NGO views on the biogeographic management process
Lessons learnt and recommendations for the future
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What is the role of the background document and the final seminar document?

Preparing and commenting the Background document requires significant effort from all participants. However during the pilot boreal seminar there wasn’t a strong link established between the Background document and the outcomes of the seminar: the discussions during the preparatory meeting and the draft seminar document both don’t consistently build on the Background document. Therefore it is questionable if this effort is justified if the sole role of the document is being adopted as a “background document”. At the moment it is still unclear what shell be the status and use of the final seminar document.

Suggestion for solution:
1. The **background document** should
   - provide an overall assessment on the status, ideal management and actual management of the habitats and associated species in the region and member states and
   - based on this information, identify the main management problems and deficiencies
2. The **preparatory workshop** should
   - discuss and verify these problems and make a first attempt to suggest solutions
3. The **final seminar document** should
   - identify and agree the solutions to these problems including an indicative action plan and timeframe.
   - The document should be **adopted** by the participants of the seminar and **published** on the Commission website.

Further suggestions:
There is limited time for discussion in the meetings. Therefore it would be good to work out the background document as well as the seminar document to sufficient detail before the meetings and leave only the contested issues for discussion in the meetings.

On the final seminar document:
- The outcome has to be sufficiently detailed (e.g. level comparable to boreal seminar background document). If conclusions are too general, than this means that lot of the preparatory work was useless and stakeholder will loose interest in inputting in the process.
- The level of ambition of proposed solutions and actions should be relevant for the identified problem to maintain credibility of the whole process
- The main solutions and actions should include policy relevant issues (e.g. questions of financing) as well as more practical, scientific, technical issues, as well as both are relevant and needed to improve conservation status.
- The results should have direct relevance (input into) the design of PAFs, CAP and other funding schemes and design of policy documents (national biodiversity strategies etc.)
  The level of detail each seminar document provides on this aspect will largely determine the relevance of the biogeographic process
- The seminar should adopt the seminar document.

What is the link between habitat selection and final outcomes?
During the boreal process it didn't become clear how the final results relate back to the originally selected habitats (and species). E.g if the seminar identifies some conclusions and actions for a habitat group, will these conclusions and actions be relevant for only some of the identified habitats, for all of them or even for the rest of the non-included habitats of the same group?

Further actions and networking
Networking, exchange of experience and training are important. Creating a permanent platform to facilitate exchange of knowledge, experience and positions is a good idea as this could be very helpful for example for development of agri-environmental schemes, LIFE projects etc. and support efforts for CAP (and other policy) reforms.
However there is a limit of resources and capacity at all stakeholders to lead and participate in such follow-up actions. E.g. exchange and training cannot be the main solution for all identified management problems. This should be restricted to problems where a significant lack of knowledge prevails (e.g. knowledge on what is FCS) and not to be used to postpone action where the knowledge is already there (e.g. lack of management plans).

Further specific general points
- preservation of FCS of already existing (natural) sites (both inside and outside N2K network) should always be preferred to the combination of degradation of existing habitats and intensive restoration activities afterwards or at the same time within other sites
- Generalizations and recommendations over regions (e.g. taking over typical management issues of the Atlantic region for the continental) need to be avoided
- Future seminar rounds should discuss biogeo level conservation objectives and favorable reference values
- The seminar process so far is not adequate to discuss species management: many N2K species occur in habitats not in the Annexes, or use mosaic of habitats. There are overlaps between requirements for habitats and species but not always.
- By taking a species approach special aspects, such as maintaining mosaics could be tackled. As it is now, the seminar process is not adequate to discuss how to manage and maintain mosaics of habitats.
- As a minimum, the next atlantic seminar should point out if the identified management issues (needs and solutions) are representative for the associated species or not and point out if there is a need to further discuss species management separately.