better management
of natura 2000 sites

Gap Analysis

Results and perspectives

Jointly for our common future
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SEE countries are currently at different levels of the application of Directive 92/43/EEC and thus of the implementation Natura 2000 sites network.

BeNatur project aims therefore at the better management and implementation of Natura 2000 sites in the SEE eco-regions. The exchange of knowledge and best practices within the project consortium is the basis for the definition of a Transnational Joint Strategy, and the elaboration of Joint Transnational Action Plans for the conservation of species and habitats common to the partner areas. These steps comprise a crucial pillar in the advancement of concrete implementation of the EU legislative framework.

At the core of the project is the identification and definition of gaps in the implementation and management structures of the project partners. The instrument for the assessment of these gaps is a comprehensive gap analysis. Initially a technique for the assessment of gaps in the field of nature conservation, a broader approach is used within BeNatur project framework.

A questionnaire was developed, serving as the main tool for the assessment of gaps in the field of legal procedures and institutional frameworks, management and organisation, ecological and socioeconomic state. Every part was complemented by best and bad practice examples respectively to facilitate the exchange of individual experiences and to build an extensive knowledge base.

Finally, a total of 11 questionnaires from 7 countries (Austria [1], Bulgaria [1], Greece [1], Hungary [2], Italy [3], Romania [2], Serbia [1]) was analysed.
The legal implementation process of Natura 2000 sites is finished throughout all EU-member states, but there are still several deficits. Implementation is done either on the level of federal states and provinces or on national level in some countries.

Handling Impact Assessments (IA) of plans and projects at a national level is the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment or similar governmental institutions in most cases.

Focusing on local responsibilities, there are only authorities in Austria, Romania, Greece and Veneto Region in Italy. The integration of local stakeholders as part of the governance system is only established insufficiently in most countries.
Legal and institutional frameworks

Gaps

• The designation process of sites was often carried out by local authorities without having the adequate technical, ecological and economical background.

• Missing national legislative competences lead to different implementations and regulations in the provinces when federal legislative structures are given.

• There is no legally defined involvement of relevant stakeholders at national, regional and local levels.

• No sufficient integration of impact assessment into legislation.

• Lack of experience exchange regarding implementation.

Recommendations

• Revise the selected Natura 2000 sites and check, if all relevant sites have been nominated.

• Coordinate the legal implementation within the federal states or provinces.

• Define the involvement of all relevant stakeholders at national, regional and local levels explicitly by law.

• Integrate impact assessment legally.

• Promote experience exchange regarding the implementation of impact assessments.
Management plans are important instruments to reach and preserve the favourable state of endangered species and habitats in the Natura 2000 network. These plans should comprise the actual status of all species and habitats and outline necessary measures and actions to prevent deterioration of their status as well. There are management plans available in all EU-member states, but it is still a long way to their comprehensive implementation.

An indispensable prerequisite for a sound management is the involvement of all relevant stakeholder groups. This is not only of importance in view of their crucial role as the main actors in today’s land use but also as relevant partners regarding awareness and acceptance of biodiversity values.
## Management and organisational structures

### Gaps

- Many Natura 2000 sites are managed without local managers and/or there are no organisational structures ensuring supervision, training and knowledge transfer between the managers.

- There is a lack of specialists regarding Natura 2000 management and specific training and education in this field. Competent, trained people to coordinate activities and knowledge exchange between different authorities responsible for Natura 2000 management are missing.

- Almost no mechanisms are available to evaluate the effectiveness of management on the national and regional level.

### Recommendations

- Provide Natura 2000 specific training for site managers and administrative bodies.

- Establishing a Natura 2000 centre of excellence for every EU-member state with a transnational funding approach. Create standards for uniform development of management plans and quality management.

- Develop concepts and mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of the management on a regular basis as a result indicator. Implement a tracking tool of the management planning process (Status: not available, in preparation, implementation, evaluation, in revision) as a performance indicator on the national/international level.
Ecological assessment

For the majority of the EU-member states monitoring concepts are already available for most of the species and habitat groups and have been implemented to a certain extent. National programmes for the coordination of activities in Natura 2000 sites would contribute significantly to the favorable state of species and habitats.

Number and quality of research programmes on species and habitat groups vary considerably. The popularity of particular species or habitat groups results in an overrepresentation of some groups and in a lack of data for others. The number of implemented concrete protection measures shows a high variety due to the fact that administration in some countries is still in the process of nomination and designation.
Ecological assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gaps</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information in the standard data forms does not correspond to the</td>
<td>Develop new monitoring concepts that facilitate an evaluation of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative data on species and habitats is rare.</td>
<td>on the European level to elaborate a cost efficient sampling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing coordination between site administrations</td>
<td>design and a reduced set of significant indicators.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitoring concepts are only implemented in few sites.</td>
<td>Programmes on the national level to coordinate activities in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a lack of national programmes and projects or they are not</td>
<td>Natura 2000 sites.</td>
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<tr>
<td>communicated effectively.</td>
<td>Enhance exchange on methodological approaches in monitoring and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the projects are focussing on the protection of birds,</td>
<td>management on international and national level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>followed by mammals (without bats). For amphibians and reptiles,</td>
<td>Implement the monitoring concepts on all species groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>invertebrates and bats only few projects are implemented.</td>
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Costs and financial gaps

The costs of effectively managing Natura 2000 sites has been estimated by the European Commission to amount to about EUR 5.8 bn per year. Benefits are roughly EUR 200 to 300 bn per year resulting from conserving the natural capital providing a broad range of vital ecosystem services to the European societies and economies. Financial gaps are evident in the current survey of partner regions in the BeNatur project.

The European Commission estimates that – on a very broad average over all types of ecosystems – annual management costs for effective biodiversity conservation may come up to about EUR 80 per hectare. An roughly equal amount was also indicated by partner regions as the “needed expenditure” for effective management.

The financial gap analysis indicated that partner regions spend about EUR 15 per hectare; the financial gap is thus around 80%.

However, it becomes apparent that the BeNatur partner regions also had an “informational gap” regarding socio-economics of Natura 2000. A significant number of partners were not able to estimate actual or needed expenditure for effective management, thus suggesting that the institutional and human resource capacities of authorities planning and managing Natura 2000 sites is still weak.

White stork (Ciconia ciconia) at WWF’s Nature Reserve at Marchegg (Austria); the March wetlands are prominent Natura 2000 and RAMSAR sites, financed partially by EU’s LIFE projects, EU’s structural funds, and by sustainable forest management.
Financing Natura 2000

While there is a broad range of potential financial sources available for Natura 2000 sites, partner regions indicated that the funding base is still very limited. This also points to institutional deficits since the application and management of funds also requires sound and firm capacities which seem to lack in partner regions.

All in all, besides public funds (national, European), other sources of funding do not play any major role in financing Natura 2000. Private financing of Natura 2000 sites only has a very limited importance.

Regarding regional economic impacts of Natura 2000 sites, studies found some positive effects on regional development.

However, the survey of the current study indicates that Natura 2000 does not play a major role in regional development besides single, very prominent sites. Again, the lack of substantial support for exploiting the regional economic development opportunities of Natura 2000 sites hinders many regions to benefit from conservation efforts.
Exchange of experiences

Best practice examples provide important insights in the individual experiences of the project partners. In particular, experiences in the fields of management, monitoring, stakeholder involvement, educational activities as well as financing and regional economic development were analyzed.

Examples for progresses in the designation procedure, as well as in the development of management strategies and guidelines resulting in the improvement of protection levels and the state of specific habitats and species showed the variety of possible approaches in management activities.

Stakeholder involvement was achieved by workshops, trained staff and media cooperations. Monitoring systems and associated study work enhanced project results. Educational programmes for different target groups, guidelines and training of guides were described as useful. In accordance with the socioeconomic assessment, almost all partners had difficulties in the provision of successful financing cases.

The project team decided to collect bad practice examples too in order to ensure a maximum learning effect among the partners and beyond. Valuable lessons can be learned, as examples comprise communication problems, lack of appropriate research and education structures in the field of biodiversity and nature preservation.
Due to a lack of personnel with appropriate training skills and a lack of courses and programmes related to Natura 2000 values at university level, a cooperative project has started in the Veneto Region in 2006. Basically, the courses are open to everybody interested in biodiversity, but there are also specifically addressed training modules for authorities and professionals.

In accordance with the broad potential target groups, aims of the courses are manifold: increasing the knowledge on principles and objectives of the Directives, elaboration of evaluation methods of habitats and species, use of specific indicators, application of the methodology of environmental impact assessment as well as distribution of guidelines for the preparation of management plans.

At least two cost free training courses have been organised each year, enjoying great popularity. In addition, there has been a multiplier effect, as other public and private courses are based on the educational materials provided by Veneto Region - Commissions’ Coordination Project Unit.
Project team: successful cooperation

BeNatur team members during a coordination meeting in Mezotur (September 2011)

BeNatur team at a working session in Ravenna (February 2012)
Literature


Kirchmeir H, Köstl T, Zak D, Getzner M (2012) BE-Natur: BEtter management and implementation of NATURa 2000 sites. WP3: Transnational joint strategy and tools for the better management and implementation of Natura 2000 sites. Individuation of gaps in the management and implementation of Natura 2000 sites (gap analysis), Final report, Vienna


Partners

Nimfea – Environment and Nature Conservation Association (LP) (HU)
www.nimfea.hu

Strandja
Nature Park Directorate (BG)
www.strandja.bg

Timis County Council (RO)
www.cjtimis.ro

Province of Ravenna (IT)
www.provincia.ra.it/Argomenti/Europa-e-relazioni-internazionali/
Cooperazione-Territoriale-Europa/Programma-SEE-Sud-Est-
Europa/BE-NATUR

Veneto Region Commissions’ Coordination Project Unit (IT)
www.regione.veneto.it/Ambiente+e+Territorio/Territorio/
Reti+Ecologiche+e+Biodiversità/

Consortium of Management of Torre Guaceto - Brindisi (IT)
www.riservaditorreguaceto.it

DDNI Danube Delta National Institute for Research and Development (RO)
www.ddni.ro

LBDCA Lake Balaton Development Coordination Agency (HU)
www.balatonregion.hu

AREC - Agricultural Research and Education Centre Raumberg-Gumpenstein (AT)
www.raumberg-gumpenstein.at

VIETU Vienna University of Technology, Centre of Public Finance and Infrastructure Policy (AT)
www.tuwien.ac.at

ETANAM - Development Agency for South Epirus - Amvrakikos (GR)
www.etanam.gr

Municipality of Cacak (RS)
www.cacak.org.rs

Associated Partners

University of Klagenfurt – Department of Economics (AT)
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DDBRA
Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority (RO)
www.ddbra.ro

Protect biodiversity
Enjoy the nature
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