree with the proposed sites, and also could comment and request changes concerning territory size or boundaries. This local municipality opinion was obligatory in the majority of cases.

Local town or village communities could participate in public hearing procedures and express their opinions, but were not involved in site selection or the designation process. They could only express their opinion, which was not obligatory.

Poland

Involvement and participation of local communities was and still is definitely insufficient. There was no reliable information about the Natura 2000 network provided to local communities. The awareness about how the network functions is critically low at this level. Moreover, in many cases lack of information has caused a negative and wrong picture of the network. Natura 2000 is perceived as another form of strict nature protection, i.e. as reserves or national parks. Stakeholders are convinced that it means only more restrictions which will limit their further development. Opportunities for development arising from Natura 2000 were not presented to local people, so they are in most cases not aware of the possibilities of sustainable development from which they can gain additional income (this also applies to the implementation of Agri-environment Programmes). Local communities and authorities (communes) were



asked to give their opinion on proposed sites located in their area. Opinions received were in most cases negative.

Greater involvement of local authorities and other stakeholders had been foreseen to be carried out during the preparation of management plans for each site. The project aimed at developing management plans for pilot areas demonstrated that involvement of local authorities and other stakeholders is essential for the long-term sustainability of the management plans as well as the implementation of the network as such. Such meetings could be good opportunities to make up for backlogs in past information dissemination activities. This involvement could be crucial to develop effective rules for protection of certain species and habitats, which could be acceptable for all the stakeholders involved. Such an approach has been foreseen in a project of ministerial decree on management plans for Natura 2000 sites. Unfortunately the regulation which was finally adopted does not explicitly require such an involvement. Taking into consideration the low awareness of local communities and their negative attitude to the network, it could cause serious problems in the implementation and proper management of Natura 2000 sites.

Slovakia

All relevant stakeholders from the proposed Natura 2000 sites were involved in the designation process. This is an obligation according to the Act on Nature and Landscape Protection. The Ministry of the Environment must involve owners, administrators, and tenants of lands designated for protection under Natura 2000. The Ministry must explain the reason for including a site in a national list, define those activities that require approval of the nature protection body or which are prohibited according to this Act, and inform

stakeholders of compensation available for restriction of common cultivation.

To identify all stakeholders, an inventory of the land parcels was carried out and a database of owners, administrators, and users of the relevant land was prepared. A total number of 42 850 stakeholders on 67 605 parcels were identified. The number of parcels was obtained from the cadastre (land register) offices (in April 2003). Altogether, 362 meetings were organised, in which 59% of the owners, administrators, and users of the relevant land participated. The meetings covered almost 80% of relevant territories. Of those who participated, 31% approved of the site designation, 16% expressed conditional acceptance, 13% expressed disapproval, 38% refused to give an opinion, and less than 3% requested additional time to decide. Most of the disagreements were connected with doubts regarding the ability of the State to pay compensation for land use restrictions.

Slovenia

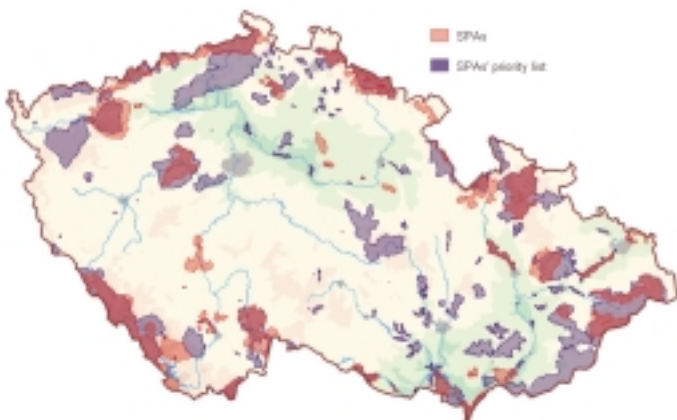
Local communities were requested to give their comments and remarks at the very end of the designation process. There was not enough time to study the pros and cons of Natura 2000. This gave rise to dissatisfaction among some local community representatives, especially among those to whom investments in infrastructure had been promised, which could potentially not be carried out because of Natura 2000 requirements (wind power plants for instance). Opportunities and benefits of the Natura 2000 network were poorly presented to locals so they have little knowledge about opportunities offered by nature conservation in this form. Some local communities are still very unsatisfied with the existing Natura 2000 network and they threaten lawsuits against the government.

6. Shadow Lists

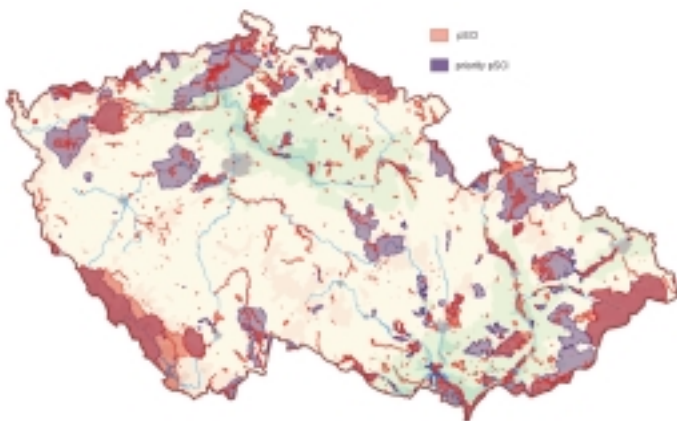
Official lists submitted to the European Commission were often assessed as not providing favourable conservation status to habitats and species from Annexes I and II to the Habitats Directive and Annex I to the Birds Directive. The "Shadow List" is one of the most important tools which enable NGOs to present their point of view, and they will be discussed during biogeographical seminars.

The Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia have prepared Shadow Lists; the Estonian Shadow List is under preparation. Latvia and Hungary have not prepared Shadow Lists, however Latvian NGOs are recognising need for making one.

Czech Republic



Priority list map and proposed Sites of Community Importance in the Czech Republic (Mojmir Vlasin and al., Veronica)



Priority list map and Special Protection Areas in the Czech Republic (Mojmir Vlasin and al., Veronica)



Levente Veszó

The Shadow List was developed as the "priority list" over four years by Czech environmental NGOs (2001–2004), with the co-operation of more than 100 specialists in Botany and Zoology. In 2003, a "Coalition of Czech NGOs for Natura 2000" was established (including NGO members such as Veronica, Arnika and Calla) which aimed to finish, promote and lobby for the "priority list" using co-operation in Central Europe. This Czech list was delivered to WWF International in Vienna for the development of a "common interest list" of the new EU accession countries, which was handed over to Margot Walström, in her capacity as Environment Commissioner, during the celebration of the accession of the new EU member states in Brussels on 1st May 2004. The "Coalition of Czech NGOs for Natura 2000" continues to work with the "priority list" to monitor the designation process of Natura 2000 sites.

Estonia

The Shadow List of Natura 2000 areas is under preparation and is expected to be submitted in autumn 2005. The Estonian Fund for Nature is responsible for compiling the List. Several other NGOs, such as the Estonian Semi-natural Community Conservation Association (ESCCA), Wildlife Estonia and the Estonian Ornithological Society, will be involved in compiling the Shadow List.

Hungary

A Shadow List was not prepared in Hungary, because it was seen as unnecessary as there are only minor differences between the IBAs list and the submitted SPAs list. There are not enough data to prepare a Shadow List of pSCIs.

Latvia

The Latvian Fund for Nature and the Latvian Ornithological Society carried out the inventory of existing and potential SPNTs. These organisations have not prepared a Shadow List as they were participants of the evaluation process and prepared the initial list of the proposed Natura 2000 sites.

Concerning SPAs, the Latvian Ornithological society published a book called "Important Bird Areas of European Union importance in Latvia", which can be used to evaluate the Natura 2000 site list.

Nevertheless, there might be a need for a Shadow List to recognise sites that are suitable for designation, but

which were not included in the list of proposed Natura 2000 sites for some reason (lack of information or lack of political will), or were designated as national SPNTs (and included in the list of proposed Natura 2000 territories).

Several inventories, i.e. the Latvian Breeding Bird Atlas and the Woodland Key Habitats Inventory, have shown that areas of high biodiversity value might still be found outside the proposed Natura 2000 sites.

Lithuania

The Shadow List was prepared in May 2004 and published by the WWF Accession initiative in June 2004: "Natura 2000 in the New EU Member States – Status Report and List of Sites for Selected Habitats and Species"⁹.

The Lithuanian Fund for Nature suggested 198 sites in the Shadow List. Some of the areas have been designated already, but the Ministry of the Environment has not published the Natura 2000 list and so it is difficult to assess the extent of its success.



Selmonas Paitanavičius

⁹ See the website: www.panda.org/epo (under Natura 2000)

Poland



Shadow List map for proposed Sites of Community Importance in Poland¹⁰



Shadow List map for Special Protection Areas in Poland¹⁰

The Shadow List in Poland was prepared because the NGOs involved agreed that the governmental list of pSCIs and SPAs was insufficient and did not allow for providing favourable conservation status in key areas. The Shadow List was developed by WWF Poland, the Polish Society for Nature Protection "Salamandra", the Naturalist Club, and OTOP – the Polish Society for the Protection of Birds (Polish BirdLife partner)¹⁰. The differences as compared to the governmental proposal include:

- several changes to the site borders proposed by the government;
- most of the new sites proposed have already been considered in the previous stages of work on designating the Polish Natura 2000 network, but were excluded later, often as a result of conflicts with stakeholders;

- 37 completely new sites – complete Standard Data Forms (SDFs) had to be created for them.

New and modified SDFs were sent to the European Commission together with the report on the Shadow List. The Shadow List, containing 152 pSCIs not present in the governmental proposal, was sent to the European Commission. In the 15 cases where had been changes in borders proposed to the government via the Shadow List, the results were that the governmental proposal was enlarged.

The complete Shadow List of pSCIs prepared by NGOs consists of 336 sites with an area of 29 400 km² which covers 9.4% of Polish inland territory, and 6159.7 km² of marine sites.

The organisations preparing Shadow List emphasise that their list is not complete, as some other areas need to be researched, and may be included on the list of Natura 2000 sites, but for now there are not enough data.

The Polish Society for the Protection of Birds prepared a list of pSCIs which:

- consists of 140 sites (cf. 72 sites in the governmental proposal); 67 sites are completely new, 2 are partly included in governmental proposal;
- covers 15% of Polish terrestrial area (cf. 8% in the governmental proposal).

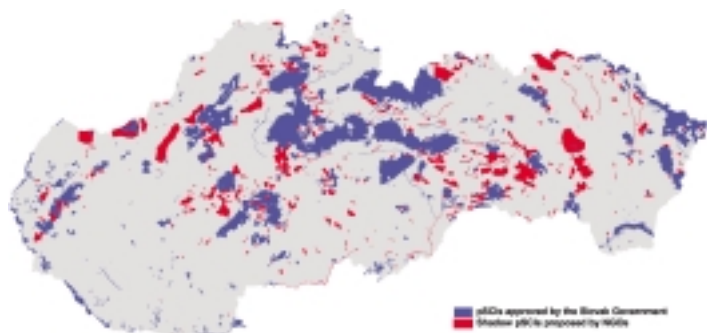
The Ministry of the Environment has commissioned a verification of the habitat Shadow List by the Institute for Nature Conservation of the Polish Academy of Sciences. Some areas of alpine regions were already included in the governmental proposal, for a biogeographical seminar on this region which was held at the end of May 2005. Most of the areas included on Shadow List falling within the continental biogeographical region will be sent to the European Commission along with the second part of the governmental proposal. The verification of the SPAs Shadow List will be also commissioned to experts.

Slovakia

In June 2004 the report "Natura 2000 in the New EU Member States" was produced by WWF and seven partner organisations¹¹, which included a proposed list of sites for selected habitats and species for a number of countries. Slovakia was included in the report's

¹⁰ "Natura 2000 Shadow List in Poland. Detailed Analysis of Habitat Directive Implementation. Synthetic Approach to Bird Directive Implementation", Warszawa, 2004

¹¹ See also the website: www.panda.org/epo (under Natura 2000)



Shadow List map for proposed Sites of Community Importance in Slovakia (DAPHNE Institute of Applied Ecology)

Shadow List. The basic conclusion of the report was that the new and future EU member states have made significant progress in implementing Natura 2000, but much remains to be done. More committed efforts are now needed to complete the work of site designation and to prepare for actual implementation of the network, for example by securing necessary funds as well as raising awareness among relevant stakeholders.

The Slovak NGOs' list, which has been developed and co-ordinated by Daphne, contains a total of 856 sites, which cover a total of 888,958 ha, covering a total of

18.20% of the country's territory. Comparing this list with the 382 pSCIs, covering 11.72% of the country (which have already been approved by the government), a total of 474 sites must still be added to the government's list in order to fully meet the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

The most important comment on this NGO list of sites is that it is still not the final version. The present version has been prepared from data that are currently available from mapping, but this is still ongoing and will continue for the next few years – new data will be necessary especially for non-forest habitats (e.g. one-third of grasslands data is missing) as well as for species of fauna.

Slovenia

The Shadow List for SPAs was prepared by DOPPS-BirdLife Slovenia in the form of a book entitled "Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Slovenia. Proposed Special Protection Areas (SPAs) in Slovenia" and submitted to the European Commission. The Shadow List for the entire Natura 2000 network (pSCIs and SPAs) in Slovenia was prepared for WWF by the private company OIKOS and submitted in June 2002.



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7. Assessment of national Natura 2000 network cohesion

The European Commission does not give clear criteria to be used in the designation process, as it leaves a free hand to Member States. The general aim is to achieve favourable conservation status of habitats and species mentioned in the annexes to directives. Put simply, cohesion is provided when all areas which ought to be designated are designated. It was not always so according to the NGO assessments, and this was the main reason for creating the Shadow Lists mentioned in the previous chapter. Another key factor in providing coherence is ecological corridors enabling connectivity between various types of protected areas; work has already started in marking them out in some Member States.

The cohesion of the Natura 2000 network seems to be sufficient in Slovenia and Hungary (concerning SPAs), and also more or less sufficient in Estonia and Latvia. The situation seems to be worse in other countries: it

is unlikely to be sufficient in Poland, Slovakia in Hungary (concerning pSCIs) and the Czech Republic and definitely insufficient in Lithuania.

Czech Republic

Cohesion is not sufficient and has two problems regarding pSCIs:

- in the 2/3 of the Czech territory where mapping of biotopes was finished in time, it is evident that the sites are too fragmented. There seems to be a tendency to avoid conflicts in the negotiation process;
- in the 1/3 of the Czech territory where mapping of biotopes was not carried out on time, it will be necessary to communicate the new sites (this correction is supposed to be done during 2005 on the basis of the biotope mapping which was finished in 2004).



The concept of ecological corridors (and the centres or reservoirs of biodiversity in the framework of a landscape-based, ecologically stable system) has existed for more than 10 years, but in the context of Natura 2000 was neither included nor improved.

Estonia

According to the experts' evaluation, the cohesion of the Natura 2000 network is more or less sufficient. However the following points need to be addressed fully in the near future:

- scientific analysis regarding the total coverage of each habitat and its importance within Estonia and the boreal biogeographical region (the meeting will be in 2005 or at the latest in 2006);
- principles of selection of certain sites according to each habitat type ("representativity" analysis);
- need for protection and comparison with existing levels of protection (including both existing protected areas and pSCIs).

Without such detailed analysis, it cannot be adequately evaluated whether the planned Natura 2000 measures will be sufficient. To date, such analysis has been conducted for the Birds Directive, but not for the Habitats Directive. With increasing criticism from landowners, encouraged by the media, such an analysis is of vital importance for justifying site designation.

In Estonia, Natura 2000 areas were defined quite selectively, largely based on the existing protected areas (about 70%). Large areas were selected on the sea and on Lake Peipsi and Vortsjärve. Several parts of rivers are included into the list of Natura 2000 sites, and these are forming ecological corridors between core areas. However, in general the linkages between core areas could be improved.

Hungary

All important areas seem to be included in the network. For example all important breeding, feeding, staging and migration areas for birds can be found in the network of SPAs.

Except for birds, there is no complete NGO assessment of biodiversity yet, but it is under preparation. SPAs

were usually designated as large areas (if some areas were close to each other they were connected into one large area), whereas pSCIs were mostly designated as several small areas. For SPAs the assessment is that the network is coherent. Regarding pSCIs a coalition of NGOs is currently working on an analysis.

Latvia

According to national legislation, in order to ensure protection (favourable conservation status of species and habitats) of SPAs and pSCIs, Latvia must designate all potential Natura 2000 sites as national Specially Protected Nature Territories (SPNTs) before they can be included in the list of proposed Natura 2000 sites.

Proposals for categories of new SPNTs were based on species and habitats found in the respective territory. Then the most appropriate status for the territory (e.g. nature reserve, nature park or other) that would ensure protection of species and habitats was defined accordingly.

In general, calculations and distribution of proposed Natura 2000 sites confirm that species and habitats are protected to a significant extent. There are however many biologically valuable forest areas¹¹ that are not included in the list of proposed Natura 2000 sites. There are strong objections from the forestry industry as timber production is the most important source of income in Latvia.

In order to meet the EU requirement to choose locations for Natura 2000 sites by the time of accession to the EU, the most logical solution for Latvia was to use the existing system of Specially Protected Nature Territories as a basis for the new Natura 2000 network and to adjust it to the demands of the EU Directives; these were large territories including National Parks as well as small Nature Reserves. Following a subsequent analysis proposals to establish new national SPNTs were submitted to the Ministry of the Environment, on sites where inadequately protected species or habitats of Community interest were found.

In the Latvian approach to ecological corridors, the national plan and criteria were initially developed and used in one pilot region – Kuldīga. On the basis of the acquired experience, a National Ecological Network was developed in the form of digital map. All ECONET¹² elements

¹¹ In Europe, most of the areas with trees are "forests", not "woods", as they all have been more or less impacted. The most valuable ones are those which have not been impacted in the last 100 years or so, but almost no forest can be found with no impact at all. In Latvia, when speaking about "biologically valuable forests" it refers to forests where natural processes are undisturbed and natural forest structure elements are present.

¹² Project results of the European Ecological Network ECONET, 1999–2001

are reflected in it – core areas, corridors and buffer zones. The ecological network on the local, regional and national level will serve as a guideline for physical planning of the territories on all levels. The Latvian Fund for Nature participated in the IUCN project “Development of National Ecological Networks in the Baltic Countries in the framework of the Pan-European Ecological Network”, which resulted in a publication including a situation analysis and proposed an ecological network for the Baltic countries in 2002.

To some extent, ecological corridors are maintained by designation of protected areas along rivers, waterbodies and by legislation on Protective Belts along waterbodies. Nevertheless, no special emphasis was put on ecological corridors when the Natura 2000 network was created. In theory, the legislation foresees that protected areas in Latvia can be established to provide that function to some extent (e.g. ensure migration of species) but in practice it has not been done.

Lithuania

Designated SPAs are mostly in areas which are already protected, but there is not enough of them. There is a large number of nominated pSCIs, but the territory they cover is quite small, and they usually do not have buffer zones or protected corridors between each other or between them and other protected areas. The Lithuanian Fund for Nature and a large group of researchers asked the Ministry of the Environment to legally adopt an ecological network according to PEEN, which could allow for the creation of a more coherent network of potential Natura 2000 sites and EMERALD sites. Unfortunately the Ministry of the Environment did not adopt the ecological network concept, but instead adopted the “Nature Framework”, which did not allow for the formation of a coherent network of Natura 2000 sites protected by buffers and linked by corridors. The “Nature Framework” is rather based on physio-geographical and geomorphologic features, and so it is not particularly well-suited to biodiversity conservation or Natura 2000.

Poland

The cohesion of the national Natura 2000 network leaves a lot to be desired. Although the proposed Natura 2000 sites are relatively large, this does not ensure adequate cohesion of the network. The officially proposed list consists of more or less connected sites which need further development to meet the criteria required by the directives. Moreover, the geo-

graphical distribution of the proposed sites does not strictly reflect the distribution of the habitats and species considered. This pattern is in many cases due to e.g. greater activity of local NGOs in some regions, or of lower opposition from stakeholders whose opinion was taken into consideration when the Ministry determined the sites. This is especially visible for sites located in river valleys. The preliminary list of sites consisted of relatively good representation of those kinds of sites, which apart from their role as sites as such, could also constitute effective ecological corridors connecting other sites. Regrettably, because of objections raised by Regional Boards for Water Management, this list has been significantly shortened.

An important step on the way to secure both adequate representation of sites and cohesion of the network is the Shadow List prepared by coalition of NGOs (see *section 6*) which is most coherent and consistent with requirements and vision of the network. Some faith can be also placed in the project carried out for the Ministry of the Environment by the Mammal Research Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences, which aimed to designate ecological corridors connecting major Natura 2000 sites and to prepare guidelines on its functioning. The main output of the project is a concept of ecological corridors connecting the main Natura 2000 areas. It consists of a GIS database, current nature protection projects and rules for functioning and management of ecological corridors. A team of experts also proposed changes and additions in legislation to make management and protection of corridors more effective.

Slovakia

Preliminary SPAs were identified using several protection networks. GIS-based analyses were worked out where qualitative data for well-known species and habitats were available. Additional inventories were carried out in preliminarily identified sites. For each species evaluated, an expert was consulted who gathered information. Additional information was collected and entered into the database. Finally, 45 sites were identified as potential SPAs. However, after the inter-ministerial evaluation, 7 sites were excluded from the official SPAs list, and the final list contained only 38 sites.

Regarding pSCIs the situation was even more difficult and more proposed sites were excluded from the proposed expert list. Sites eligible to be identified as pSCIs were pre-selected using several protection net-



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works. After finishing the project, a total of 59 sites were identified, covering some 31.7% of the national territory; this list was handed to the Ministry of the Environment and the State Nature Conservancy. But due to their nomination requiring more detailed legislative steps, finally 382 pSCIs were proposed, covering only 11.72% of the Slovak territory, as bigger sites were cut into smaller ones. Cuts within the pSCIs list were much more complicated and that is why this list cannot be seen as sufficient.

As for spatial aspects, a number of sites were chosen on the basis of scientific data and they form sometimes less and sometimes more coherent networks. For large carnivores in particular, the coherence is disputable, but there will be an opportunity during the biogeographical seminars to increase the number of sites for them. Article 10 of the Habitats Directive, which calls for the ecological coherence of the network is mentioned separately in the “Act for a Coherent European Network of Protected Areas in Slovakia”. However, the meaning of the article 10 of the Habitats Directive is different from the one in Slovak Act on

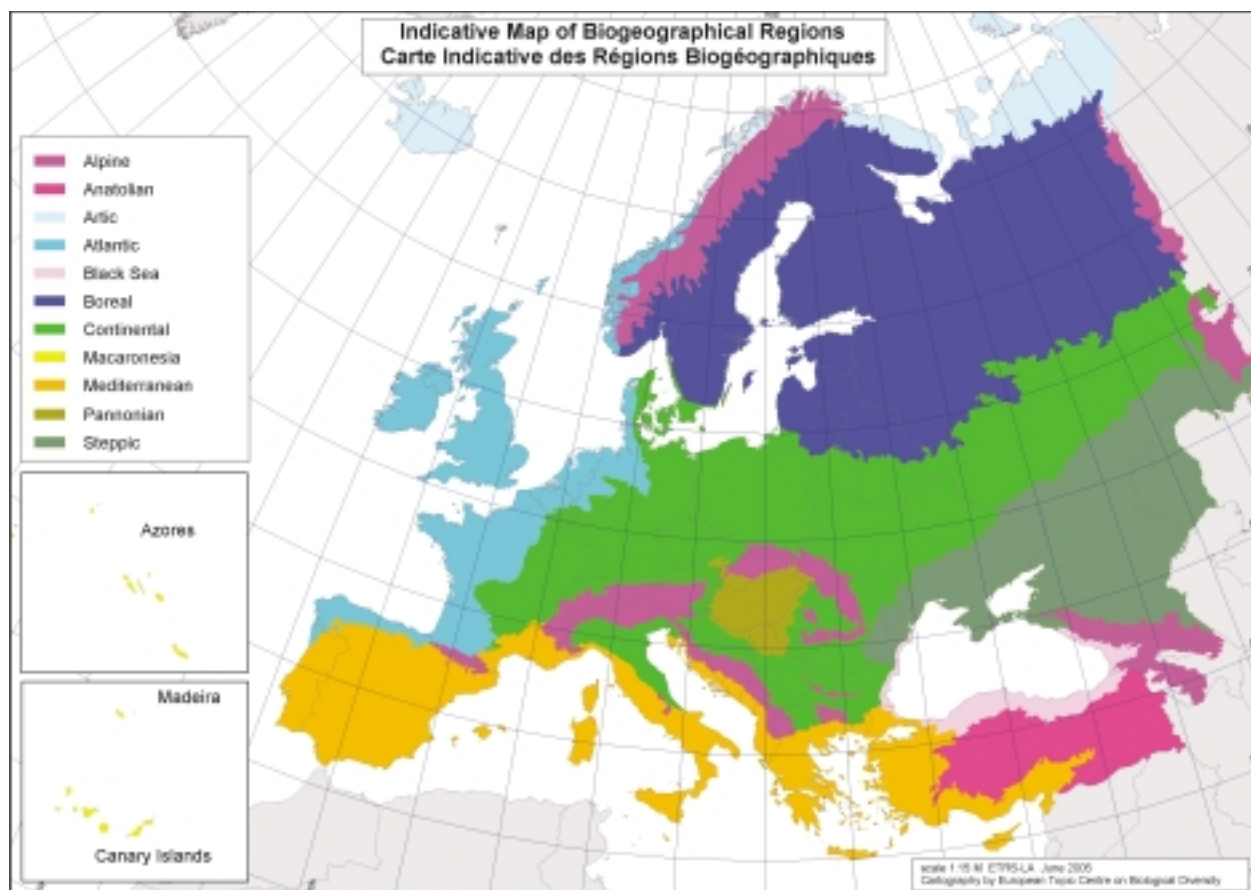
Nature and Landscape Protection. So, even if it is allowed for in the Act, coherence is neither secured in legislation nor in practice.

Slovenia

The extensive coverage of the Natura 2000 network over the country provides sufficient cohesion. However as Slovenia is a relatively small country, connectivity with other national Natura 2000 networks is very important for wildlife in the region, and there was no cross-border co-operation between NGOs or governmental bodies. Such a lack of co-operation results in poorly-defined cross-border Natura 2000 sites. This is likely to result in objection from people living close to state borders. For example it is hard for local people to understand why on one side of the border there is a Natura 2000 site, whereas on the other side with the same habitat there was no designation.

Regarding ecological corridors, there is one corridor for big mammals (such as bears and wolves) which is covered by Natura 2000 sites in sufficient way.

8. Assessment of transboundary cohesion of the national Natura 2000 networks and transboundary co-operation in the designation process



Source: European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity

Nature does not recognise or respect political borders, many of which were established only a few hundreds years ago. No wonder that while animals and plants are “travelling” – migrating or expanding their ranges – the borders are creating problems for their natural behaviour. In the future a concept for transboundary nature protection within Natura 2000 should be developed, which should be easily solved within the European Union. Only Estonia assessed transboundary co-operation as more or less sufficient, and in other countries the situation needs to be improved.

Czech Republic

The insufficient transboundary cohesion was caused by a rather hectic development of Natura 2000 in neighbouring countries and their political decisions. From the Czech point of view the quality of co-operation is diverse:

it is good with the Land of Sachsen, not good enough with Slovakia, harmonised in the border area with Austria and the Land of Bavaria, and there is a lack of any integration with Poland, except in the Krkonose mountains. As regards pSCI, all the Krkonose National Park and also the buffer zone is included as one large complex. As regards SPA only a part of the Krkonose National Park is included, but as the coherent area.

In the immediate future the Czech government must send an official demand to the Polish government for negotiations concerning transboundary co-operation regarding Natura 2000.

Estonia

According to expert evaluation the Natura 2000 network transboundary cohesion is more or less sufficient.

There have been some meetings and information exchange with Latvian colleagues, but the joint Estonian-Latvian scientific analysis regarding transboundary cohesion has not been carried out.

There was no co-operation with Russia on maintaining a good state of conservation of transboundary areas. Between Russia and Estonia the border is along the River Narva and Lake Peipsi, i.e. mainly a freshwater border, and quite a short land border. There is a very preliminary idea to establish a National Park of Setumaa to preserve the unique culture of the Setu people and the area's landscape heritage. There is also good co-operation with Russia on protecting and managing Lake Peipsi.

Hungary

No information on transboundary co-operation in the designation process initiated by the government is available. MME/BirdLife Hungary prepared a proposal in the framework of the European Important Bird Areas programme of BirdLife International, in which all European Partners were involved, so transboundary cohesion was necessarily taken into account in the proposal.

However, not enough co-operation has taken place with neighbouring countries yet to assess the transboundary cohesion of the network. In the SPA designation process, the BirdLife-RSPB EU-Accession project carried out strong co-operation between NGOs (mainly BirdLife partners in all new accession countries). For pSCIs there is little international co-operation, but NGO co-operation occurs mainly on local and regional levels.

Latvia

There was a lack of co-operation between neighbouring countries (Lithuania and Estonia) in the preparation of the lists of potential Natura 2000 sites. The reasons were that different approaches were used (different methods of site selection and mapping of habitats) and the governments used different designation procedures.

Bilateral co-operation agreements have been signed with Estonia and Lithuania. Numerous bilateral co-operation projects are taking place, for example in North Vidzeme Biosphere reserve. Co-operation with the UNDP is continuing. Support for several projects has been received, such as the UNDP/GEF project "Maintenance of biological diversity in North Vidzeme biosphere reserve". A bilateral agreement between

Latvia and Lithuania "on co-operation in the management of international river basins" was signed in 2003. Regional and sub-regional co-operation is continuously taking place in the scope of several biodiversity-related international conventions: the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats. Latvia is participating in HELCOM activities, and several projects based in the Baltic Sea are being implemented. Generally, with accession to the EU, co-operation within biogeographical regions is also being strengthened.

Lithuania

There was no real co-operation concerning transboundary areas with Latvia concerning Natura 2000. However there already exist some transboundary protected areas with Latvia, Belarus and Kaliningrad.

Poland

Transboundary co-operation was not co-ordinated by the government. All activities concerning transboundary co-operation were initiatives of the NGOs, notably in the Odra River Valley and the Karkonosze Mountains.

The first steps were very promising. Work on implementation of Natura 2000 started with the pilot study conducted on the Czech-Polish border (see *section 1*). Later on, co-operation existed only partly at the local level, mostly where co-operation between NGOs across the border has traditionally been good. This was based on individual initiatives of particular experts or NGOs and was not co-ordinated at the national level. The most important reasons for this lack of for-



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Arne Ader

mal international co-operation were different stages of progress of implementation in neighbouring countries and their different approach to site designation. Moreover, Polish teams of experts had no capacity, resources or time for additional international meetings and exchange of information since these were not supported and co-ordinated by the Ministry. Only some international meetings were organised, which ended only with declarations of co-operation which were not realised later.

Certainly these gaps need to be filled in the future through further development of the network since international coherence creates important additional value for effective protection. So far, sites protected as Natura 2000 areas on one side of the border are often not reflected in the same protection on the other.

The results of the project (mentioned in *section 7*) on ecological corridors should also be co-ordinated in the future with similar activities in neighbouring countries, since the outputs are very promising.

Slovakia

When the establishment of Natura 2000 network started in the new EU Member States, all those countries tried their best in their own territory and were not concerned with the situations in neighbouring countries. Some co-operation did take place between the experts on the transposition of both directives, on

methodology for site selection, raising awareness and so on, but this exchange of expertise focused more on collection of knowledge for use within the experts' own countries. There was an absolute lack of time and capacity for proper transboundary co-operation aiming at optimal transboundary cohesion. Most of the NGOs hope that the biogeographical seminars will be also focused on achievement of the goal of sufficient transboundary cohesion and co-operation.

Slovenia

In some cases Natura 2000 sites cross boundaries but these are more coincidental than results of deliberate work. In many more cases there are Natura 2000 sites on one side of the border and nothing on the other side (e.g. river Mura, Kras). This also caused problems with local people, because there was no explanation given why such differences were existing on either side of the border.

The River Mura is a transboundary river (linking Austria, Slovenia and Croatia) which is designated as a SPA on both sides of the Austrian-Slovenian border but they are not connected because Slovenian SPA does not start immediately after the border. The Kras is also a transboundary ecosystem (Carst) spanning the Slovenian-Italian border, with big differences on either side: while the Slovenian side is designated as a large Natura 2000 site, only fragments of the Italian carst have been designated as Natura 2000.

9. The Natura 2000 financing system

It is hard to believe that the new EU Member States have not prepared any effective sources of funds for the Natura 2000 system, but this is true. The money would be paid to the landowners for delivering public goods and services, so it should be possible to separate a proportion of tax-payers' money for services directed to the whole of society: fresh air, a living landscape, and nature values. It is also true that the preparatory work for Natura 2000 in the new EU Member States of Central Europe was to a large extent financed by foreign funds. The question to be asked to the politicians in the new Member States is: are foreign countries more interested in saving our natural heritage than we are?

The financing system for Natura 2000 was assessed as definitely insufficient in most countries, but in Estonia it seems to be more or less sufficient.

Czech Republic

For the immediate future there exists legislation to support the Natura 2000 sites – the new approach for Czech nature conservation recognises the use of financial compensation with the motivation of nature conservation. A similar possibility, which includes the improvement of biotopes, is offered by the existing Agri-environment Programme in the Czech Republic, for which it would be possible to apply in 2005 and 2006. An analysis was made to evaluate financing support for Natura 2000 but it seems rather hypothetical at this stage.

Estonia

Support for implementation of the Natura 2000 network has been earmarked from the state budget until 2007, as the Natura 2000 programme in Estonia was budgeted for by the state between 2000 and 2007. It appears that investments both for scientific research and communication activities have not always been used effectively, though lack of transparency in allocation of the funds makes clear evaluation difficult. There is a clear need for increasing the rates and total amount of support available for management of semi-natural grasslands in particular.

According to a government order of 6th May 2003, the overall costs for the implementation of Natura 2000 for the years 2003–2007 (2nd Natura 2000 imple-

mentation period) is foreseen to be 20 million EEK (1.3 million EUR), and the government order mentioned above provides for the whole of this sum for the years 2003–2007. Of this, 19 million EEK has already been guaranteed or will be applied for from the state budget; 1 million will be financed in 2003 under the PHARE programme for Estonia. According to a government order of 25th July 2000, the overall budget for the first implementation period for Natura 2000 (2000–2002) was planned to be 18.3 million EEK (1.2 million EUR), of which 10.4 million EEK (664 000 EUR) was financed from the state budget.

Some specific projects which are also contributing to activities in some Natura 2000 sites are financed by the Centre for Environmental Investments, but no special financial measures are provided for this.

Hungary

There is no dedicated Natura 2000 financing system yet in Hungary. Currently the only available, but not dedicated, source of financing is the National Rural Development Plan, but there are problems with the implementation of the Plan. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has not started to pay out subsidies and submitted a proposal to the European Commission to amend the NRDP and to reallocate 20% of the budget of the National Rural Development Plan to complementary national direct payments ("top-up" payments). The Hungarian government proposes to introduce non-targeted measures (formerly planned to be funded from the national budget) to replace targeted measures, aiming at delivering supports to targeted areas in accordance with the priorities of the European Commission's 6th



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Environmental Action Plan: this is crucial in providing support to the implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan for Agriculture, the Birds and Habitats Directives, as well as the Water Framework Directive.

However, the submitted proposal fails to consider the environmental impacts, as well as effects of the planned reallocations for 2005 and 2006.

Latvia

There are several sources of finance that can be applied for financing of Natura 2000, but there is no national financing instrument with the main aim of financing of Natura 2000. Since 2000, the largest potential Natura 2000 sites have been financed through the EU's LIFE Nature fund (management and protection).

One of the national financing instruments is the Latvian Environmental Protection Fund (LEPF) that operates under the supervision of the Ministry of the Environment. It was established to manage a special budget for environmental protection and it is used to finance environment and nature protection projects. The funds of the LEPF are collected from natural resource tax revenues. Financing is received on a project basis as a grant. Part of the natural resource tax revenues is transferred to special environment protection budgets run by the municipalities. These resources can be used by the municipality only for environment protection including nature protection.

Mostly the approach for obtaining resources for financing the Natura 2000 system has been based on projects such as the Danish–Latvian project entitled "Analysis of Specially Protected Nature Territories (SPNTs) in Latvia and Establishing the EMERALD/Natura 2000 Network", and several LIFE Nature projects with the aim to maintain particular SPNTs (potential Natura 2000 territories) or particular habitats.

More resources for management of agricultural land within Natura 2000 territories became available upon accession to the EU (via payments arising from the Rural Development Plan), since "areas with environmental restrictions" mentioned in the RDP include Natura 2000 sites.

Lithuania

There are funds allocated for Natura 2000 in the state budget. Structural Funds can finance management of Natura 2000, but most resources were allocated for management of recreational facilities in protected

areas, not particularly SPAs and pSCIs. Resources which are directly related to ensuring a favourable conservation status of habitats and species are very limited. Until now potential Natura 2000 sites were mostly managed by NGOs, but NGOs do not have access to Structural Funds, except in the budget line for informing society about the quality of their environment.

The Agri–environment Programme under the Lithuanian Rural Development Plan started in 2004, but only for organic farming and the rearing of local breeds. Other tasks relevant to Natura 2000, such as meadow management, will probably not be open for funding in 2005, or even 2006.

Poland

Financial support for some activities which are positive for Natura 2000 implementation is only possible for farmers (forestry, water management and other activities are not taken into account at all) who applied for Agri–environment Measures under conditions which were neither easy nor legally well-defined. There is also no special budget line for financing Natura 2000 activities.

A farmer who applied for Agri–environment Measures and whose farmland (or part of it) is located in a Natura 2000 site can claim 20% higher payment under following conditions (besides basic conditions for the AEM):

- the operator of the Natura 2000 site will confirm that the activities of the farmer under the AEM are in line with the *management plan* of the site;
- or the operator of Natura 2000 site will confirm that the activities of the farmer under the AEM are in line with the *protection goals* of the site.

Until now, no designated Natura 2000 sites had a management plan, although some of them were in the process of developing one, so fulfilling the first



condition is rarely possible. It is slightly easier to get confirmation using the second condition, since the protection goals of Natura 2000 sites are already defined, although there is no clear procedure for the confirmation. On the other hand, the operators of the Natura 2000 sites (Voivodship Nature Conservation Officers) are trying to help the farmers and are confirming the applications of farmers for 20% higher payments, to guarantee that the farmers will implement AEMs (instead of, for example, intensification).

The danger is, that in the case of implementation by farmers of the “sustainable agriculture” measure in Natura 2000, they theoretically can increase their use of fertilisers up to 180 kg N/ha (the average use of NPK fertilisers in Poland is at the moment 90 kg N/ha), which definitely will be not beneficial for the conservation goals of Natura 2000 sites.

Slovakia

Most of the activities related to preparing for the establishment of Natura 2000 have relied on support from foreign sources, as funds made available from the state budget were entirely inadequate for the task. Initial activities were based on existing data and additional inventories developed through the Dutch-supported project enti-

tled “Establishment of Natura 2000 in Slovakia”. Together with the implementation of Natura 2000, projects on specific habitat sites, such as the peatlands project (supported by the Danish government) and the grasslands project (supported by the Dutch government and GEF) have significantly boosted conservation activities in Slovakia.

In 2004, a positive sign was the increase of support available for compensation measures (from 10 million SKK [0.24 million EUR] to 100 million SKK [2.47 million EUR], but this amount is still insufficient for compensation. For the future, the most important factor will be that the Ministry of the Environment together with the State Nature Conservancy have a clear strategy regarding how to use EU funding sources and match these with domestic sources in order to ensure effective nature protection in Slovakia. Support from the EU sources is not sufficient in isolation and only in combination with national sources can it be most effective.

Slovenia

At the moment there is no financial system that would properly address the Natura 2000 network. There are small funds available for the work of NGOs, but these are insufficient for serious and widespread work.



Viera Stanova

10. Financial instruments (sources of financing and types of land use)

Czech Republic

In the 2005–2006 financial perspective, the adaptation of the existing national programmes and instruments for the financing of Natura 2000 is expected to cover:

- the majority of the small-scale biotopes under the Ministry of the Environment's "Welfare of the Landscape" programme;
- while on the larger scale meadows will be covered by Agri-environment Measures managed by the Ministry of Agriculture.

Evaluation of the breakdown of future funding sources is supposed to be 90% national funds and 10% EU funds.

Estonia

Natura 2000 is mentioned in the general introduction to the draft Rural Development Plan, but there is no mention of specific financial measures connected with this. With regard to Less Favoured Areas measures, it is said that the relevant Natura 2000 sub-measure will not be started until the next programming period (after 2006).

Hungary

Currently in Hungary the only available, but not dedicated for Natura 2000, source of financing are Agri-environment Programmes.

Latvia

LIFE Nature has been the most important tool for nature conservation in Latvia since 2000. Projects which are submitted for financing from LIFE Nature should promote implementation of Birds and Habitats Directives and especially management of Natura 2000 sites. For the time being, there are 12 LIFE Nature projects that are either finished or being implemented.

The importance of EU structural funds such as the European Regional Development Fund and European

Natura 2000 financing system	Sources of financing	Percent [EU/national]	Types of land use or sites which dominate under mentioned financial instruments (if any)
ESTONIA			
Agri-Environment Programme	EU/national	no data	Agricultural land
State programme on Natura 2000 network	no data	no data	no data
HUNGARY			
The National Rural Development Plan (NRDP)	EU/national	80/20	Agricultural land, forests, waters
LATVIA			
State budget for functions of SPNTs administrations	National	0/100	Territory of 3 National Parks, 4 Strict Nature Reserves and Biosphere Reserve
State budget for management activities of Nature Protection Board	National	0/100	Development of management plans and management of protected areas (all habitat types)
LIFE Nature	EU/national	50/50 to 75/25	All habitat types within Natura 2000 sites
Rural Development Plan for Latvia – Preservation of Biodiversity in Grasslands	EU	100/0	Agricultural land, biologically valuable grasslands
– Less-favoured areas and areas with environmental restrictions	EU	100/0	Agricultural land within Natura 2000 territories
Single Programming Document – Measure: Improvement of Environmental Infrastructure and Tourism	EU/national	70/30	SPNTs, potential Natura 2000 territories
Latvian Environmental Protection Fund	National	0/100	SPNTs, potential Natura 2000 territories
LITHUANIA			
Structural Funds	EU	no data	Forest, agricultural land
Rural Development Program under RDF	EU	no data	Agriculture
POLAND			
Agri-environment Programme	EU/National	85/15	Agricultural land
SLOVAKIA			
Act on Nature and Landscape Protection	EU/national	depends on financial contribution	Different protected areas
Rural Development Plan	EU/national	100/0	Agricultural land, forests
Sectoral Operational Programme: Basic Infrastructure	EU/national	up to 75/25	Different protected areas
Sectoral Operational Programme: Agriculture and Rural Development	EU/national	50/50 to 100/0	Agricultural land, forests
Sectoral Operational Programme: Industry and Customs	EU/national	depends on measure	Different infrastructures within protected areas
LIFE Nature projects	EU/national	50/50 to 75/25	Natura 2000 sites
SLOVENIA			
Slovene Agri-environment Programme	National	0/100	Agricultural land
LIFE Nature III	EU/national	50/50 to 75/25	Agricultural land
Structural funds	EU/national	50/50 to 75/25	Agricultural land



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Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund has increased since Latvia became a member of EU.

The measure for Less-Favoured Areas and Areas with Environmental Restrictions are implemented since 2005. The sub-measure for Areas with Environmental Restrictions shall be implemented from 2005 upon the approval of Natura 2000 sites by the Cabinet of Ministers and creation of maps of those areas in a digitalised format.

The support from the SPD measure “Improvement of Environmental Infrastructure and Tourism” is also intended at promotion of nature tourism activities

including development of eco-tourism facilities in the Natura 2000 sites. But nevertheless there is demand for a financial instrument to ensure sustainable management of forest areas within Natura 2000 territories.

Lithuania

Lithuania has not yet co-financed Natura 2000 projects. Authorities can give money for the administration of protected areas from the state budget, and Natura 2000 is among the activities that can be financed, but there is no specific funding targeted just at Natura 2000.

Poland

No special financing instrument is planned in the Rural Development Plan for 2004–2006, only the possibility for farmers to apply for 20% additional payments for implementation of AEMs in Natura 2000 sites.

Slovakia

According to the Act on Nature and Landscape Protection, owners can obtain a financial contribution from the state budget if they maintain or enrich a part of the landscape that is not possible to enrich via common cultivation; or maintain buildings or underground premises created by a human activity if these buildings or premises are necessary for the protection of protected animals associated with them. According to this Act, the owners of the lands are obliged to obtain compensation for restriction of common cultivation. Amount of finances are changing annually.

Slovenia

In general there is no financing system exclusively dealing with Natura 2000. In some cases applications for financing can be more successful if they are prepared for Natura 2000 sites.

11. Financial instruments (beneficiaries, amount of support and special conditions)

Czech Republic

For 2005–2006, the issue is to be clarified on the basis of discussions and adjustments between the Ministries of Environment, Agriculture, Finance and Local Development, as well as between the respective users and owners of land (as stakeholders). For the period 2007–2013, the specification of Natura 2000 financing ought to be outlined in the EC regulation which was being discussed within the EU Member States (Council regulation on support for rural development by the European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development).

Estonia

The Rural Development Plan provides support for management of semi-natural grasslands and valuable landscapes, establishment of "feeding fields" for some migratory birds, protection of endangered amphibians and the establishment of small wetlands. Some activities in the national Natura 2000 implementation programme are co-financed through the PHARE national programme (0.8 Million EUR in 2001 for a twinning project with Finland). There is a plan to include some agri-environment measures in the Rural Development Plan with 15% "stimulus" financing for activities occurring in Natura 2000 sites (i.e. nature-friendly management, organic agriculture, maintenance of traditional stone fences, and management of semi-natural grasslands).

Hungary

Currently the only source of financing could be the National Rural Development Plan, but at the time of writing the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development had not started to pay subsidies and submitted a proposal to the European Commission to amend the NRDP and to reallocate 20% of the budget of the National Rural Development Plan towards complementary national direct payments. The Hungarian government proposes to introduce non-targeted measures (formerly planned to be funded from the national budget) to replace targeted measures aiming at delivering support to specific areas in accordance with the priorities of the European Communities 6th Environmental Action Plan; these targeted measures were crucial in

supporting the implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan for Agriculture, the Birds and Habitats Directives as well as the Water Framework Directive. The proposal submitted fails to consider these environmental impacts and fails to consider the impact in the framework of the planned reallocations for 2005 and 2006.

Latvia

The Latvian Rural Development Plan is a very complicated document even for the experienced reader, thus farmers are generally excluded from studying the plan themselves. The information for farmers was poor and fragmented, because elaboration of the RDP was finished only at the beginning of May 2004. The interest from the farming community was very high; but there was no precise information as to which measures they could apply for and what would be the requirements. As for payments for organic farming and biologically valuable grasslands, these two measures are often confused and farmers are not adequately informed about them. The campaign about applying for the Single Area Payments and LFA Payments was carried out, informing farmers of the requirements for receiving these payments (excluding information about agri-environment measures, which have different requirements). As a result, farmers are more or less informed about how to receive payments for intensive farming, but not informed about other possibilities. In general, information regarding financial instruments for Natura 2000 needs to be seriously improved, with a special focus on local municipalities and landowners.

Lithuania

There is no financial instrument dedicated specifically for Natura 2000 sites. Management programmes and measures for SPAs and pSCIs are expected to be financed from Structural Funds. Agri-environment Measures are supposed to be used for Natura 2000 sites on which agricultural land exists.

Poland

The process of applications for AEMs by farmers to the paying agency started on 1st October 2005. There were no published data at the time of writing on how many

Financial Instruments	Beneficiaries	Support (Euro/ha)	Special conditions of payments
ESTONIA			
Agri-environment Programme: management of semi-natural meadows	Farmers	92	no data
HUNGARY			
NRDP/Agri-Environment	Farmers	50–500	no data
NRDP/LFA	Farmers	10–90	no data
LATVIA			
NRDP - Preservation of Biodiversity in Grasslands	Farmers	138	Support may be granted to the applicant if: - Good Farming Practice is being applied throughout the farm; - they farm biologically valuable grasslands in an area of at least 1 ha, composed of fields not smaller than 0.3 ha in size; - they enter into an agri-environment commitment for the respective area for five years, including the first year of payment approval; - in the case of extensive pasturing: 0.65 to 0.74 animal units per ha biologically valuable grassland; - in the case of late mowing: performed between 10 th July and 10 th September, and the mowed grass shall be removed.
NRDP - Less-favoured areas and Areas with environmental restrictions	Farmers	26–38	Support may be granted to the applicant if: - the beneficiary annually pursues farming activity in at least 1 ha of agricultural land composed of fields not smaller than 0.3 ha; - land is kept in good agricultural condition. In addition beneficiaries applying for support in Less-Favoured Areas shall comply with the following requirements: - Good Farming Practice is being applied throughout the farm; - undertake to pursue their farming activity in a Less-Favoured Area for at least five years from the first payment of a compensatory allowance; - hormone directives 96/22/EEC and 96/23/EEC are respected.
Single Programming Document - Measure: Improvement of Environmental Infrastructure and Tourism	Nature protection services	2004–2006 in total 3 009 281 Euro	The projects must be included in the National Programme and the SPNT must be a proposed Natura 2000 site
LIFE Nature projects	Farmers, forest owners, government nature protection organisations and NGOs	different, depending on project and habitat	Natura 2000 sites
LITHUANIA			
Structural Funds	Protected areas service, other nature conservation agencies	no data	Payments support different SPA and pSCI management programmes
NRDP	Farmers	no data	Agri-environment schemes – grassland management: late mowing of meadows
POLAND			
Agri-Environment Programme	Farmers	20% higher payment for implementation of AEMs	As described in <i>section 9</i>
SLOVAKIA			
Act on Nature and Landscape Protection	Owners of the land	depends on compensation or financial contribution	Written request with calculation
NRDP	Farmers, foresters	depends on measure	Proposed and approved projects (afforestation, forest management AEP, LFA, etc.)
Sectoral Operational Programme: Basic Infrastructure	*State organisations and institutions dealing with the environment	depends on measure	Proposed and approved projects (protection, improvement and regeneration of nature)
Sectoral Operational Programme: Agriculture and Rural Development	Farmers, foresters	depends on measure	Proposed and approved projects (forest management fisheries promoting the adaptation and development of rural areas, etc.)
Sectoral Operational Programme: Industry and Customs	Different stakeholders (state or private institutions, NGOs)	depends on measure	Proposed and approved projects (infrastructure in nature within different measures)
LIFE Nature projects	SNC, other relevant partners dealing with nature protection	no data	Proposed and approved projects
SLOVENIA			
Slovene Agri-Environment Programme	Farmers	84	no

*State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic, Slovak Agency for the Environment, Administration of Slovak Caves, Slovak Environmental Inspection Service



farmers with land located in Natura 2000 sites applied for the 20% bonus payments. In general by 31st December 2004 nearly 4000 farmers in Poland had applied for different measures under the AEP, most of them for the “Organic agriculture” measure. On the end of May 2005 over 8500 farmers applied for AEMs, including 5000 organic farmers.

Slovakia

Owners of the land on Natura 2000 sites are supposed to be paid based on the Act on Nature and Landscape Protection. They just have to submit a written request for calculation and compensation. Farmers and foresters will be paid with resources from the Rural Development Plan and the Sectoral Operational Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development. The Sectoral Operational Programme for Industry and Customs will make resources available for different stakeholders, including NGOs. Activities protecting the environment on Natura

2000 sites will be financed from the Sectoral Operational Programme for Basic Infrastructure. LIFE Nature projects are sources of financing of proposed and approved projects for Natura 2000 sites to be used by SNC.

Slovenia

There is no measure that would specifically target the Natura 2000 sites. Slovene Agri-Environment Programme is implemented in so-called ecologically important areas that cover more than 50% of Slovenia. There is no special additional funding of any measure in the case where land lies in Natura 2000 sites, but there is additional funding if land is in a national park (20%), a regional park (15%) or other protected areas (10%), i.e. Natura 2000 status does not mean that site is “protected” in the strictest sense of the word. Also the management bodies for protected areas which include Natura 2000 sites do not receive any additional financial support because of this inclusion.

12. Adaptation of national nature protection legislation to Natura 2000 network requirements

European Union Directives are legislative acts which do not become part of a national law automatically, but they have to be transposed into relevant national acts. Countries have to decide by themselves which national acts need amendments concerning the Natura 2000 network. In Hungary the process should be improved, whereas in other countries it has been completed quite successfully, or at least is more or less sufficient.



Levente Veszlő

Czech Republic

Just before accession of the Czech Republic to the EU the new Law for Nature and Landscape Protection came into force (from 28th April 2004), in which regulations regarding Natura 2000 were transposed. The critical evaluation of the quality and conformity of this law is dealt with by the NGO Ecological legal service.

The Law for Nature and Landscape Protection lays down the principle that each of the Natura 2000 sites in the Czech Republic must have the category of a "special protected area". In practice this means that if any Natura 2000 site (or part of it) has not yet been awarded this category, it will be imperative to adopt it. In the majority of cases, the lowest status will be awarded – a "natural monument". It is expected that this legislative step will be very complicated and will cause large problems in the nature protection sector.

Estonia

The adaptation of national nature protection legislation to the requirements of the Natura 2000 network is more or less sufficient. The Nature Conservation Act specifying rules of functioning of the Network and protection methods (such as Environmental Impact Assessment) was passed on 21st April 2004 in Parliament.

Hungary

The regulation on the Natura 2000 network entered national legislation in October 2004 as two Governmental Decrees. One Decree includes a definition and regulation of the Natura 2000 sites and their network.

The other, the "Governmental Decree on Environmental Impact Assessment of Plans and Programmes" includes rules on the assessments taking into account the aims of the Natura 2000 network.

Some parts of the legislation were found insufficient:

- the orders do not include the proper designation (corresponding to EU regulation) of the Natura 2000 sites. This gap was foreseen to be solved during the first half of 2005;
- provision of information on the aims and rules of the Natura 2000 network;
- the orders cannot assure the resultant conservation commitments of Natura 2000 conservation tasks;
- there are certain tasks missing from the orders which can assure conservation, calculability, transparency and equality;
- the orders do not include the adequate implementation of the article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

Latvia

The requirements of the Birds and Habitats Directives are transposed into Latvian legislation through:

- The Law on Specially Protected Nature Territories (adopted on 2nd March 1993, with amendments as of 26th October 2004);

- The Law on Protection of Species and Habitats (adopted on 16th March 2000);
- Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers “On the List of Specially Protected Species and Species with Exploitation Limits” (adopted on 14th November 2000);
- Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers “on Establishment, Protection and Management of Micro-reserves” (adopted on 30th January 2001);
- Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers “On Recompensing Damage for Spoiling or Destroying Individuals or Specially Protected Species or Habitats” (adopted on 13th March 2001);
- Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers “On the List of Specially Protected Habitats” (adopted on 5th December 2000);
- Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers on “Criteria for Selecting Sites Eligible for Identification as Sites of Community Importance (Natura 2000) in Latvia” (adopted on 28th May 2002).

The requirements of the EU Directives are also incorporated in the national legislation on hunting, fishery and forestry.

Lithuania

The Law on Protected Areas contained the main requirements for designation and implementation of Natura 2000, but SPAs and pSCIs are not defined in separate categories of protected areas. A Governmental Decision and Order of the Minister of the Environment set the main requirements for the preparation and implementation of management plans for Natura 2000.

The Law on Protected Animal, Plant and Fungal species and communities sets out the main requirements for species protection. There is a national list and a list of EU protected species. The problem is that the legal acts (Governmental Decision or Ministerial Order) which should ensure *in situ* conservation had not yet been prepared at the time of writing. It is necessary to prepare practical and legally binding mechanisms (as required by the Habitats Directive, Art. 12, Annex IV).

The National Master Plan has been prepared and the County and Municipality Master Plans are being prepared. They are defined under the Law of Spatial



Planning as obligatory planning documents. Unfortunately the potential Natura 2000 sites (SPAs, pSCIs) were not included in the national plan, which means that the resulting county and municipality plans will not include Natura 2000 sites. In conclusion, spatial plans for protected areas are contradicting the protection requirements of Natura 2000 sites.

Poland

The Birds and Habitats Directives have been transposed into Polish legislation, mainly into the Nature Conservation Act, which came into force on 1st May 2004. Legally speaking, the two types of Natura 2000 sites, i.e. SPAs and SACs, are defined as distinct forms of nature conservation, independent of other forms.

However, problems may occur since the Polish system of Natura 2000 management is not very clear. Many questions arise after reading the Nature Conservation Act: e.g. how management is related to supervision; who is responsible for monitoring; who is responsible for obtaining funds for protection of Natura 2000 sites, etc.

The article of the Nature Conservation Act concerning the role of local authorities (communes) in the Natura 2000 designation and management process was widely discussed, as there is an obligation that management plans of designated areas are agreed with communes. Communes may force solutions which are better for them from the economic point of view, which may in many cases lead to solutions which are harmful for nature. It also may not be the case, as communes may understand that Natura 2000 can be beneficial for them, e.g. as a factor which supports sustainable activities such as tourism.

Article 6 of the Habitats Directive states that all plans or projects that may have a significant effect on Natura 2000 sites must be appropriately assessed. Such a regulation is included in the Nature Conservation Act, but as for detailed conditions on how such an assessment should be realised, it refers to existing Environmental Law. Article 6 of the Habitats Directive also says that public opinion on investment which may have impact on a Natura 2000 site should be taken into account. The Nature Conservation Act only allows for communes' opinions to be taken into account, but surely this cannot be treated as public opinion. Thus there is no place allowed for the opinions of NGOs or individuals.

The Nature Conservation Act gives a clear deadline on creating management plans for Natura 2000 sites, i.e. 5 years from the moment of national designation. On 30th March 2005 a Ministerial Decree announced a course of action and the scope of the Natura 2000 management plans. Since legislation is weak concerning ecological corridors, potentially very fruitful results can be achieved in the above-mentioned project aimed at developing ecological corridors. One result of that project is a detailed proposal of changes to be incorporated into Polish legislation related to nature protection (such as the National Development Plan, the Nature Conservation Act, the Environmental Protection Law, the Water Law and others).

Slovakia

The transposition of the Habitats Directive into national legislation seems to be sufficient. A new Act on Nature and Landscape Protection was prepared and approved by the government in 2002 and this transposed both Directives into national legislation. The Act entered into force in January 2003 and a binding regulation was approved a few months later in the middle of 2003. Since the Act's entry into force, a few gaps have been observed, but as a whole the Act is more or less sufficient.

There may be some misunderstanding connected with new obligations for investors and with regard to provisions for Environmental Impact Assessments.

There are important discrepancies regarding two important acts – the Act on Nature and Landscape Protection (more oriented towards management and conservation of forests) and the Act on Forests (different management goals and tools, strongly oriented toward economically profitable management of forests). A new Act on Forests was due to be prepared in 2004, but is still awaited.

This is also the case with the Act on Environmental Impact Assessments, where the Article 6 of the Habitats Directive is yet to be transposed. This Act was due to be approved in 2004.

Slovenia

All key elements were adopted in Slovene legislation so that there are enough legal elements for nature protection.

13. Assessment of awareness and understanding of Natura 2000 among key stakeholders

The Natura 2000 network is not just a scientific concept, but a practical nature conservation tool which should be harmonised with the national economy and with human activities. In order for the Natura 2000 network to be accepted among stakeholders, they first need to have good understanding of the whole idea. An awareness-raising campaign is an important tool while designating sites, but even more so when managing them. Levels of awareness leave a lot to be desired in most countries, although in Estonia it seems to be more or less sufficient.

Czech Republic

Pre-negotiation with the key stakeholders started in spring 2004 under the leadership of different Directorates of Protected Landscape Areas within the delimited territories. It was doubtless too late but the stakeholders expressed interest and responsibility regarding Natura 2000. Most apprehensive were the foresters who raised most objections, less objections were raised by farmers and even less from hunters (contrary to expectations). Generally if stakeholders formed negative positions before the pre-negotiation meeting, it was very difficult (or impossible) to change their opinion. Officials at regional and local levels regretted getting involved so late but their role will be sufficiently optimised in future, all being well.

Other ways NGOs participated included:

- direct active engagement with the public (information brochures, exhibitions, discussion meetings, etc);
- the "Coalition for Natura 2000", made up of ecological NGOs, organised special seminars, meetings and negotiations (4 times during the year);
- the NGOs Arnika and the Czech Society of Ornithology are preparing to address their complaints to the European Commission, motivated by the exclusion of some pSCIs by the Czech government and also generally to complain about the legislative faults in applying of Natura 2000 rules to Czech nature protection law.

Estonia

In general awareness and understanding of Natura 2000 among key stakeholders has not been very high. Also it is hard to assess and give just one evaluation

mark, because the group of stakeholders is very diverse. For example there are no serious conflicts with hunters after Estonia gained exemptions concerning the hunting of wolves and beavers. There are a few conflicts in the fisheries sector caused by designation of Natura 2000 areas, connected with the damages caused by seals to fishing gear and fish stock. The system of compensating such damages is still not sufficient. No targeted communications programme has been undertaken during the last phase of site designation in 2003–2004. Items on Natura 2000 have appeared in national and local newspapers, TV and radio interviews. Numerous leaflets and posters have been published and two video films were produced featuring Natura 2000 habitat types and several books have been published. Natura 2000 information days were held with the support of the Baltic Environmental Forum in 2000–2001. The indicative boundaries of the sites have been available at the Ministry of the Environment's website.

There has been too little co-operation with ministries other than the Ministry of Agriculture, despite the fact that the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication are important decision-makers and stakeholders who should be involved. The co-operation between the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture has focused on development of the Rural Development Plan, the benefits of which are presently unclear for Natura 2000 sites.

The co-operation between the Ministry of the Environment and different stakeholders (other Ministries, state agencies, academic institutions, NGOs) should be improved, which will considerably facilitate future work, such as designation and management of the sites, as well as successful communication.

Hungary

Local communities were informed of the Natura 2000 network, the designation process, the proposed sites, the reasons and aims and their possible future benefits mainly by the so-called "NGO Natura 2000 coalition" of NGOs (CEEWEB, MME/BirdLife Hungary, the National

Society of Conservationists and WWF). MME/BirdLife Hungary organised a travelling exhibition, published information materials and held media events. CEEWEB and NSC organised workshops for municipalities. During 2004, the NGO coalition published leaflets for farmers and a series of local information forums for stakeholders, with the support of the Ministry of the Environment and Water. However, the overall understanding of Natura 2000 among key stakeholders is still very weak and much more awareness should be raised. One of the key problems is the uncertainty of financing.

Latvia

There were several activities performed to raise the level of understanding of Natura 2000 among key stakeholders, such as the publication and distribution of booklets for landowners to describe the implications and benefits of the Natura 2000 network; also several articles devoted to the Natura 2000 process were published in local and regional newspapers. But there are still many objections about the designation of SPNTs: the main reason is absence of legislation on landowner's rights to receive compensation for the legal restrictions established in Specially Protected Nature Territories. Generally, forest owners are less enthusiastic about site designation than farmers and owners of agricultural land, mostly because of the lack of state or EU support for Natura 2000 territories in forests. Hunters share the opinion of forest owners because some rules introduced in the Birds Directive prohibit old hunting traditions i.e. woodcock hunting at spring. Farmers are more enthusiastic because they foresee adequate support payments from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (envisaged by the Rural Development Plan). In general, communication regarding Natura 2000 still needs to be improved, with a special focus on local municipalities and landowners.

Lithuania

Awareness and understanding of Natura 2000 differ between stakeholders. The Ministry of the Environment and its agencies obviously have a good level of awareness; the Ministry of Agriculture staff are less aware, but it is more or less sufficient.

Governmental organisations and agencies of development sectors (transport, economy, energy, etc.) are not sufficiently aware of Natura 2000; regional and local administrations are even less aware (except in the ecology sector in the municipalities). National-level

forest owners, landowners or farmers, hunting and fisheries unions/organisations are quite well-aware and informed. But at the regional and local level, organisations are much less informed and awareness is not sufficient. Grassroots organisations, individual landowners or users are insufficiently aware, except in areas where pilot projects have been carried out on Natura 2000 requirements.

Poland

In general, awareness and understanding of Natura 2000 among key stakeholders is very low. There was no comprehensive information campaign on Natura 2000 for the public and for local stakeholders. Some information materials were presented to a limited number of recipients. The Ministry of the Environment prepared a few brochures from which only the one entitled "The Natura 2000 network. 10 questions – 10 answers" is a good example, presenting in a "user-friendly" and exhaustive manner the main goals of the network. There were also some other materials prepared, such as a film on CD and maps presenting the network. An internet page was still under construction and the time of writing.

Obtaining reliable and up-to-date information is difficult. Awareness is particularly low concerning farmers; many may not be aware if their farm was even located inside a Natura 2000 site and are more concerned regarding possibilities of receiving 20% more compensation via Agri-environment Measures. Often, opinion is negative and Natura 2000 is treated as a "limitation of development" because of the limited efforts to fully inform stakeholders. Even local administrations of some areas protested against designation of Natura 2000 sites within their territory, so that afterwards farmers were disappointed that they "could not apply for 20% more money". A similar opinion is shared by the most influential farmers' unions and some political parties dominant in rural areas. Fishermen have a similar opinion, but these are harder to convince because there are no direct financial measures supporting them to develop sustainable fisheries consistent with protection goals of Natura 2000 sites, although they and their target fish populations will benefit from nature protection in the longer term.

The critically low awareness of local administration authorities is very disturbing; these are often not informed of the goals of the network and possible limitations of landuse and development opportunities. This caused them to be decisively opposed to the implementation of the network and will probably cause further complications in the future.

The most worrying fact showing low awareness about Natura 2000 network is that even some nature protection authorities are not very aware of its rules and even have a negative attitude towards it. Moreover, in many cases scientists working on protection of certain species and habitats, do not have knowledge of the specific rules of Natura 2000. Linked to this, the scientific capacity to be utilised in the implementation phase of the network is also relatively low and should be boosted. Taking into consideration that many activities (such as inventories and management plans) have been postponed, these factors could cause real problems in achieving such ambitious goals in the future.

While some environmental NGOs were involved in the process and were invited to Voivodship (Regional) Working Groups and supported the Natura 2000 network with data, lobbying and promoting, some NGOs (mostly rural development NGOs or Civil Society Organisations) were never invited or even officially informed about the process.

Slovakia

The Ministry of the Environment together with the State Nature Conservancy and several other organisations and NGOs have prepared several information brochures as well as a series of conferences and seminars focussing on Natura 2000.

At the national level, national conferences have been organised on Natura 2000 (three for experts and one for stakeholders) and four types of brochures have been disseminated to the public. However, Natura 2000 has been insufficiently explained in the national media, especially regarding its implications. Efforts to prevent misunderstandings and fears have not had the necessary effect.

At the local level, the most important awareness-raising activities have been the meetings held during the preparation phases in the proposed protected areas. These meetings provided an opportunity to explain in



detail the reasons for and implications of the Natura 2000 network, as well as potential opportunities and benefits. Unfortunately, not all protected area administrations used these opportunities optimally.

Because all these opportunities were not used properly, a lot of misunderstandings still exist among stakeholders. This varies from extreme anti-Natura 2000 feelings due to incorrect information to positive feelings for Natura 2000. Among the stakeholders, those against Natura 2000 are investors, foresters and hunters, while on the other side we can find more and more farmers and a few investors who understand

properly the philosophy of Natura 2000 and its potential for developing sustainable tourism.

Slovenia

The majority of stakeholders does not know and understand the aim and meaning of the Natura 2000 network. There were efforts to communicate the importance and especially the need for Natura 2000 sites. This is one of the major needs to be addressed in the future. Only with support of stakeholders, especially at the local level, will the Natura 2000 network be successful.

14. Useful links:

Czech Republic

The Ministry of the Environment
<http://www.natura2000.cz>

Veronica Ecological Institute
<http://www.veronica.cz>
 information on "priority list"

Estonia

Maps of the pre-selected and finally selected sites
<http://maps.ekk.ee/natura>

The Ministry of the Environment
<http://www.envir.ee>

Hungary

The Ministry of the Environment and Water
<http://www.kvvm.hu>

MME/BirdLife Hungary
<http://www.mme.hu>

National Society of Conservationists
<http://www.mtvsz.hu>

WWF Hungary
<http://www.wwf.hu>

Latvia

The Ministry of the Environment
<http://www.vidm.gov.lv/vad/English/natura.htm>

The Nature Protection Board
<http://www.dap.gov.lv>

Informative system of Latvian Environmental Agency
<http://vdc2.vdc.lv:8998/iadt.html>

Lithuania

State Service for Protected Areas
<http://www.vstt.lt>

Lithuanian Ornithological Society
<http://www.birdlife.lt>

Lithuanian Fund for Nature
<http://www.glis.lt>

Poland

Natura 2000 in Poland (The Ministry of the Environment)

<http://www.mos.gov.pl/natura2000>

The Ministry of the Environment
http://www.mos.gov.pl/1strony_tematyczne/natura2000
http://www.mos.gov.pl/1strony_tematyczne/natura2000/broszura/eng.shtml

WWF-Poland
http://www.wwf.pl/informacje/publikacje_natura.php

The Naturalist Club
<http://www.lkp.org.pl/n2k>

"Salamandra" – The Polish Society for Nature Protection
<http://www.salamandra.org.pl/Natura2000>

Institute for Nature Protection, Polish Academy of Sciences
<http://www.iop.krakow.pl/natura2000>

Odra River Atlas (Natura 2000 in Odra River Valley)
<http://atlas.odra.org.pl>

Slovakia

State Nature Conservancy
<http://www.sopsr.sk>

The Ministry of the Environment
<http://www.enviro.gov.sk>

Society for Birds Protection in Slovakia
<http://www.sovs.sk>

Daphne Institute of Applied Ecology
<http://www.daphne.sk>

Slovenia

Natura 2000 in Slovenia
<http://www.natura2000.gov.si>

The Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning
http://www.gov.si/mop/podrocja/uradzaokolje_sektor-varstvonarave/projekti/natura2000

Abbreviations and acronyms

AEMs – Agri-environment Measures

AEPs – Agri-environment Programmes

CEEWEB – the Central and East European Working Group for the Enhancement of Biodiversity

CORINE – Co-ordination of Information on the Environment (information system on nature, co-ordinated by the European Environmental Agency)

ERDF – the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

EAGGF – the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund

ECONET – European Ecological Network

EMERALD – ecological network made up of “areas of special conservation interest”, launched by the Council of Europe as part of its work under the Bern Convention

ERDF – European Regional Development Fund

EU – European Union

GEF – Global Environment Facility

GIS – Geographical Information Systems

HELCOM – the Helsinki Commission, the governing body of the "Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area" (Helsinki Convention)

IBA – Important Bird Area

LEPF – Latvian Environmental Protection Fund

LFA – Less Favoured Area

LIFE – the Financial Instrument for the Environment

LIFE Nature – part of LIFE, used to conserve natural habitats and the wild fauna and flora of European Union interest

MoE – the Ministry of the Environment

NGO – non-governmental organisation(s)

NPK – nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium (in relation to fertilisers)

(N)RDP – (National) Rural Development Plan

NSC – National Society of Conservationists (Hungary)

PEEN – the Pan-European Ecological Network

PHARE – pre-accession instruments financed by the European Union to assist the applicant countries of Central and Eastern Europe in their preparations for joining the European Union

RDF – Rural Development Fund

RSPB – Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

(p)SCI – (proposed) Site of Community Importance (the Habitats Directive)

SDF – Standard Data Form

SNC – State Nature Conservancy

SPA – Special Protection Areas (the Birds Directive)

SPD – Single Programming Document

SPNT – Specially Protected Nature Territory

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

WWF – World Wildlife Fund

IUCN – THE WORLD CONSERVATION UNION

Founded in 1948, The World Conservation Union brings together states, government agencies, and a diverse range of non-governmental organisations in a unique worldwide partnership; over 1000 members in all, spread across some 140 countries.

As a union, IUCN seeks to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.

The World Conservation Union builds on the strengths of its members, networks and partners to enhance their capacity and to support global alliances to safeguard natural resources at local, regional and global levels.

EUROPEAN PROGRAMME 2005–2008

The IUCN European Programme mission is to contribute to a sustainable Europe by influencing policy development and implementation for biodiversity and landscape conservation, restoration and sustainable use inside and outside Europe. In practical terms, the mission translates into the following objectives:

Supporting the Union in Europe and the EU – Improved support framework for the global work of IUCN through the EU and other European partners; improved European membership services, including capacity building

Understanding the main drivers of biodiversity change – Improved knowledge of biodiversity change and effective conservation measures at landscape, ecosystem, habitat and species levels

Financing nature conservation – Efficient incentive frameworks for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use are available and understood

Linking education, science, policy and practice – National and supranational (EU) policies, multilateral agreements, processes and institutions are more supportive of biodiversity conservation and ecologically sustainable use

Managing our natural heritage – Ecosystems are managed in a sustainable manner, reconciling social, economic and biodiversity objectives

The European Programme seeks to make IUCN's voice heard through providing authoritative information and policy products, whilst applying the expertise in the European constituency of IUCN. These will be the result of integrating the diverse expertise of the Commissions, members and the worldwide IUCN secretariat to address the key drivers of biodiversity loss. The IUCN European Programme provides the platform for bringing the expertise together, coordinating development of the products and obtaining financial resources.

Countdown 2010

'Countdown 2010' is an initiative of IUCN, its members and partners to raise awareness on biodiversity and to monitor the progress of a unique political commitment by all EU heads of State, and the pan-European Environment Ministers to 'halt the loss of biodiversity in Europe by 2010'. This ambitious goal forms a part of the EU Sustainability Strategy, and was reinforced by the 5th Environment for Europe conference in 2003.

The IUCN Programme Office for Central Europe – current fields of activities

The IUCN Programme Office in Warsaw has a ten years experience in providing information on current topics related to biodiversity management. The office's expertise in compiling and disseminating information to key societal actors currently serves four major fields of activities:

- Ecological Networks – development of the ecological network in Ukraine. Uniting world experience to support a Global ECONET. Working together with stakeholders to support implementation of Natura 2000 network in the New Member States
- Agriculture – integrating environmental and consumer organisations of the CE region into the discussion of the European agricultural policy reform, and Integrating biodiversity protection concerns into the development of rural areas by linking instruments of the future Natura 2000 sites with Rural Development Plans in the CE region
- Forestry – raising awareness and building capacity among private forest owners in the CE region, developing nature conservation guidelines for afforestation projects
- Fishery – sustainable management of fresh-water fisheries in 19 countries of Central and Eastern Europe

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