

# NATURA 2000 IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE - HOW CAN WE MAKE IT WORK FOR PEOPLE AND THE ECONOMY?

## GENERAL INFORMATION

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A designation of Natura 2000 sites in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries started before the EU enlargement in 2004 and continued ever since. Today, Natura 2000 in 11 CEE countries covers an area of 285 360 km<sup>2</sup>, the equivalent of 24% of all sites in all the 28 Member States.

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS

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The Natura 2000 network provides different socio-economic benefits, such as attracting tourism opportunities, development of local communities, creation of jobs, water purification, flood protection and on climate change mitigation. Natura 2000 sites provide benefits worth between €200 billion to €300 billion annually, hosting between 1.2 million and 2.2 million visitors per day and generating between €5 billion and €9 billion in recreational benefits<sup>1</sup>. We presented several case studies from CEE countries showing multiple benefits of this network for people and the economy in our brochure. For illustration, Igriş Natura 2000 site in Romania hosts numerous habitats and species of high nature value and at the same time it provides drinking water for 2/3 of the population of the municipality of Baia Mare. Slitere National Park and Natura 2000 site in Latvia developed a sustainable tourism management plan thanks to which tourism significantly increased, resulting with visitors spending around €1 million in the park in 2011. The number of companies providing travel services also rose from 23 to 48 after the project, ensuring additional work places. Restoration of the Danube green corridor in Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova and Ukraine brought €500 benefits per hectare per year through flood alleviation services.

## THE PROBLEM

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Despite great efforts taken to set up the network, nature is still subject to major threats hampering implementation of Natura 2000 in CEE, such as a lack of effective financing, of political will, of management plans and a lack of coherence between policies (see [the results of the Fitness Check](#)).

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<sup>1</sup> European Union, 2013, "The economic benefits of the Natura 2000 network", [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/financing/docs/ENV-12-018\\_LR\\_Final1.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/financing/docs/ENV-12-018_LR_Final1.pdf)

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

In order to make sure that the full potential of benefits that Natura 2000 is offering is achieved, we suggest to the governments of CEE countries to pay close attention to the following actions **from the Action Plan for nature, people, and the economy**. Under each action, you may find suggestions on how you can fulfil requirements of the Action Plan, as well as references to best practices, projects and publications. We hope you will find them useful for your future work.

Actions from the Action Plan	What you could do to make it happen?
<p>ACTION 1: Update, develop and actively promote, in all EU languages, guidance on</p> <p>a) site permitting procedures, species protection and management as well as sector-specific guidance;</p> <p>b) integrating ecosystem services into decision-making.</p>	<p>Use the opportunity of having EU guidelines in your language, spread it among all levels of authorities dealing with Natura 2000 as well as other sectors, such as infrastructure, forestry, agriculture, water management, spatial planning, tourism and recreation.</p> <p>Using the guideline developed by the EC and the support provided, include ecosystem services in your decision making processes, see examples on how it can be done (<a href="#">MAES in Romania</a>, <a href="#">MAES</a>, <a href="#">OPPLA</a>, <a href="#">EKLIPSE</a>, <a href="#">OPERA</a>, <a href="#">ESMERALDA</a>)</p>
<p>ACTION 2: Establish a support mechanism to help Member State authorities address key challenges in applying the permitting requirements of the Birds and Habitats Directives for Natura 2000 and species protection rules.</p>	<p>Make full use of the <b>EIR Peer to Peer mechanism</b>, learn from other <b>best practices</b> and <b>know-how</b>, then spread it to all levels of national and regional authorities for issues related to the permitting requirements of the Birds and Habitats Directives for Natura 2000 and species protection rules.</p>
<p>ACTION 4: Complete the Natura 2000 network, especially filling gaps for the marine environment, and put in place the necessary conservation measures for all sites.</p>	<p>Use the best monitoring practices available in the EU (<a href="#">EC publication</a>, <a href="#">EU BON</a>, <a href="#">EU MON</a>, <a href="#">BioScore2</a>), consult with experts on biogeographical level, use the capacity of ongoing and past LIFE project in your country, implement citizens' monitoring to engage other stakeholders, share data between other sectors such as forestry and water management.</p>
<p>ACTION 5: Use the new Environmental Implementation Review process for dedicated bilateral meetings with national and regional authorities to develop agreed roadmaps to improve implementation and consult with landowners and other stakeholders on implementation challenges.</p>	<p>Use the new <b>Environmental Implementation Review process</b> to share your experience, good and bad practices with the EC, and through that with other MSs. Consult the roadmap agreed with the EC with all other stakeholders from different sectors; landowners, managers, NGO, foresters, to communicate with the general public.</p>

Actions from the Action Plan	What you could do to make it happen?
<p>ACTION 8: Strengthen investments in nature.</p>	<p>Update your <a href="#">Prioritised Action Framework</a> in a way that truly reflects the needs of Natura 2000 network in your country. It can be assessed by the calculations in the management plans or see <a href="#">the methodology on how to do it</a>. Make sure it includes clear priorities and possible synergies with other sectors and policies (such as green infrastructure) to reflect socio-economic benefits of investing in Natura 2000, e.g. in relation to its climate change mitigation and adaptation potential, human health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Advocate for the increase of funding for nature in the next Multiannual Financial Framework of the EU.</p> <p>Advocate for 10% increase in the <a href="#">LIFE</a> budget which is highly beneficial for nature conservation. Read about good practices <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>Use full potential of all financing mechanisms to fund Natura 2000 management measures. See how it can be done <a href="#">here</a>, <a href="#">here</a> or <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>Encourage support in nature projects from the private sector, cooperation with business can be beneficial for both sides, see some examples of good case studies on our website: <a href="http://www.ceeweb.org/welovenatura2000/">www.ceeweb.org/welovenatura2000/</a></p>
<p>ACTION 9: Promote synergies with funding from the common agricultural policy, including effective use of Natura 2000 payments and agri-environment-climate measures, the development of result-based schemes, support to farmers through Farming Advisory Services, and innovation and knowledge transfer through the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability.</p>	<p>Encourage the full and effective use of the financial <a href="#">resources available for Natura 2000</a> sites and wider biodiversity protection in the period 2014-2020 under the European Agricultural Rural Development Fund (EARDF).</p> <p>Coordinate your actions with agricultural authorities, share relevant information for the management of Natura 2000 sites, including on conservation objectives and measures for Natura 2000 sites, on the allocation and uptake of rural development measures, and on application of cross compliance.</p>
<p>ACTION 10: Increase awareness of cohesion policy funding opportunities and improve synergies.</p>	<p>Use Cohesion Funds for better implementation of Natura 2000, in case of doubts how to use it, consult the document: <a href="#">Financing Natura 2000. Guidance Handbook and Integration Of Natura 2000 and Biodiversity Into EU Funding</a></p>

Actions from the Action Plan	What you could do to make it happen?
<p>ACTION 12: (a) Provide guidance to support the deployment of green infrastructure for better connectivity of Natura 2000 areas; (b) Support nature-based solutions projects through EU research and innovation policy and Horizon 2020 funds.</p>	<p>Map areas suitable for green infrastructure network and safeguard them in landscape plans. To learn more about green infrastructure, consult <a href="#">our website</a>. When considering new infrastructure development always consider <a href="#">nature-based solutions</a>. Consult our documents on green infrastructure connection with <a href="#">cities</a>, <a href="#">agriculture</a>, <a href="#">water</a> and <a href="#">health</a>.</p>
<p>ACTION 14: Support recognition of good management of Natura 2000 sites and awareness-raising of the Nature Directives through relevant fora, availing of new technologies and outreach activities, and strengthen links between natural and cultural heritage, especially in the context of 2018 as European year of cultural heritage.</p>	<p>Use biogeographical processes to connect with experts in your region, check <a href="#">Natura 2000 Communication Platform</a> to find experts, events and publications. Promote <a href="#">Natura 2000 as a cultural heritage</a>.</p>

Moreover, we would like to suggest you to take additional actions that were not proposed by the European Commission, but would greatly contribute to the better implementation of Natura 2000:

- a) Strengthening of effectiveness of investment of Natura 2000, biodiversity and sustainability proofing of all the funds. All EU funds have to undergo sustainability / biodiversity proofing either as SEA procedures or other to ensure they are coherent with PAFs and other policies, and will not damage the environment. All funding policies should be coherent with each other.
- b) Immediate action should be made to halt all harmful agriculture incentives for biodiversity e.g. some of the greening measures under Pillar 2, CAP. For illustration: Measures are oversimplified also in terms of lumping together habitat types, or large land-use categories. This includes grouping together extensive, biodiversity-friendly practices with highly intensive ones. Ecological Focus Areas are only on 5% of the arable land, in 2015 two-thirds of the EFA area comprised nitrogen-fixing crops, that are unlikely to provide significant benefits for farmland biodiversity, according to the literature.<sup>2</sup>
- c) Establish management plans. Set standards that are already used and can be adapted to Natura 2000 e.g. Green List of IUCN or an EU-wide software for management planning.

You may find more information about the proposed actions in a [joint letter sent to the European Commission in February 2017](#).

<sup>2</sup> Underwood, E. and Tucker, G. (2016) Ecological Focus Area choices and their potential impacts on biodiversity. Report for BirdLife Europe and the European Environmental Bureau, Institute for European Environmental Policy, London. Available at:

<http://www.ieep.eu/work-areas/agriculture-and-land-management/2016/12/ecological-focus-areas-what-impacts-on-biodiversity>

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## CONTACT US!

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CEEweb for Biodiversity has vast experience in all aspects of Natura 2000 management and implementation, including policy and project development. We are happy to consult, help and support your work towards better implementation of Natura 2000 in your country with the support of our member organization based in your country.

Should you have more questions, please contact our Natura 2000 and Water Policy Officer: Monika Kotulak [kotulak@ceeweb.org](mailto:kotulak@ceeweb.org).

More information on our related work:

<http://www.ceeweb.org/welovenatura2000>

