

# NATURA2000

## Information and communication on the designation and management of Natura2000 sites

Main Report 2: Organizing the management in  
27 EU Member States

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# **1 Introduction**

## **1.1 Objectives of the project**

Biodiversity in Europe is under threat as it has been rapidly declining in the last decennia. It leads to less stable ecosystems, lowered reliability of ecosystem services and therefore negatively influencing human wellbeing, economy, recreation, etc. The EU has set up a policy to counter this evolution. With the Birds Directive and Habitats Directive (respectively (BD) in 1979, CD 79/409/EEC and (HD) in 1992, CD 92/43/EEC) threatened species and habitats (see the Annexes of the BD and HD) will obtain protection, in order to halt the decline of biodiversity. These Directives form the cornerstone of the Natura2000 network of protected sites and are currently implemented.

Following the selection of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Sites of Community Importance (SCIs) according to the Birds and the Habitats Directives, most European Member States are now in the process of formally designating SPAs and SACs (Special Areas of Conservation, Natura2000 sites). These protected areas collectively form the European Union's Natura2000 network. Member States are also selecting and implementing adequate management approaches and instruments to maintain and restore the favourable conservation status of the protected species and habitat types and to prevent damage to the integrity of the Natura2000 sites. Both actions follow the Articles 6.1 and 6.2 of the Habitats Directive.

To help the Member States, the Commission wishes to improve the knowledge and exchange of information on good practices both concerning the designation process of SPAs and SACs and the establishments of conservation measures and instruments for these areas in the Member States. Furthermore, the Commission wants to stress the importance of the Natura2000 sites and their management by involving a wider group of stakeholders in the development of so called integrated management, as is in accordance with the Habitats Directive (Article 2).

The project 'NATURA2000 PREPARATORY ACTIONS- Lot 2: Information and communication on the designation and management of Natura2000 sites' (tender ENV.B.2/SER/2007/0076) is meant to help the Commission to achieve these objectives.

## **1.2 The main tasks and the consortium**

The main tasks of the project are to:

- 1 collect and produce information on the procedures applied for designating SCIs and SPAs as Natura2000 sites at the national level in the different Member States;
- 2 collect and produce information on the management procedures and to identify and analyze rates of success and good practices of integrated management;

- 3 elaborate a new communication tool on potential and integrated socio-economic development in Natura2000 sites that allows networking and exchange of experience amongst stakeholders and managers and;
- 4 elaborate a scheme for the award 'NATURA2000 PARTNER' under the responsibility of the Member States and the award 'NATURA2000 PARTNER of THE YEAR' of the Commission.

In more detail the tasks include:

*Task 1. Information on the SACs designation process*

The information will present the actual state of progress of the process in the Member States. The information focuses on the procedures applied in the EU Member States, their strengths and weaknesses in being successful and the possible constraints.

*Task 2. Management of Natura2000 sites*

For all Member States information will be collected describing the necessary management approaches, their legal framework, public consultation procedures as well as timing, structure and content of management measures. Further, examples of best practices of integrated management will be collected focusing on the integration of important sectors in the site management (e.g. farming, recreation, water management, forestry and (harbour) development).

*Task 3. Communication tool*

This task focuses on the development of a communication tool, allowing for the exchange of experiences and stimulating networking between actors from different sectors that have to deal with the Natura2000 sites, their objectives and management.

*Task 4. Scheme for the award 'Natura2000 Partner' and 'Natura2000 Partner of the year'*

To enhance the relations between possible stakeholders and the Natura2000 site management, a proposal will be made for the awarding mechanism and related selection and award criteria and concrete products as a logo, brochure and flyer to announce the awarding scheme.

To fulfil the tasks as described above, a consortium of three institutes, Alterra Wageningen UR (the Netherlands), Research Institute for Nature and Forest (INBO, Belgium) and Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH, UK) was formed. Specialists of these institutes worked together in close collaboration, discussing and preparing the different working documents and deliverables. However, for the sake of efficiency, a major division of tasks was agreed. Thus, although certain expertise tasks were assigned to specific partners, all contributed to the other parts of the project too.

<b>Institute</b>	<b>General task</b>	<b>Expertise task</b>
Alterra	Lead contractor; financial & administrative manager	Part 1
INBO	Process management and contacts	Part 2
CEH		Part 3

This report presents a full description of the results of the project regarding the management of sites. The results regarding the designation process of sites are presented in Van Apeldoorn et al. (2009a). Both reports are summarized in Van Apeldoorn et al. (2009b) and Kruk et al. (2009b), which summary reports are also available in French and German.

A number of good cases of integrated management, as well as criteria for good integrated management can be found in De Blust et al. (2009), and more information on the award scheme in Sier et al. (2009).

The web address of the aforementioned communication tool “Natura2000 Good Practices Exchange” is: <http://www.natura2000exchange.eu>.

## 2 Collecting and analyzing information

### 2.1 Collection of data

To achieve the objectives of the project, information was collected that goes ‘beyond the official reporting’ of the Member States to the Commission. The main sources of information consulted are:

- *MS country reports* (art. 17 HD)
- *websites*
- *publications*
- *contact persons* (governmental and non governmental) (see Annex 2)
- *conferences and workshops dealing with the topic* (see Annex 2)

To structure the data collection, a questionnaire was prepared at the beginning of the project (Annex 1). Originally it was planned to distribute the questionnaire officially amongst the member state’s Natura2000 contact points (e.g. representatives in the Habitats Committee). After consultation with DG Environment however, it was thought to be no longer advisable. Therefore, the questionnaire was only used by us for additional information gathering in the informal networks of ALTER-Net, academic community, NGO’s and national and European nature conservation and management organisations.

Gathering information in the networks of the cooperating partners started with persons and institutions involved in the implementation of both directives. When for several reasons the information could not be collected using these networks persons were asked for new names, i.e. during the project the network was intensively extended.

However, finding and contacting the relevant persons and collecting the data were difficult and time consuming. For that reason initially institutions and persons were selected in a few Member States (France, Slovakia, Poland, Italy, UK and Denmark) and asked to cooperate and collect the necessary data for their country. Partly they belong to the ALTER-Net network of Excellence.

Annex 2 presents an overview of cooperating institutions and contacted institutions and persons.

Several conferences and workshops have been visited for recruiting new contacts as information sources as well as for the collection of examples of integrated management.

The specific situation of delegated legal responsibilities to regional authorities in some federal Member States (Austria, Spain, Belgium, Germany, Italy) made it impossible to collect all necessary information at the national and lower governmental levels in a comparable way.

Several internal coordinating meetings took place with the project partners, as well as with DG Environment.

## 2.2 Analysis of collected data

The analysis of the management of Natura2000 is divided up into the following categories:

### *Characteristics of management plans*

- Obligation of writing management plans
- Extent, range of management plans: valid in- or also outside Natura2000 sites
- Validity term of management plans
- Content of management plans, and the striking differences per country
- Types of management plans: Sectoral management plans, regional management plans, management plans for species or habitats, for groups of sites or for nature reserves
- Enforceability of management plans

### *Development of management plans*

An important step towards the realization of conservation and management is the development of management plans. We shortly describe the writing process of these plans. We focus on who writes, who is responsible, how stakeholders are involved, what kind of guidelines exist, etc. We also mention the programmes under which many – pilot – management plans are written, as not all countries take up the full responsibility for the development of management plans themselves.

### *Execution of management*

We describe if and how actual execution of management plans is foreseen, what the problems are, and who is responsible for the actual execution. We also mention shortly the programmes, such as Life, that support the execution of management plans, as some countries almost solely rely on such programmes for the execution of management.

### *Types of management instruments*

We briefly describe the types of instruments that are used for the management and conservation of Natura2000 sites. A contract between a governmental authority and a landowner or user, voluntary or obligatory is a frequently used type of management.

### *Monitoring*

We give a concise overview on the status of monitoring of the effectiveness of the management measures and of the monitoring of conservation status of species and habitats.

### *Challenges and solutions*

During our research we encountered many problems that arise in the Member States with the development of management of Natura2000 sites. Some are valid for all countries, some are country specific. Where applicable we propose possible solutions.

***Notice for the reader***

The information we received from Member States from our interviews and questions by phone and mail and our questionnaire, was not uniform. From some Member States, we received much information, whereas for other Member States it was rather difficult to obtain information. For that reason, the extent, detail and availability varies per issue and per country and it is not always clear, whether such issues do not exist in certain Member States or that we did not receive information on such an issue. It depends partly on the responsiveness of local organisations, but also on the availability of information within these organisations. Some Member States with that regard can therefore be relatively ‘under-represented’. We are grateful to those people who dedicated their time to answer our questions (see Annex 2).

## 3 Role of management for Natura2000 objectives

### 3.1 Introduction

Most countries have not completed the final designation of their Natura2000 sites; some countries still have to add additional sites to their Natura2000 network because they fell short in the initial proposal of Natura2000 sites. The progress made per country varies, as is described in the first report of this project by Van Apeldoorn et al. (2009a). Meanwhile the management planning of the Natura2000 sites is under development. A few countries have almost completed management planning, while most are still in the development phase of the management of the Natura2000 sites. While significant progress has been made by the Member States in the development of plans for the management of Natura2000 sites, and pilot projects are set up under various programmes for the integrated management of sites, the execution of these management plans is in most countries still in its infancy.

Since there are a very large number of Natura2000 sites occupying about 15-20% of the EU territory, careful attention has to be paid to the management of these areas, according to the EU, especially with regard to landowner and user involvement, and hence the clear, efficient and realistic organisation of the management.

### 3.2 Arranging management

Management of Natura2000 sites is in many cases necessary to achieve the favourable conservation status of species and habitats and the EU has left it up to the Member States to decide on the most appropriate management approaches. Apart from a few exceptions, the Member States organise the planning of the management of the Natura2000 sites separately from the designation process, although often the same organisations and government departments are involved. All Member States use a mix of statutory, administrative and contractual instruments. Two ways of organizing the management can be distinguished:

- implementation of the necessary management measures in and through sectoral laws (such as hunting, forestry, spatial planning, water management, fishing, etc.)
- development of management plans with specific measures for individual or groups of Natura2000 sites.

Only a few countries organise the management of their sites exclusively through the implementation of management measures in sectoral laws – such as Slovenia and some regions in Italy and Germany (see text box *‘Italian example of management through implementation in sectoral laws’*). This way of implementation again varies between the countries. In Slovenia the management and protection through sectoral laws is arranged by the National Natura2000 Site Management Programme that defines – on a site-by-site basis – which sectoral law is appropriate and how this sectoral law should be adapted to protect a site. It also specifies quantitatively the conservation objectives for habitats and species, together with the conservation measures, for each

site. In contrast, in Germany it is not specified which sectoral laws should be adapted in order to protect a Natura2000 site, either at the federal level, or the state level.

### *Italian example of management through implementation in sectoral laws*

In Italy the management of Natura2000 sites is delegated to the regions, which might eventually delegate it to the provinces. The provinces might on their turn delegate the management to other local administrative bodies – such as municipalities or mountain communities, to NGOs, to managers of existing natural areas, or to private individuals and organizations. The possible management measures provided by the national legislation are the creation of ad hoc management plans (not mandatory) or the integration of management into other instruments: development plans; sectoral and territorial plans; regulation, administrative or contractual provisions.

The three categories of provisions can be defined as follows:

1. *Statutory measures*: general dispositions regarding the activities generally forbidden or allowed in the protected areas. They can be national legislative decrees, regional or provincial legislations, interpretative circulars, coordination and addressing acts, planning or programming documents.
2. *Administrative measures*: dispositions regarding orders, authorizations, prohibitions and prescriptions related to a single protected area. These measures can be set by bodies managing protected areas, municipalities, mountain communities, provinces, regions or the central government.
3. *Contractual measures*: interventions which encompass agreements among two or more public or private (also non-profit) parties, such as the Territorial Pacts and Area Contracts.

This varied system allows the site management to be integrated into local policies, but might result in a confused and diversified panorama of management measures which undermines the coherence of the Natura2000 network.

To avoid complications, the Ministry of Environment set with a decree the guidelines for the Natura2000 Management (Decree of 3rd September 2002), and arranged a technical manual (Ministry of the Environment, 2002. Manuale delle linee guida per la redazione dei piani di gestione dei siti Natura2000) addressed to stakeholders and administrative bodies.

The Management Guide Lines and the redaction of nine pilot management plans have been funded by the Life-1999 program in the project “Verification of Natura2000 Network in Italy: management models”.

Some countries by law give all of their Natura2000 some kind of nature protection status like National Park, Nature monument, etc. thereby giving the sites some specific protection and superimpose the Natura2000 requirements. This has some implications for the responsibility for the management of these sites (see section 5.3.1). Other countries distinguish Natura2000 sites as a separate category (see for more information on the designation process Van Apeldoorn et al., 2009a). In most countries one tries to cover the protection of Natura2000 sites by a national protection law. However, such a law is often too general for the individual sites and additional work such as the development of management plans, needs to be carried out on a more individual level.

### 3.3 Role of management plans

Management of Natura2000 sites varies widely between the Member States, because of a range of factors, such as traditions in nature conservation, population density and differing governance structures. This leads to different approaches and different levels of progress between the Member States and even within, as federally organized countries such as Italy, Spain, Germany and Belgium, delegate their responsibility to the individual federal states, to regions or to provinces. Although management plans for Natura2000 sites are only suggested by EU legislation as an instrument to reach a favourable conservation status of species and habitats, almost all Member States decided to develop management plans for (many of) their Natura2000 sites, though the extent, content and importance of management plans as well as the priority and dedication to write them differ widely through the EU. Management plans for Natura2000 sites are obligatory in about half of the Member States, and although they are not obligatory in the other half, they most often are written anyway as guidance to stakeholders and administrations, and for other reasons (see Table 3.1). In some countries management plans are only obligatory for specific sites, or for some kinds of land use, depending on legal specifications. If management plans are not obligatory, the question rises how a Member State will reach the favourable conservation status of species and habitats of a site? It could be by integrating the required management measures in sectoral legislation as few countries do (see section 3.2), or they only are dealt with in a contract with owners – e.g. in the Czech Republic for the protection of bats in buildings and in Slovenia for the protection of caves. However, usually contracts are used to officially arrange the measures, which are drafted in a management plan, with private landowners or users.

Sometimes sites do not need management plans because they are very remote or inaccessible, and only need some monitoring or assessment of site values (e.g. some parts of Finland, Malta; see text box *Example of obligation of writing management plans in Finland*).

#### ***Example of obligation of writing management plans in Finland***

The national legislation in Finland only demands a formal management plan to be written for National Parks (Nature Conservation Act), Wilderness Areas (Wilderness Act), and several other Nature Reserves (various acts and decrees). Management plans for other areas are drafted if e.g. land use pressures either inside or outside the area give reason for that.

In general management plans at site level are used to formulate the conservation status and objectives together with the management measures necessary to attain these objectives, although other instruments can be used as well. Management plans can also function as a tool to lay down responsibilities of the socio-economic stakeholders, authorities and NGOs for the execution of management, allowed activities and other use and potential threats of Natura2000 sites.

**A management plan can be useful because of:**

1. **Legislation** It meets the needs of legislation. (In many countries Management Plans for Protected Areas are a specific legal requirement e.g. Nature Reserves, National Parks or Habitats Directive (Natura2000) sites.)
2. **Objectives** It makes clear the role and objectives of the Protected Area e.g. in meeting a range of targets such as national biodiversity & sustainable use targets.
3. **Condition** It identifies what needs to be done to maintain “Necessary Conservation Measures”.
4. **Practical tool** It is a practical tool for Protected Area managers & staff: (a) planning work (b) priority/target setting (c) resource allocation (staff, time & money).
5. **Consistency** It provides for consistency and continuity for the managing organisation.
6. **Rationale** It informs future managers of what was done and why.
7. **Understanding** The people involved in management can understand the reasons for the work they are doing.
8. **Credibility** It gives credibility, (particularly political credibility), to the objectives and management activities at all levels within the Protected Area.
9. **Communication** The preparation process is a means of communication with “Stakeholders” and securing their support and involvement in the Protected Area.
10. **Progress** It identifies what data and information is needed for evaluating progress, towards the objectives through monitoring and recording.

*Source: Idle & Bines (2004)*

*Table 3.1 Purposes of a Natura2000 site management plan.*

### 3.4 Interference with other laws

Although in most countries forestry, hunting, wildlife and various other laws, decrees and acts have been adjusted to the Natura2000 requirements, infringement cases illustrate this has not always been done in a proper way (Van Apeldoorn et al., 2009a). It may well happen that the nature conservation law that arranges the management and protection of Natura2000 sites in Member States is conflicting in some unforeseen cases with other sectoral laws on spatial planning, manure, transport, agriculture, tourism, forestry, hunting, etc. In countries where management of Natura2000 is arranged through implementation of management measures in sectoral laws or decrees, especially when no clear overview or central coordination (see section 3.2) exists, this is even more imaginable. Some countries such as the Czech Republic and Wallonia (Belgium) intend to avoid such conflicts with a nature conservation law superior to other laws such as spatial planning, manure, etc. In the Czech Republic the nature conservation act has a higher status than most other laws, whereas in Wallonia it is explicitly stated that when two laws are conflicting, the law that arranges the best outcome for the nature conservation status will prevail. In other countries such protection of Natura2000 sites is arranged by giving them the status of a certain kind of nature reserve, like for instance a National Park or National nature reserve, that already have an overruling and strict nature protecting status (e.g. Lithuania).

In e.g. Latvia the law on Specially Protected Nature Territories states that if an international agreement that is in force in Latvia specifies requirements regarding protection of the protected territories other than those prescribed by the laws of Latvia, the requirements of the international agreement shall be in force, except in cases where stricter protection regulations are prescribed by regulatory enactments of Latvia (see also text box ‘*Law of Specifically Protected Nature Territories*’).

### **Law of Specifically Protected Nature Territories**

The “Law of Specifically Protected Nature Territories” in Latvia defines that *“In conducting economic and territorial planning, land surveys and forest management, as well as all types of design works, the location of the protected territory (Natura2000 and others), regulations for the protection and use thereof, as well as the nature protection plan shall be observed.”*

Furthermore the management plan of a site is also an instrument for coordinating environmental protection, use of natural resources and the interests of regional sustainable development, in order to ensure the preservation of the natural value of the territory. According to the above mentioned law it has recommendatory character for local, regional and state development plans.

## **3.5 Administrative integration**

Although Natura2000 implementation and nature protection is the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment or equivalent in every Member State, the responsibilities for site management are sometimes shared between ministries. For example areas like forests, harbours, waterways or military domains reside in most countries under a different responsibility than that of the Ministry of Environment, which can lead to conflicts of interests and delays in the execution of management if responsibilities and obligations are not clearly specified. One could think of e.g. a Ministry of Defence, or a Ministry for Agriculture and Forestry or equivalent that have different priorities and objectives than a Ministry of Environment. Moreover, factors that can influence nature protection and attainment of the Natura2000 conservation objectives outside a Natura2000 site – such as planning, water ways or land use – can be outside the competency of the Ministry of Environment. On the other hand, socio-economic development is often not the (financial) responsibility of a Ministry of Environment and integration with nature conservation therefore can be jeopardized – e.g. in Navarra (Spain) – when no interdepartmental cooperation is arranged and agreed on. Also in Romania responsibilities for Natura2000 are shared by different ministries but an interdepartmental working group so far has not been very effective. Actually, still very little progress is made in Romania with implementation of Natura2000.

It often has been reported that better communication and coordination between all administrative units, on national, regional or local level (horizontal) as well as between the levels (vertical) is needed.

Member States found amongst others the following solutions to improve cooperation on the various competences:

- In Denmark the administration has been reformed recently bringing nature, water, planning, forest, land use, climate and international projects all under the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment, including the integrated implementation of the Birds Directive, the Habitats Directive and the Water Framework Directive, which makes it easier to arrange and integrate different management measures.

Due to the obligation for the responsible authorities to assess the impact a project or plan might have on a Natura2000 site (Executive Order No. 408, Ministry of Environment) and structural cooperation with other Ministries like that of Transport and Energy, and of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries,

these Ministries included similar requirements to plans and projects, in legislation under their jurisdiction.

- In Hungary – like in many other countries – inter-departmental working groups have been set-up, though it seems they do not always function very well. Although, the working group of the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Defence appears to be more effective, apparently due to the competencies it has been granted, in contrast to other inter-departmental working groups that often remain toothless.

## 4 Characteristics of Management Plans

### 4.1 Introduction

Obviously for practical reasons, management plans are excellent tools to formulate conservation status, conservation measures, allowance or limitation of activities, conservation objectives, specific site characteristics, threats, etc. for Natura2000 sites (see table 3.1). In particular they can show in a transparent manner what Natura2000 may mean in practice for stakeholders. They can provide a means for working across administrative and policy boundaries and with different stakeholders at an early stage. For some sites, management plans and moderating authorities already existed before designation as Natura2000 site. This is for example the case for National Parks in many countries and in some countries for the forested areas that are subject to Forest Management Plans. The latter may need to be adapted to the requirements of Natura2000 by the existing management authorities. For sites that are very remote, large and without factors that may prevent the achievement of good conservation status of species and habitats, management plans often do not need to be written. However in almost all Member States, for the majority of sites new management plans need to be prepared from scratch, especially for sites that neither had some kind of nature protection status before, nor had an existing management authority.

### 4.2 Types of management plans

Different types of management plans exist depending on e.g. the history of a site, the specific needs of a site, the geographical distribution, the management strategy, or the rareness of present habitat or species. However diverse the range of management plans, they all must lead to the favourable conservation status of habitats and species. Different types of management plans used and prepared in the Member States are:

- Common management plan, for an individual site or a group of sites
- Country level management plan, for a certain rare species or habitat, occurring in only a few Natura2000 sites that were exclusively assigned for these species or habitat (e.g. Lithuania, Czech Republic), or, for all sites in a country (Portugal)
- (Regional) Master management plan (e.g. Finland, Denmark) to manage the development of individual management plans
- Sectoral management plan (Forestry, Nature Reserves), often already existing and need to be adapted to the Natura2000 requirements

#### ***Common management plans***

The content and remarkable differences between the Member States of common management plans are described in paragraph 4.5. They are usually written for an individual site, or for a group of sites that is grouped for geographical, ecological or planning reasons to lower the administrative load and to simplify the arrangement of management measures (see text box '*Efficient grouping of sites under one management plan*').

### ***Efficient grouping of sites under one management plan***

Southern Finland has a high density of Natura2000 sites and the average area of these sites is rather small, which is one of the reasons why planning is done by grouping several sites under one management plan, rather than per single site. It increases cost-efficiency and productivity and it also enhances regional planning and coherence between the sites and between stakeholders. As a matter of fact, due to the larger scale, regional planning issues, ecological connectivity, etc. can be dealt with more insight and relative priorities can be set. It is a way towards integrated management.

Also in Brussels Capital Region (Belgium) where sites are scattered throughout the heavily populated Capital Region, and are relatively small, comparable sites are grouped to lower the administrative load and to simplify the arrangement of management measures.

### ***Country level management plans***

In some countries management plans have been drafted on national level for few sites that contain only some rare species or habitats, which is the case in e.g. the Czech Republic.

In Lithuania management plans have been drafted with measures that apply to species and are formulated on national level, called Species Actions Plans. The Department of Nature Conservation of the Ministry of Environment proposed in 2008/2009 to prepare detailed Species Action Plans for some plant and animal species. These plans contain:

- actions for conservation or restoration of populations of species in different areas and concrete methods for implementation and reaching of favourable conservation status;
- timing and responsible institutions for implementation of proposed actions;
- detailed budget for the implementation of the actions.

Such plans are still under development and can be elaborated for the few sites that only contain some rare species or habitats, or for species and habitats that are found in other areas than the Natura2000 sites. Nevertheless it appears that Species Action Plans can interact with management plans that are developed for Natura2000 sites and one should regard that both plans will not interfere and cause confusion. Also in Finland similar plans have been drafted for Natura2000 sites that do not need a full management plan, due to the absence of immanent threats.

In Portugal an overall national management plan exists (Sector Plan for the Natura2000 Network, Council of Ministers Resolution no. 115-A/2008 – adopted July 2008), which formulates measures to protect species and habitats and includes specific management objectives and regimes for each site. The plan also outlines species and habitats that need to be restored and indicates where they occur and which sites are therefore important for these species and habitats. Also it outlines species which need to be prioritized and are endangered according to the Red list of Portugal and which sites are important for them. However, no target population size, or habitat area, are given. The specifications need to be incorporated in e.g. local spatial plans of municipalities (Plano Director Municipal).

In Greece a general management plan has been written for SPAs, but according to nature NGOs the management plan should be too general to cover the management requirements of individual sites and so targeted management plans at site level are necessary.

In Slovakia so called rescue plans have been drafted for the protection of Natura2000 species, including restrictions and supporting management measures, awaiting the development and approval of management plans by the Ministry of Environment – so far no management plans have been approved, and few have been developed.

### ***(Regional) Master management plans***

In a few countries (regional) master management plans are drafted that are responsible for the overall coordination of regional work on Natura2000 sites, which is the case in Finland and Denmark, and coordinate the development and priority of management plans for sites or groups of sites, from a regional perspective. Thus, in Finland in 2007, a Natura2000 General Plan has been drafted for each of the country's 13 environmental regions. At the beginning of 2008 412 individual management plans were still needed for 542 Natura2000 sites.

### ***Sectoral management plans***

In many Member States management plans already exist for specific sites, such as forests and National Parks, to manage forestry, nature protection, wildlife, etc. In such countries, where such specific management plans usually are obligatory by sectoral policies, it has been decided to adapt these plans to fit the Natura2000 requirements. The most ubiquitous sectoral management plans in the Member States are the following:

- Nature reserve management plans for National Parks and alike (most countries);
- Forest management plans (e.g. Austria, Hungary).

### ***Nature reserve management plans***

In most countries management plans already exist for National Parks and alike, which means that management is much easier to be carried out than for 'new' sites that did not have a protection status before, because of the already existing tradition of nature protection, development of management plans and administration and the presence of a management structure. This might be especially the case in countries where the majority of Natura2000 sites were already a nature reserve with administration, before designation (e.g. in Hungary, where about 90% of Natura2000 were previously nature reserves). In the UK, most sites already had some kind of nature protection status and a more or less elaborated management plan. Sometimes these nature reserves have even stricter protection than Natura2000 sites – e.g. in Finland where National Parks and Wilderness Areas (which together cover 2.3 million ha) by definition have no inhabitants and no logging activities, although in Northern Finland reindeer husbandry and subsistence hunting is allowed, or other countries where a Nature Reserve status means no access for anybody.

However, there can be some drawbacks. First of all, Natura2000 sites are often larger than the National Park it comprises and stakeholders in such extrapolated areas often consider it as an enlargement of the National Park including its restrictions and prohibitions – if they are ill-informed – unaware of the socio-economic development potential of Natura2000 areas. Secondly, some management traditions probably will need to be changed of the nature reserve, for example private landowners, users and other (socio-economic) stakeholders might need to be involved in the management that were not before. And, traditional management might need to be adapted to the Natura2000 requirements. Therefore capacity building, information and training of staff and socio-economic stakeholders as well as other stakeholders could well be necessary.

#### *Forest Management plans*

In some countries such as Austria, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary, specific forest management plans already exist and their governments allow the adaptation of such management plans to the Natura2000 objectives, without the need to write a common, prescribed, form of management plan. It also means that although in general the Ministry of Environment is responsible for the management of Natura2000 sites, in the case of forestry, usually the Ministry of Agriculture or equivalent is responsible, which necessitates the need for interdepartmental cooperation on both funding and on safeguarding proper implementation of the Natura2000 objectives (see 3.5). It is important to make clear agreements on aforementioned issues, as quarrels on funding and responsibilities between ministries exist and delay the attainment of favourable conservation status of habitats and species. Strong coordination is therefore a prerequisite. Austria has set up criteria and requirements for adapted forest management plans and is quite far with the implementation. Romania still has to start with adaptation of its forest management plans to the requirements of Natura2000.

In Austria management and protection of Natura2000 sites is usually carried out through management plans and through integration in regional landscape protection plans, but an exception has been made for forested areas – about 48% of the Natura2000 in Austria is covered by forests – where so called forest management plans (Waldfachplannen) are already in charge for the forestry. These forest management plans were focussed primarily on the economic management of forests, but nevertheless were already well functioning as an integrative planning instrument bringing together socio-economic, nature conservation and governmental stakeholders. The forest management plans will be adapted to the Natura2000 objectives, and will need to integrate information on (Hinterstoisser, 2004):

- spatial planning –including digital land registration;
- borders of protected area, biotope mapping, current and historical vegetation maps, forest use history;
- scientific publications on the area;
- aerial photographs;
- forest development plan;
- Water book;
- species and age variety;
- soil and vegetation;
- dead wood – with information on standing/laying wood, species and size;

- damage – game, meadows, emissions;
- touristic infrastructure – with regard to visitors management;
- hunting infrastructure;
- transport infrastructure – roads, power transmission lines;
- actual and favourable conservation status and objectives

It also states which institutes or authorities are responsible for the provision of the aforementioned information. Participation of landowners, users and other socio-economic stakeholders is foreseen in various stages of the development of the forest management plan.

### 4.3 Enforceability of management plans

Almost all Member States tend to write management plans for most of their sites. In more than half of the Member States however, management plans are not enforceable, in other words, management plans are used as some kind of proposal or guide for the management of an area, and are usually only binding for publicly-owned or managed land. In a small number of countries, management plans are enforceable, sometimes only in specific cases of rare species or habitats, although it can be seen that Member States are very reserved with enforcement in order to avoid unnecessary resentment among stakeholders, for whom the eventual management must be acceptable (see table 4.1).

Member State	Management plans obligatory	Management plans legally binding	Form of stakeholder participation
Austria	No, only Upper Austria, Burglund	No	Informal/Formal
Belgium			
Flanders	Yes	Yes	Shared
Wallonia	Yes	Yes	Shared
Brussels	No	unclear	Informal
Bulgaria	No	Yes	Shared
Cyprus	No	No	Formal (unclear)
Czech Republic	Yes (only for SACs)	No	Informal, at the end
Denmark	Yes	Yes	Formal
Estonia	Yes	Yes	Formal, although not obligatory
Finland	No, only for nature reserves		Formal
France	Yes	Yes	Shared
Germany	No, only in a few States (e.g. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern)	No	Diverse, in general Formal
Greece	Yes	Yes	Formal
Hungary	No, but aim	Not yet	Formal
Ireland	No	Yes	Informal
Italy	No	No	Informal (and diverse)
Latvia	No, intention to do all sites	They have to be acknowledged in other sectoral plans	Shared (stakeholders in supervisory board)

Member State	Management plans obligatory	Management plans legally binding	Form of stakeholder participation
Lithuania	No, though intention to do most sites.	No	Formal
Luxembourg	No	No	Shared
Malta	Yes (if EU funding arranged)	No	Formal or Shared (under development)
Netherlands	Yes	Yes	Formal
Poland	Yes (first simple version of management plan (plan of management tasks), then possibly a management plan)	unclear	Formal, although recently initiatives are taken for Shared
Portugal	No	No	Informal
Romania	Yes	No	Stakeholders have been consulted in the past, but it is unclear for the future (Formal).
Slovakia	Yes	No	Shared
Slovenia	Only for protected areas (management for all sites defined in a national plan and sectoral legislation (not in site level management plans))	No	Formal
Spain	Yes	Yes	Formal
Sweden	Yes	Not yet	Formal
UK	No	No	Formal

*Table 4.1 Some characteristics of a management plan, and forms of stakeholder participation per country. Management plans are usually binding for National Parks and other sites that are publicly owned or managed. See section 5.4 for more information on stakeholder participation.*

This means that the responsible authority usually depends on the consent of the landowner and that it might well be that the proposed management measures will not be executed. The only thing is that a landowner can be held responsible for the damage he causes to the land. That could lead to the imaginary route that landowners can be held responsible for the damage caused by doing nothing, or by not complying with the management plan. As far as we know, this imaginary route has not been followed so far. It would not get so far of course, when landowners and land users see the benefit of cooperation and when management contracts and compensation measures – that are enforceable – are in place. Even though management plans are enforceable, countries are often careful with the enforcement. In Estonia for example, one uses in general voluntary contracts and only enforces management in cases where the favourable status of objects with very high biological values are endangered without supporting management. The interest in cooperation is high in Estonia because the local people get money for it. Also Wallonia (Belgium) has not enforced management agreements. In the UK the landowner or user has some responsibility in executing appropriate management measures.

Management plans in the Czech Republic are to be considered as a proposal for management and do not specify who is going to do what. Landowners can not be forced to execute the management plan. Convincing the socio-economic

stakeholders to cooperate is the responsibility of the authorities. Also in Luxembourg the government intends voluntary participation at first stage, management plans can not be enforced, although once a management contract has been accepted that can be enforced.

## **4.4 Extent and revision of management plans**

### **4.4.1 Buffer zones**

Management plans are generally only valid for a Natura2000 site itself, or for a group of sites. In a few countries however, the management plan may apply to areas outside the Natura2000 site as well. For example in Luxembourg a buffer zone of 30 meters around specific Natura2000 sites – forestry, riverside – is foreseen, where activities are restricted by the management plan. In the Netherlands a management plan can have consequences for factors outside a Natura2000 site, for instance water quality that may damage or threaten the favourable conservation status of species and habitats. Then the plan can specify the organisations that have to manage these conditions outside the Natura2000 site. Also in the Czech Republic management plans can be applicable outside designated Natura2000 areas, however in these cases the management plans then need to be incorporated in other sectoral – spatial – laws that are applicable for these areas. Moreover, in many countries Natura2000 sites, and in some countries with reference to the management plans as well (e.g. Poland), are incorporated into the spatial planning schemes (see also van Apeldoorn, et al. 2009a), which could make it easier to control the activities in the direct neighbourhood of a Natura2000 site.

Apart from the juridical implications of management plans outside Natura2000 areas mentioned above, an important role is given to the way Natura2000 sites have been designated in the first place. Natura2000 sites often contain buffer zones themselves, i.e. a site contains a core zone containing the valuable species or habitats and a zone around it that functions as a protective buffer. In detailed management plans such internal zones are specified (e.g. Czech Republic, Lithuania, Finland, Spain). Such buffer zones appear to be economically and environmentally favourable. For example, according to Schou et al. (2006) buffer zones are found to be an important step towards sustainable co-existence of intensive livestock production and nature conservation when local sources are important contributors to eutrophication. In some other regions, such as Flanders (Belgium), Natura2000 sites are only covering the habitats or species for which the Natura2000 site is designated, without the inclusion of buffer zones. The latter could make the species or habitat more vulnerable to damage and management measures could be more easily counteracted by harming activities just outside the Natura2000 site, which indeed is happening at some locations.

### **4.4.2 Timely revision of plans**

The life time of a management plan varies between 5 and 20 years, depending on the country and – to some extent – on the kind of area to be managed. Management

plans for forests tend to be valid for a longer period – 10-20 years – than those for wetlands and fishery-related areas (approximately 5 years).

In a few countries, such as Estonia and the Czech Republic, management plans foresee the possibility for an earlier, internal revision based on the results of a site-level monitoring of the effectiveness of the management measures or conservation status. It should be clear that internal monitoring and an established working procedure are prerequisites in such cases. In Hessen (Germany) management action plans are drafted yearly on the basis of a management plan that is valid for about ten years or more, which leaves some flexibility. In France management plans can be adapted continuously, for natural, institutional or juridical reasons. There NGOs and administrations consider it rather strange to fix management measures, objectives and other characteristics for example for a 10 year period in a legal document, while knowing that changes in the natural, social, or land use conditions can easily render the plan inappropriate. This implies a need for flexible plans, or, for management plans that serve only as a guide. On the other hand, landowners and land users, such as farmers could prefer to have a reliable and predictable agreement over management measures that need to be taken for a longer period, with regard to the business strategy they follow and investments they make.

Management plans in Malta foresee an annual evaluation of the management measures with a financial and management report to the Malta Environment and Planning Authority, making the management of the site more transparent for both the supervising authority and executing organisation.

#### **4.5 Content of management plans**

As mentioned before, different kinds of management plans exist (see 4.2). The most common management plans are often developed for individual sites, or groups of sites. They can also be developed in strong cooperation with sectors such as agriculture, forestry, water – so called sectoral management plans, at the national level for the general protection of certain species and habitats, or as a regional master plan for the development of other management plans. In this paragraph we describe the content of a common management plan that is used in most Member States, as well as the most notable deviations between the Member States. In some Member States management plans can cover more than 100 pages, while others decide to write leaner management plans (see also text box '*A user's comment*').

A German study of 29 management plans of 12 German federal states lead to the conclusion that the planning of concrete management measures was realised adequately, but in about two thirds of the plans deficits were identified on the content and form, as well as planning quality. For instance, a statement of the objectives, monitoring, evaluation, and a detailed consultation process are missing or insufficient, as well as periodic updating, development of different alternative management options, and the integration of impacts from outside (Böhnke-Henrichs and Lipp, 2009).

### **Content of a general management plan**

1. Description of the site, including reasons for selection of the site
2. Map, location, boundaries, administrative distribution, land ownership
3. Socio-economic situation, history, land-use –e.g. tourism, forestry, recreation, hunting, agriculture etc.
4. Natural values – birds, fauna and flora, geology, hydrology
5. Cultural history & objects (archaeology)
6. Designation responsibilities and obligations arising from the designation
7. Opportunities and threats of activities or developments in or outside the site
8. Current status of Natura2000 species and habitats present at the site
9. Conservation objectives (favourable status of present Natura2000 species and habitats)
10. Management measures required to meet the favourable conservation statuses of species and habitats
11. Allowed and forbidden activities
12. Work plan, work timetable, resource and time allocations, sources of funding for management, monitoring and staff responsibilities
13. Monitoring and review data collection requirements and review procedures
14. Stakeholder lists and Members of managing board / working group
15. Brief, formal record of meetings; significant outcomes.

### **A user's comment**

A user comment that stands up for clear and straight forward information with regard to the content and development of a management plan:

*“The content of a management plan is rather similar to the content of a monograph where they try to collect all the information about the target area, 90% of which is irrelevant from the conservation actions point of view. These mostly scientific chapters tend to increase the resistance of stakeholders, land users, since they do not understand most of it.”*

*Source: Experienced management plan developer from Lithuania and Hungary*

### ***Borders of Natura2000 sites***

In a few countries, the maps and borders of Natura2000 sites are not made public in a detailed way, or are not clearly demarcated, which leads to confusion among landowners and users, regional and local authorities, and to unclear responsibilities for management. This has the potential to lead to conflicts between stakeholders. Maps are of various degree of quality, and can range from very rough maps of 1:200,000 to the more common maps of around 1:30,000 and even 1:5,000 (several states in Germany). Some Member States, regions or sometimes only sites, have advanced GIS-databases containing not even the border, but also other site related ecological, geological, hydrological and socio-economic information (e.g. Flanders (Belgium), and some parts of Germany), which is used for spatial planning purposes and to assist the successful achievement of favourable conservation status of habitats and species. Also the dynamic nature of some borders of Natura2000 sites that for instance coincide with rivers or other flows sometimes leads to confusion and conflicts.

### ***Conservation objectives***

Usually the conservation objectives are defined at site level in the management plan. However, in many countries the favourable conservation status of species and habitats are not yet defined, but under development, which means that management plans with concise objectives are also in their infancy in these countries (e.g. Cyprus).

Even when sufficient data is available, in several regions objectives are often vaguely formulated or even absent in management plans and alike, which leads to unverifiable situations (e.g. Austria, Lithuania), thereby losing some significance of the management plan. Nevertheless, data on the status of species and habitats is still missing for many sites. Regions exist where data are collected for a too short period of time to make sound decisions (many countries), or is collected in a way that is not tuned for use with Natura2000 (e.g. Poland and Czech Republic). The lack of suitable information can hinder the formulation of proper objectives and the necessary management measures, as well as the feasibility of monitoring. Also, the reasons – i.e. presence of a specific species or habitat – for designating a site are in some cases not existing, because the data or ‘expert judgement’ on which it was based appeared to be obsolete, which complicates the communication with local stakeholders as well as the realization of management measures and eventually favourable conservation status.

Many Member States do not quantify the conservation objectives (see also Van Apeldoorn et al., 2009a), but only qualify the conservation objectives of species and habitats with terms as ‘good’ or ‘best’ conservation status to be achieved and alike, which are words that are interpretable in various ways by various stakeholders. When such concepts are not further specified, the danger exists that it leads to unverifiable situations and conflicts between stakeholders. It also might jeopardize the achievement of favourable conservation status, and simultaneously may decrease the significance of the management plan.

In some countries the conservation objectives are not defined in the management plan itself, but in other documents such as the legal acts designating the site (see Van Apeldoorn et al., 2009a). In Greece the conservation objectives will be formulated in a national document called the ‘Biodiversity Strategy’, but the full strategy is still under consultation: anybody interested can send comments to the Ministry of Environment to the end of May 2009.

Although in Latvia management plans are developed for almost all sites, for sites that do not have a management plan the regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers "On the General Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories" are applied, which does not include specific conservation objectives.

In Hungary no obligatory regulations on land use are included in a management plan, unless there is legislative background – e.g. a spatial planning document – to such an obligation.

#### *Conservation objectives on national and site level*

In a few countries or regions, conservation objectives are formulated at national and site levels, in order to have a better overview of, and a more flexible, fulfilment of conservation objectives. This is true for, amongst others Flanders (Belgium), the Netherlands, Lower Austria (Austria) and Slovenia (sectoral implementation). The formulation of conservation objectives for species and habitats on both national and site level, shows the relative importance a site has in the Natura2000 network of the Member State to reach the national favourable conservation status of a species or habitat. It also means that there is some flexibility in reaching the favourable conservation status for the individual sites, as long as the national favourable conservation status of species and habitats is achieved. It enables the authorities and stakeholders in setting priorities on development and execution of management measures, financial and staff resources. In Portugal one national management plan

has been written for the individual sites, which means that there is some centralistic overview as well.

### ***Responsibility***

Many Member States do not explicitly specify who is responsible for management in the management plan, and arrange the responsibility for the execution of management plans through:

- contracts with landowners and users, usually voluntarily;
- licences for activities that landowners or users would like to employ;
- letters of intent;
- a list of activities that are allowed or disallowed at the site ;
- proposals for the adaptation of sectoral legislation (in some cases).

A few countries do specify explicitly in the management plans the responsibilities of stakeholders with regard to the management of the site, such as France where management plans can contain contracts – Contrat or Charta 2000 – that describe the management measures and responsibilities in detail. This is in contrast to the Czech Republic, for example, where responsibilities are not specified, and the plans are proposals only.

### ***Elaborate versus lean management plans***

Because the development of management plans can be very elaborate, time consuming and demanding in terms of the amount of data needed on the conservation status of species and habitats, some countries such as Poland approach the development of management plans in steps, starting with a lean management plan, and consequently – if necessary – developing a more robust management plan. In this example, in 2009, Poland changed its law on the obligation for making management plans, to the obligation of making Plans of Management Tasks. First of all, a Plan of Management Tasks is approved at the regional level, which takes less time than management plans that have to be approved by the Ministry of Environment. Secondly, a Plan of Management Tasks is a list of tasks that should be undertaken immediately to maintain species and habitats on a Natura2000 site, in contrast to a management plan that envisages a longer-term (20 years), more detailed conservation programme establishing rules and principles. As a result, a Plan of Management Tasks can be drawn up more easily and quickly than a management plan. Nevertheless, a Plan of Management Tasks generally foresees the eventual development of a management plan, as it will be easier, for example, to perform environmental impact assessments for sites with management plans.

### ***List of activities***

Usually Member States make a list of allowed and restricted activities – including the management activities that are needed to achieve favourable conservation status – in order to avoid ‘appropriate assessments’ for planned activities of which the impact is already known. In some countries these lists, are defined in other documents but the management plan, such as in legal acts designating the site (see Van Apeldoorn et al., 2009a). In Latvia for example, this list and some general conservation objectives, are

indeed incorporated into the legal act designating the site, in stead of in a management plan. Where this is not the case, such as in Greece where management plans often lack the standard list of regarding activities, and where the list is not available elsewhere, the management of such sites depends on an assessment of any planned activity. At the end, implementing and executing the management plan then might become quite laborious.

***Socio-economic aspects***

It has been noted that socio-economic aspects, although cornerstone of the Natura2000 Directive according to the EC, are not always present in the management plans. Although the opposite occurs, such as in Navarra (Spain), where particular emphasis must be given in a management plan on the cost benefits of the implementation of an integrated plan. To document this, an active dialogue with stakeholders should be pursued.

## 5 Developing management plans

### 5.1 Introduction

Developing appropriate management plans for Natura2000 sites is a very demanding and time consuming activity. Objectives have to be carefully defined, effective management measures and techniques selected and lasting collaboration with the different stakeholders established. So, a series of aspects have to be considered (see text box '*Considerations before developing management plans*'). In this chapter the current practice regarding the development of Natura2000 management plans in Europe will be analysed.

#### Considerations before developing management plans

Amongst others the following considerations can be helpful while developing management plans:

##### 1. Methodology

- Is a management plan really necessary? Clarification of the reasons for development of a management plan
- Who is going to initiate the plan and who will be responsible for the development and execution?
- What are the natural and socio-economic important aspects of a site?
- What are the main threats?
- What would you like to attain?
- How are you going to attain it and what is the specific time planning?
- How much will it cost? Is it the most optimal way to reach the conservation objectives?

##### 2. Objectives

The objectives for a site should be clear, realistic, quantified and reachable. They should be formulated clearly and understandably for all stakeholders

- What is a favourable conservation status?
- Does it depend on the unimpairment of the site?
- Are the dynamics of developing a favourable conservation status of species and habitats taken into account?
- Is the conservation status of the site defined in coherence with the ecological state of the network?

##### 3. Consultation and implementation

An important part of the implementation process is to develop a management plan that is carried by all stakeholders.

- Are all local actors involved?
- Are they participating according to a bottom-up approach?
- At which stages are the stakeholders involved?

##### 4. Monitoring and evaluation

This is an important part of the plan, in order to observe whether the plan is successful. Like the formulation of the conservation objectives, the monitoring should be defined clearly and precisely and should include how the monitoring is arranged financially.

*After Zanini & Reithmayer (2004), derived from the conclusions from the Galway seminar on SAC Management (Ireland, October 1996)*

Due to different traditions and different starting points, the process and progress of management varies widely between countries (see ANNEX 4: Authorities responsible for management and progress in writing and approval of management plans,

per country). Some countries structurally organise the writing of the management plans, often regionally through a state agency, and make good progress with writing management plans, leaving the final execution to others, such as local communities or special management authorities. In some countries this works well, because compensation schemes and procedures or guidelines are foreseen e.g. when drafting contracts. In other countries implementation has not progressed beyond preparation of the management plan, because no compensation measures, funds for contracts, etc. are available yet or, it is not clear yet who is responsible for a site's management. Other countries, like Luxemburg, organise the writing of management plans on an ad hoc basis, simultaneously with other major public works, or when landowners or users approach the authorities. This is leading to slow progress, but not necessarily to low quality.

Most countries develop management plans during the designation process of their Natura2000 sites, except for the Czech Republic where it is required by law to have a management plan before a site can be formally designated. In most countries it is obligatory to have all management plans ready within six years after designation of the Natura2000 sites, except for the Netherlands where it is three years.

In many countries lives the idea that the development of management plans takes about one year. Of course that depends on support of stakeholders, availability of data on the protected species and habitats, manpower, skills, etc. Due to various obstructions the development of management plans, especially at an early stage, can take several years. Additionally, some criticize that one year is too short for the formulation of management plans, as one year of conservation status data is too little for the definition of well founded conservation objectives and connected measures.

The timing of the formulation of management plans is influenced by the way a country organizes the writing of management plans, i.e. who is responsible for the writing of management plans, how are stakeholders involved, and is it a strict guided process or is there no guidance at all?

Existing nature reserves that became a Natura2000 site often already have management plans and an experienced administration, which can be an advantage for the development of Natura2000 proof management plans in comparison with new areas that were not protected before.

## **5.2 Guidelines**

The existence, use, development and level of detail of guidelines vary greatly between countries. Guidelines have been developed by Member States for the elaboration and approval of management plans, the content of management plans, procedures for public participation, measures for conservation of species and habitats, assessment and monitoring of sites, on priorities in writing and updating of management plans, for the execution of management plans, etc.

For administrative and transparency reasons it seems good practice to formulate management plans, however it also seems very important to guide the process of

writing in order to deliver precise, controllable plans, and to define the extent of management plans. In countries with less strict guidance (e.g. Cyprus, Greece, some regions in Austria), management plans vary widely in quality and are often vague in the formulation of conservation objectives and measures, which confuses stakeholders and makes it difficult to reach a target, verify management measures, measure progress, etc. and makes it more prone to conflicts at a later stage. Some countries have well organised and even very detailed guidelines on the priorities for the development of management plans (e.g. Finland, Italy), the content of management plans, on quantitatively formulated conservation objectives (e.g. Slovenia), and on potential benefits of a number of ways of socio-economic development in cooperation with nature protection (e.g. France).

Common guidelines are often in the form of a handbook for management plan developers including descriptions of the main principles, the process of management plan development, and specific requirements for particular types of territories

About two-third of the Member States have ‘self-developed’ guidelines. Some countries rely solely on the guidelines developed through Life Nature-programmes. In countries that do not provide clear guidance, the guidelines produced by international NGOs such as Birdlife International, Eurosite and WWF are used, usually by local NGOs that take the lead in the development of management plans.

Many countries have detailed guidebooks on the management measures required for Natura2000 species and habitats. Common guidelines are often a handbook for management plan developers including description of the:

- main principles
- development process and content of the management plan
- stakeholder participation
- specific requirements for particular types of territories, species and habitats.

In general countries have incorporated such guidelines in official laws, decrees, or ordinances, whereas to various degrees some countries – such as Luxemburg, Greece, some regions in Austria – did not adopt such guidelines officially. Although in the case of Luxemburg, strong guidance is given from the Ministry of Environment in the development of every management plan. This is in contrast to Cyprus that developed guidelines, through Life programmes, for the development of management plans and stakeholder participation, but its government so far did give little guidance to the actual development of management plans and the responsibilities therein.

Many countries have developed guidebooks for the management of specific Natura2000 species and habitats.

### **5.2.1 Some challenges in guiding**

Some major challenges were noticed when interviewing contributors (see Annex 2) and reading publications on Natura2000. The challenges described are exemplary for the Member States mentioned. It does not exclude however, that similar problems exist, to different degrees, in other Member States too.

### *Too little guidance*

In e.g. Austria no full consent has been reached in all states on the guidelines describing the content of a management plan (see section 4.5), therefore conservation objectives are often too vaguely formulated or even absent, and hence potentially jeopardizing the achievement of the favourable conservation status of species and habitats.

Cyprus and Greece have some guidelines of which some of them were developed in pilot projects, but the responsible authorities give little guidance in the further development, implementation and execution of (more) management plans and application of the existing guidelines, thereby leaving NGOs, landowner and users, local authorities and other stakeholders in limbo on what is going to happen with 'their' Natura2000 site (see also text box '*Political commitment*'). This might well be a questionable development for the successful achievement of the favourable conservation status of species and habitats.

#### **Political commitment**

A big issue in Greece (and in Cyprus as well) concerns the political commitment to nature conservation and the inherent weaknesses of traditional governing structures in designing and implementing nature policies.

Political commitment is not very strong and that reflects on the people. It appears that at the top level of the government little or no priority is given to successful development of Natura 2000, while at the site level people - Management Authority - often are interested in the successful development of Natura2000 sites.

Although the Greek government is obliged to have national legislation for safeguarding the Natura2000 conservation objectives, the Operational Plan for the Environment for 2009-2013 does not mention a plan to have a management structures for all Natura2000 sites, but only for 30 sites (the National Parks). Moreover, it does not explicitly state how, what and when appropriate management should be arranged. Protection and some management of SPAs will be approached by horizontal, national legislation, meaning that the same law applies to all sites, but it will be too general for the individual sites.

*Source: pers. com. Vogiatzakis, Papageorgiou, Vareltzidou (2008)*

In some countries, the biodiversity policy can still be developed more resolute. In Lithuania for instance, the government often relies on ad hoc procedures and seems to have some hesitation to take initiative, or to define a clear nature conservation strategy and allocate a sufficient budget for its implementation. Also in Cyprus it appears that a central force that guides the implementation of Natura2000 management is absent. Therefore the approval of management plans, that were already written in 2004 through Life and the Transition Facility Tools, lags behind.

### *Too general guidelines*

The experience is that guidelines are not a panacea for the development of all types of management plans, or for all types of Natura2000 sites. So, for instance France wrote manuals for all its habitats (see section 5.2.2), while Italy drafted specific guidelines for each of the 24 in Italy distinguished vegetation typologies. In Germany, the general strategy of the Development Plans for Nature reserves (so called 'PEP') that were developed for their Natura2000 sites, turned out to be less suitable for the small sized and fragmented sites in Berlin. And hence, the city

council of Berlin (Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung Berlin) decided to follow an alternative approach (see text box ‘*Experience in Berlin (Germany)*’).

#### **Experience in Berlin (Germany)**

One of the main problems of management planning for Natura2000 sites is that too many plans have to be written within a short period. Therefore, in most countries standard approaches have been created to formally fit all management plans into the same pattern – and also to pay the formulation of management plans according to fixed rules: In Germany the HOAI (Fee Structure for Architects and Engineers) determines the fee according to the size of the reserve, not according to the problems met in this reserve.

This standardized approach has already failed with the Development Plans for Nature reserves (PEP). In most of the cases you get generalized goals for the reserve as well as for the single items of nature conservation and theoretically valid measures. In practice they do not work, as the practical instruments to enforce a certain type of measure are missing.

The positive opportunity we have in Berlin is first, that we have only 15 Natura sites. For those it is not necessary to make general schemes for the content of a generalized management plan. We can decide for each site:

- what the main problem is
- on what scale we need to address these problems
- who our partners are with whom we can solve the problem with.

And fortunately we have not been squeezed into a straitjacket of time – to present management plans for all our sites within a few years.

Up to now we have been lucky to wait for a chance when certain pressure points, being the main problems within a reserve, became overwhelming and had to be solved on a different legal basis.

For example most of our reserves have problems with drinking water abstraction. Now, according to the environmental impact assessment all waterworks need a new admission – and enforced by the appropriate assessment procedure we together achieve a sustainable situation in which the drinking water abstraction can coexist with an acceptable state of preservation for major parts of the reserve.

Another group of our reserves are old parks. They get less and less money for gardening but have to serve for recreation of the city population. We combine the development of the Natura2000 management plan with the former park-management plan to find out where are goals in common, where they differ, and how zoning could be an answer for coexistence of nature protection and recreation (e.g. strict reserve, nature trails and intensive use playgrounds).

Up to now we have worked in small steps and individually and have found partners for quietly solving problems or parts of problems. We think that is a better output than have finished management plans for 90 percent of all Natura2000 sites in theory, but in reality have only little changed towards a better preservation status.

*Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung Berlin, personal communication (2009)*

### **5.2.2 Examples of guidelines**

A plethora of guidelines have been written or are written in the 27 Member States, nevertheless, a few examples are presented below.

### ***Common guideline for writing management plans***

In Latvia a general guideline for writing management plans has been published (Rule of Cabinet of Ministers No.686). It is exemplary for many of such general guidelines and consists of the following sections:

1. General information about organizing elaboration of nature management plans (about priorities, financing, contracting out, etc.)
2. Content of a management plan:
  - description of site;
  - assessment and evaluation of site;
  - long-term and short-term goals;
  - conservation and management planning;
  - propositions and suggestions for individual protection and usage regulations and justification for the functional zoning.
3. Process of elaboration – about informative meeting, about meetings of supervising group
4. Procedures for public hearing and approval of management plans.

### ***White Book in Austria***

In Oberösterreich (Austria) so called White Books or 'Weißbuch' have been written that provide information on the general impact for species or habitats of common socio-economic activities, in other words information on possible conflicts between the conservation objectives and the activities of people and enterprises located in the Natura2000 area. These books are used to inform local stakeholders about the implications of the designation of Natura2000 sites in their area, to enhance communication on Natura2000 management and as a basis for the development or adaptation of management plans. Central element of these books is a matrix of land use, divided over the categories agriculture, forestry, hunting, fishery and industry, against the Natura2000 species and habitats presented in that region. This matrix shows whether the activities have an impact on the species and habitats, and if so, that further measures are needed in the development of management plans and measures.

White Books are written by the environmental authority in cooperation with representatives from the hunting, fishery, and other sectors, landowners and users.

### ***Technical manual in Italy***

In Italy a diverse system exists that allows the site management to be integrated into sectoral or local policies, which might result in a too diverse and confusing panorama of management measures that undermines the coherence of the Natura2000 network. To avoid complications, the Ministry of Environment adopted the Decree Guidelines for Natura2000 management (Decree September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2002), together with a technical manual addressed to stakeholders and administrative bodies (see Annex 3).

### ***Conservation manual with economic management suggestions***

France has developed conservation manuals for different habitat types (e.g. forests, wetlands) called 'cahier d'habitats', which are extensive documents that serve as the basis for explaining what can and cannot be done in Natura2000 areas by private

landowners. It includes restrictions and a summary on scientific knowledge, production capacity and economic use, but most important it includes good economic management suggestions. It supported and still supports the development of individual management contracts with private owners. A first initiative to write such manuals was launched after the French government experienced that when there is little or no communication on what Natura2000 means in practice for the people concerned, those people probably will be suspicious, fear the worst and resist. The National Museum of Natural History plays a main role in the development of these manuals and has been assisted by amongst others, scientists and natural environment managers. The first manual was drafted in 2001 and appeared to be such a success that similar manuals have been drafted for the other Natura2000 habitats in France.

### ***Regional guiding, also master plans***

In Finland, in 2007, a detailed working plan – Natura2000 General Plan or regional Master plan – has been drafted for each of Finland's thirteen Environment Regions by the thirteen Regional Environmental Centres (see 4.2). The general plan describes which sites, how and when should be provided with an (updated) management plan and envisages a regional approach on the development of managements plans, taking into account spatial planning, ecological corridors, etc.

The more common management planning guidelines – about the content of management plans, procedures, etc. – have been written in Finland by the Natural Heritage Service (Metsähallitus) in 2003 and updated several times; the latest revision has just been completed in 2009. The planning process and documentation is uniform and always involves stakeholder and public participation.

### **5.2.3 Role of nature NGOs**

Guidelines from international nature organizations can play a leading role in the development of management plans and also in the design of national guidelines. In particular management boards and local nature NGOs frequently make use of such guidelines, especially in countries with no clear guidelines, but it occurs also, albeit to a smaller extent, in countries that do have guidelines on their own. Examples of international nature protection organisations that developed guidelines for Natura2000 management are Birdlife International, Eurosite, IUCN and WWF, but also the guidelines for European Biogenetic Reserves and European Diploma protected areas are used (see section 5.4.1 for more information about international guideline development projects). Also national or regional nature NGOs play a strong role in the development of guidelines. Such NGOs usually also take the initiative where governments lag behind, or lead in the application for European funds such as Life Nature, Life Environment and Life+. The Nature protection organization NABU in Germany developed guidelines for the development of management, which were mostly well received at the local level by NGOs as well as governmental organisations, because in some German states, little good advice, support or clear guidance has been given. In Greece for example, guidelines for the development of management plans and measures are used from Eurosite, as well as the open standards for practising conservation and adaptive management (MIRADI). Another example are local nature NGOs in Malta that used Birdlife guidelines and

management plan examples from the UK, although the Malta Environment and Planning authority has strict guidelines for the content of a management plan.

### **5.3 Responsibility and organization**

In every Member State it is the Ministry of Environment or equivalent that has the responsibility to arrange the management of the Natura2000 sites. The way these ministries organise the management varies: they either organise the management themselves, or they play a more background role by delegating responsibilities and only approve management plans and supervise. In general a Ministry of Environment delegates its responsibility to one of the following, or a combination of the following organisations:

- Regional and Local Environmental Authorities;
- newly set-up Management Authorities;
- National Park Authorities and equivalent for other protected areas;
- Institutes for Nature Conservation and Biodiversity;
- Local governments (municipalities) or provinces.

The aforementioned authorities and organisations, depending on the country or region, again are either writing the management plans themselves or supervising the writing of management plans that is carried out, either by contracted consultancies and nature NGOs (the case in many countries), or by working groups consisting of stakeholders involved with the site (e.g. in France).

The responsibilities for site management are sometimes shared between ministries, although the overall responsibility for the implementation of Natura2000 resides with the Ministries of Environment. For example areas like forests, harbours, waterways or military domains reside in most countries under a different responsibility than that of the Ministry of Environment, which can lead to conflicts of interests and delays in the execution of management if responsibilities and obligations are not clearly specified. (see sections 3.5, 4.2 and 4.4).

In many countries the government puts the development of management plans out to tender to NGOs, nature protected area authorities, universities, or other scientific institutions (Malta) and to consultancies as well (Luxembourg, Cyprus, Greece, etc.)

The responsible authority for the development and implementation of management plans per country is listed in Annex 4.

#### **5.3.1 Nature protected area administrations**

Many Natura2000 sites are (within) nature protected areas such as National Parks, Nature Reserves, etc. that already have their administrative structure, experienced staff, knowledge and facilities to develop and execute the management. This is the case in many countries (see section 4.2, and Van Apeldoorn et al., 2009a) and can be an advantage for the implementation of Natura2000. Sometimes these nature protected areas have even stricter protection than common Natura2000 sites that

allow harmless activities. In most countries the nature protected area administrations adapt and execute the management plans for their territories themselves, with – depending on the form of stakeholder participation – assistance from experts or other stakeholders, after approval of the Ministry of Environment or equivalent. In some cases Natura2000 sites also receive a new National Park status and thereby a management authority (e.g. in Greece, Malta).

In a few countries – e.g. Lithuania, Ireland and Hungary – the responsibility for the management of Natura2000 is in general given to the management authority of National Parks and similar nature protected areas.

Lithuania has been divided up in areas of responsibility covered by regional parks, national parks, strict nature reserves, etc. that all have their own administration (about 40). Such administrations are not only responsible for the park itself but also for surrounding protected areas – including Natura2000 sites – that do not have their own administration. Altogether, about 600 people are responsible for the Natura2000 network. The administrations are responsible for the development of management plans, monitoring, as well as for the execution of management plans. Development and execution of management plans can be carried out by the administration itself, or under supervision of the administration by municipalities for the areas they own, state forestry enterprises, contracted nature NGOs, institutions, or consultancies and alike. The administrations reside under the responsibility of the State Service for Protected Areas of the Ministry of Environment. Once a management plans has been developed it has to be approved by the Minister of Environment, by ministerial decree. The Species Action Plans (see section 4.2), nation wide applicable to certain species, are prepared by the Ministry of Environment.

In Hungary the responsibility for writing management plans resides with the 10 National Park Directorates and 12 regional environmental authorities. However, the capacity of these administrations did not increase with the rate of protected areas from 9% to 21%. Other problems are of communicative nature, between lower levels of Nature Park Directorates, Inspectorates and environmental authorities as well as between governmental authorities and stakeholders, despite the fact that there have been several communication projects and initiatives by government and NGOs. Landowners and users are still unaware of possibilities and limitations of Natura2000, which is resulting in disinterest and negative attitudes.

In Greece 27 new management authorities have been set up, to manage at least the 27 National Parks, of which 10 parks are officially approved at the time of writing. The other Natura2000 sites fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment directly and it is not clear how these areas will be managed. It could be that the responsibility for these areas will be given to the new Management Authorities, however, this is not yet clear decided. Forested areas might be managed by the Ministry for Forestry, although the Ministry of Environment remains responsible for the achievement of the favourable conservation status and therefore will need to cooperate (see also text box *‘Forestry Service one of the few authorities that have some experience in nature management in Greece. Will it be enough?’*).

***Forestry Service one of the few authorities that have some experience in nature management in Greece. Will it be enough?***

Little experience with public participation exists as the Forestry Service used to manage mostly protected areas that were neither close to the coast – no development pressure – nor involved in agriculture and mostly publicly owned. The new Natura2000 sites, apart from the former protected areas, are often privately owned, and are situated in the more developed and populated areas, leading to less straightforward designation and management plan development of the sites than before. Moreover, the Forestry Service could be reluctant to give responsibilities to newcomers in areas traditionally managed by them. However, examples exist that the Forest ry service is voluntarily supporting management of new nature protection Natura 2000 sites, although it is nowadays the first responsibility of the Ministry of Environment.

*Source: Papageorgiou, Vogiatzakis, pers. comm., 2008*

The Management Authorities in Greece consist of representatives of local and regional authorities, NGOs, scientists, local interest groups, etc., depending on local conditions, up to 11 people. The management plans are written by contractors, either consultancies, or administrations of nature reserves, according to technical documents that are issued by the Management Authority for each site and each action. The technical document specifies procedures for participation of socio-economic stakeholders, specific requirements for the management plan and specifications on the contract between the Management Authority and the contractor. The Management Authorities were established after law 2742/1999 in 1999 but it was not until 2007 that all 27 authorities became somehow operational. One of the problems in the writing of management plans is that the management authorities, being semi-independent of the Ministry of Environment, can not contract out the writing of management plans, but are dependent in this on the regional authorities. This can lead to delays in the writing of management plans, as well as to inflexibility during and after the assignment of the contract, when for example the borders of a site change. In many cases the functioning of the management authorities is hampered by for instance personnel that is only on a short contract regime of 3-6 months, by funding that is not secured for staff and management, and by a sometimes weak political commitment. It is also said that there is little coordination by the ministry, the board of directors members need to gradually change every three years, while relevant experience of Management Authority members is often not strictly required. The aforementioned law states that Management Authorities can not be a financial burden to the national budget, which makes them dependent on occasional project funding and therefore lack core funding to ensure the functioning and continuity of the Management Authorities. The discontinuity in the functioning presence of authorities, and management projects leads to distrust and resentment with in particular socio-economic stakeholders.

### **5.3.2 Governmental authorities**

In most countries the development and execution of management plans is under the responsibility of governmental authorities being the Ministry of Environment itself or lower government (e.g. Luxemburg and the Netherlands), or by state nature or

environmental management bodies (Czech Republic, Estonia, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden). In Poland the responsibilities are divided: Plans of Management Tasks (see section 4.5) are the responsibility of the Regional Director of Environmental Protection or the State Forestry Service, and management plans the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment. In Slovakia the responsibility for the approval of management plans depends on the size of the site. Management plans of small sites are approved by regional authorities, while management plans for larger sites need to be approved by the Ministry of Environment and the national government. A similar situation exists in Romania where the responsibility for managing Natura2000 sites resides with local, regional or national environmental protection agencies, depending on the local, regional or national significance. The agency and its local subsidiaries reside under the Ministry of Environment. In Denmark (see text box '*Example of management responsibility distribution (Denmark)*') and Latvia management plans are developed under the responsibility of an environmental or nature protection agency, but the execution of the management is the responsibility of local communes. In the countries mentioned directly above, the administrations of nature protected areas are usually responsible for the development and execution of management plans for their own territory, as is the case for forested areas (see section 4.2) where often forestry services play a major role in the development of management plans.

In former Eastern European countries, a weakness that may hamper the effective management of Natura2000 sites, is the often subordinate position of biodiversity policy and the related executive administration, compared to other policy domains. Not seldom, an ad hoc and a traditional "top-down" approach are maintained when it comes to arrange site management. Moreover, nature conservation NGOs are often seen as unfriendly and more of a problem than an advantage or a public support mechanism that should be nurtured. And besides, for their part NGOs are divided, often small and in competition with one another. Finally, the attitude of joining NGOs, as is the case in many Western European countries, is still developing. All disadvantages that are obstacles for a smooth implementation of the Natura2000 objectives. A participative approach to the preparation of management plans helps to deal with many of these problems. Some deep-rooted issues however, may require government intervention. In that case, the process of preparation can be lengthy, but the final result will improve considerably (pers. comm. E. Idle, 2009).

### ***Example of management responsibility distribution (Denmark)***

#### ***General responsibility***

Ministry of Environment with its subsidiaries Agency for Spatial and Environmental Planning (By- og Landskabsstyrelsen) and the Agency for Forest and Nature.

#### ***Preparation***

**Water (including Water Framework Directive), nature (including Natura2000), spatial planning, land use, climate and international projects, drawing of management plans**

Agency for Spatial and Environmental Planning, with a central administration and seven regional environmental centres.

#### ***Execution***

**Forestry, National Parks and management execution in these areas**

Agency for Forest and Nature (200.000 ha of forest and nature areas under the Ministry of Environment, including some Natura2000).

**Execution of management in other areas than forests and National Parks**

Local communes.

#### ***Monitoring and advice***

**Preparing guidance documents, developing criteria for favourable conservation status and methodologies for data gathering and analysis**

NERI, the Danish environmental research institute under Aarhus University, doing applied and strategic research.

In Latvia the Nature Protection Board, a governmental authority, organizes and supervises writing and renewal of management plans and promotes implementation of these plans for those Natura2000 sites that have no administration. All sites, except for those six sites that are National Park or Strict Nature Reserve have an administration of their own. The Nature Protection Board has the power to suspend or cancel licences and permissions and appoints a steering or supervising group (rule no. 686) for each site, which is composed of delegates of different stakeholder organizations, often representing opposed target groups of society. There is no special remuneration for the supervising group.

The State Environmental Service and the Regional Environmental Boards as its subsidiaries, is a member of the supervising group that is appointed for each site, which is in contrast to the leading role they played in the designation process of Natura2000 sites. However, Regional Environmental Boards are an important tool for ensuring implementation in the municipalities, because they are a governmental authority that controls a lot of actions in municipalities, such as the environmental impact assessments, granting of licences and permissions, definition of technical rules for actions that may harm nature, etc.

#### ***Local government***

As mentioned before, most often, the responsibility to prepare, implement and execute the Natura2000 management plans, is divided over several policy levels. The example of Italy is clear in this respect (see text box '*Distribution of management responsibilities in federal Italy*'). So, in many countries, though to a varying degree, it can be the responsibility of municipalities to execute and draw management plans, which can be the case when a site is municipal property. In quite a few countries, communes and municipalities have the responsibility for the execution of management at the sites in their territory. Although the municipalities can have much

responsibility for arranging the execution of management, they often give little priority to nature protection, due to insufficient knowledge and experience, unqualified staff, insufficient funding, depopulation of the countryside, etc.

Solutions that Member States have found to address some of the aforementioned challenges are:

- Involve NGOs, stakeholders, national park administrations, etc. in development and (preparation of) execution of management plans;
- Combine nature protection with socio-economic development (examples in De Blust et al., 2009 and Life Nature programme);
- Arrange EU funds and additional funding structures (although it seems that EU funds like Life Nature will fall short of covering the continuous management of all Natura2000 sites);
- Define responsibilities realistically, e.g. by developing management authorities, or arranging extra funds and guidance.

In Denmark and Latvia municipalities are intended to play a leading role in the execution of management plans. In Denmark local communes will be responsible for implementing the Natura2000 plans and will have to involve the private owners in the practical management, either through existing compensation measures or through existing subsidy schedules that stimulate close-to-nature practices, such as close-to-nature forestry. In Latvia the local government is responsible for the administration, the measures, management development and issuing of permissions, if a site is not under supervision of a National Park board or alike. In Denmark it might be less problematic to give municipalities such a responsibility, but in Latvia, Bulgaria, and Estonia, where resources are scarcer it might lead to serious delays in reaching the favourable conservation status of species and habitats. In other words, development and execution of management by local municipalities can have some drawbacks as at this local level there often is insufficient knowledge, capacity and financial resources available and no priority given (e.g. Bulgaria, Estonia, and Latvia). It is even more aggravated when there are no clear guidelines from higher hierarchical levels (e.g. some regions in Spain).

Municipalities also often have the task to inform landowners, users and other stakeholders about the implications of Natura2000 site designation for land management, and as often municipalities are badly informed and are sometimes even unaware of the existence of Natura2000 (unfortunately in many Member States).

### **5.3.3 Independent administrative bodies and facilitators**

Some countries set up independent administrative bodies or facilitators for the development of management plans and the execution. Such bodies are designed to facilitate the development of management plans and gain public support.

Natural England in the UK is an example that is rather independent from the UK government and functions as a facilitator between the government and stakeholders, when developing management plans and supervising the execution of the agreed management measures, it as well advises the government on nature protection issues. Hessen (Germany) has appointed special SAC-facilitators to guide the development of management plans and to facilitate the cooperation of the stakeholders.

In Ireland, Conservation Rangers function as facilitators in the development and execution of management plans.

In France a steering committee ('Comité de Pilotage') is preparing and supervising the management, and is directly set up by and under the supervision of the Prefect of the Département. It is comprising local authorities, landowners and users, representatives from rural agencies, farming, forestry and other sectoral organisations, water administration, nature NGOs and ecology experts (see 5.3.4).

Denmark has set-up regional water & nature councils, with important stakeholder groups represented, that is directly involved with the regional development of management plans for Natura2000 and for water (see 5.3.4).

## ***Distribution of management responsibilities in federal Italy***

### *From federal to local level*

In Italy management responsibilities are shared among the Ministry of Environment and the Regions and Autonomous Provinces. The other actors consulted for setting up the management of the areas, according to the law, are: the Permanent Conference for the Relations between State, Regions and Autonomous Provinces; the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Policies; National Institute for the Selvatic Fauna; the Bodies managing existing protected areas.

The Regions and Autonomous Provinces are responsible for applying conservative measures aimed at avoiding the degradation or perturbation of Habitats Directive habitats and species in the pSCI. The temporary conservation regime for the pSCIs remains in force until the official sites are designated as SACs. They are also in charge to adopt conservative measures for the SACs and SPAs within six months from their designation. The measures have to be based on the management guide lines that were adopted by a Decree of the Ministry of Environment after the consultation of the Permanent Conference for the Relations between State, Regions and Autonomous Provinces. The measures can encompass the creation of appropriate management plans or, where possible the management is to be integrated into development plans, or statutory, administrative or contractual provisions, in order to address the ecological requirements of species and habitats that are characteristic to Natura 2000 sites.

The Ministry of Environment defines the guidelines for the management in agreement with the Permanent Conference for the Relations between State, Regions and Autonomous Provinces.

When a Natura2000 site falls within an existing protected area, as defined by the law #394 of 6th December 1991, the measures provided by the legislation in force are applied. For the portions falling outside the border of the existing protected area, the Region or Autonomous Province needs to adopt suitable conservation measures and the management regulations.

### *Reporting*

The Ministry of Environment must report to the EC every six years from 2000 about the implementation status of the requirements of the Natura 2000 legislation, including information on conservation measures, the effects of these measures on the species' and habitats' conservation status, and the main results of monitoring. To contribute to the report, the Regions and Autonomous Provinces needs to present every two years from the emission day of the Decree 120/2003, on the measures adopted and on the criteria used to create management plans to the Ministry. Moreover, they report tot the Ministry according to the EC model and on eventual compensative measures.

### *Progress*

The Regions took advantage of the freedom granted by the national legislation by applying a variety of conservation systems varying per Region or even per site. A small number of Regions adopted legislations or regulations that refer to management measures or plans. Often management is regulated by referring to an Appropriate Assessment procedure, or urban and sectoral plans. Only three regions so far referred to the Natura2000 management in a law or management plan:

- Lombardia Region (Legge Regionale del 6-03-2002, n.4, Norme per l'attuazione della programmazione regionale e per la modifica e l'integrazione di disposizioni legislative) provides the integration of the site management into socio-economic and territorial policies.
- Toscana Region with a law on Natura2000 (Legge Regionale of 6-04-2000, n.56 Norme per la conservazione degli habitat naturali e seminaturali, della flora e della fauna selvatiche) that requires the provinces to adopt conservation measures, which can encompass management plans.
- Lazio Region, in a deliberation of the regional council dedicated to Natura 2000 (Deliberazione della Giunta Regionale del 2 agosto 2002, n.1103: Approvazione delle linee guida per la redazione dei Piani di gestione e la regolamentazione sostenibile dei SCI e ZPZ), establishes the criteria and guidelines to apply conservation measures, and delegates to the Regional Direction for the Environment and Civil Protection the task of educating local authorities and bodies about the guidelines and the possibility of drafting management plans.

#### **5.3.4 Writing a management plan**

Management plans are usually drafted by the responsible authorities (see the two foregoing sections), but can also be drafted by consultancies, nature NGOs and other organisations under the supervision of these authorities, and depending of the kind of stakeholder participation, are supervised, assisted or informed by steering groups consisting of local authorities, landowners and users, NGOs, and other stakeholder groups. Ultimately the government approves, or disapproves the management plan. As the approaches are very diverse in the European Union, a few approaches are listed below.

##### ***A general example from Lithuania***

In Lithuania experts are writing plans by public procurement (institutes, NGOs, consultancies) sometimes written in cooperation with the protected area administration and usually more than one at a time. Once the management plan has been written, it is sent to the Ministry of Environment for approval through the State Service for Protected Areas. Many management plans have already been written.

##### ***Ad hoc in Luxemburg***

In contrast to Lithuania and other countries where management plans are written on a structural basis, Luxembourg organises the writing of management plans more on an ad hoc basis. Luxembourg also contracts out the development of management plans, but the initiative to the development of management plans can be taken by a landowner/user or the Ministry of Environment. The Ministry of Environment usually takes the initiative and contacts local stakeholders when major (re)construction works are to be carried out such as river course reconstruction, Water Directive implementation, etc.

The administrative process is usually carried out by a consultancy and the Ministry keeps the supervision. It is important to note that both conservation objectives and measures are negotiated between the Ministry and stakeholders. There is no legal enforcement possible (yet). It is the Ministry and the Council for Sustainable development that finally approves the management plan.

##### ***Integrated approach in Denmark***

In 2007, before the preparation of the Natura2000 management plans started, the Ministry of Environment carried out a public hearing called “the phase of ideas”, where other sectors, organisations and private stakeholder were invited to submit ideas and proposals to the water and nature plans. Approx. 1700 proposals were submitted and the ideas are to the extent possible taken into consideration in the plans.

According to the work programme, another public hearing on the draft water and nature plans was to take place from December 2008 to June 2009. But this public hearing has been delayed due to some administrative difficulties. The draft water and nature plans are expected to go in public hearing in the near future. All available information in relation to the draft water and nature plans is meanwhile available on

www.vandognatur.dk, until the public hearing starts. When the public hearing starts the draft plans, the basis analysis and response forms will be moved to www.blst.dk.

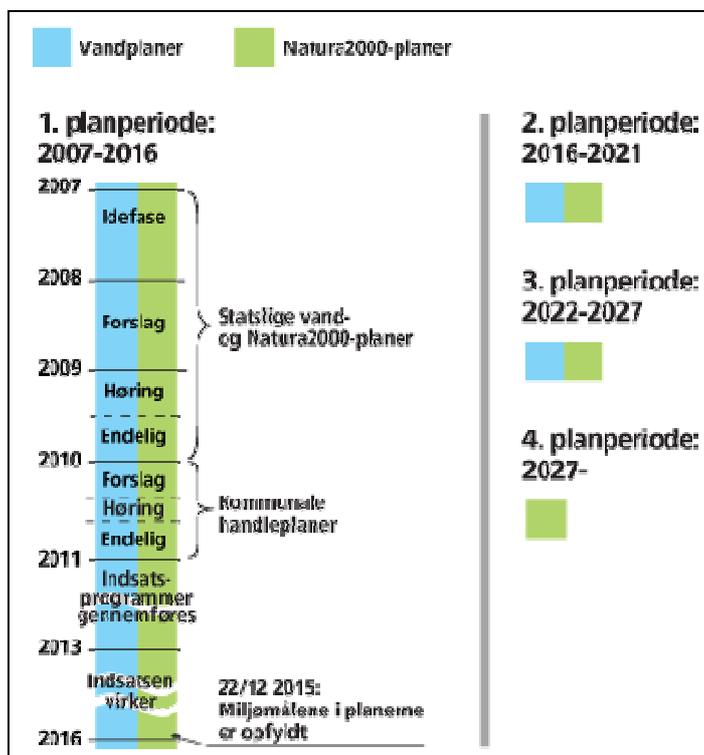


Figure 5.1 Time plan for the water and Natura2000 plans (source: www.blst.dk).

The time plan for implementation is illustrated in figure 5.1. After the public hearing, the plans will be adjusted according to incoming comments to the extent possible and finally adopted. According to the work programme the expected deadline is 22 December 2009. When the plans have been adopted, the Danish communes are responsible for preparing actions plans for the implementation of the water and nature plans. According to the work programme, the deadline for sending these draft action plans in public hearing is 22 June 2010. After the hearing, the final plans will be approved.

The seven regional environmental centres have prepared the water and Natura2000 plans in close cooperation with the local communes, the local forest centre, NGOs and other interested stakeholders. Regular meetings have been carried out. Furthermore, each regional environmental centre has established a water and nature council, where the larger stakeholder groups are represented. The water and nature councils carry out regular update and discussion meetings.

### ***Stakeholder involvement in France***

The process of writing management plans ('Document des Objectives, DOCOB') in France is based on three pillars:

- Steering committees ('Comité de Pilotage', COPI), usually set up by the Prefect of the Département and chaired by an elected representative of the local authorities, comprising local authorities, landowners and users,

- representatives from rural agencies, farming, forestry and other sectoral organisations, water administration, nature NGOs and ecology experts;
- Habitat conservation manuals ('Cahier d'habitats', see section 5.2.2) including restrictions, a summary on scientific knowledge, and most importantly suggestions for good economic management. It supports the development of individual management contracts with private owners;
- Training programmes for people involved in developing and writing plans and site managers (administrations responsible for implementation of Natura2000, technical operators and managers at site level and members of the steering committee) organised by ATEN (L'Atelier techniques des espaces naturels).

DOCObS are prepared under the responsibility of the Prefect of each Département, assisted by a facilitator and with full stakeholder participation, according to the following procedure:

- A facilitator drafts the management plan in cooperation with the steering committee and is responsible for the implementation of the plan;
- Steering committee and working groups meet periodically, once the committee has reached its final decision, the management plan is passed on to the Prefect (State) for approval;
- Technical studies are executed to specify ecological and socio-economic characteristics of the sites;
- Management and conservation objectives and their implementation by specific contracts are negotiated in the steering committee with private landowners (or users) with the help of the facilitator. The State will fund the contracts after approval.

The process may appear to be very elaborate and time consuming, however, it has the advantage of nurturing an integrated approach on the implementation of Natura2000, in a wider frame of rural development, with a strong emphasis on stakeholder participation and integration of socio-economic stakeholders in the process. Management plans are not set for a certain time limit and allow modifications for ecological, institutional or juridical reasons. However, an evaluation report was planned to be written every six years.

Once a management plan is approved, landowners or users can accept the provisions of the management plan by entering into different types of contracts, signed by the Prefect (the State) for a minimum of five years. They include specification of the work to be carried out to conserve or restore habitats and species, the nature of funding from the State and the conditions of the payments. State funding can be in the form of investment subsidies or annual payments per hectare.

#### ***Technical procedure description from Italy***

A detailed and representative example for the elaboration of a management plan is illustrated by the Italian manual for writing management plans. It follows an iterative process, starting with the collection of information about the site, representative species and habitats, then with the verification of existing conservative measures and ends with the evaluation of the necessity to create a new plan. Before a plan can be

made the concept of the favourable conservation status must be translated into indicators easily measurable; for the indicators thresholds have to be identified, in order to be able to monitor the effectiveness of conservation measures.

The phases for the creation of plans are:

1. Collection of information on the site (descriptive, quantitative, cartographic)
2. Evaluation of habitats' and species' ecological needs
3. Definition of indicators
4. Identification of impact factors and threats
5. Definitions of the objectives of the site
6. Definition of a management strategy through the possible interventions on the site:
  - Active interventions, aimed at removing or reducing a disturbance factor.
  - Regulations, which impose behaviours to adopt in determinate circumstances and locations.
  - Incentives, aimed at stimulating stakeholders to adhere to certain practices, procedures or managing methodologies which favour the fulfilment of the management plan's goals.
  - Monitoring or research programs aimed at measuring the species' and habitats' conservation status and verify the effectiveness of the management plan.
  - Educational programs, aimed at implementing sustainable behaviour models and knowledge within local communities.

To make the management plan more efficient and easy to apply, the management actions are exposed in the form of a standard file. The file includes the following information:

- Site typology;
- Site code and denomination;
- Action;
- Geographical area of intervention;
- Action typology;
- Cartographic data, only in case of localized actions ;
- Description of the actual state of the species, habitat for which the site has been designated;
- State indicators;
- Aims of the actions (measures);
- Action description and operative program;
- Verification of the action state of implementation;
- Description of the expected results;
- Involved economical interests ;
- Competent subjects;
- Action priority;
- Time and Costs estimation;
- Programmatical references and financing framework;
- Technical annexes

With regard to the cartographical annexes, the plan should include a territorial contextualization with respect to other Natura2000 sites, a land use map, and an

action map, which represents a summary report that allows the geographical localization of the conservative actions.

### ***Management agreements in Wallonia (Belgium)***

In Wallonia, the proper management plan for a Natura2000 site, is specified in a series of documents. General protective Natura2000 management rules are incorporated in the law on Natura2000. More specific management objectives and regulations are specified in the designation arrests. When the obligatory public consultation leads to consensus on an active management agreement, the Walloon government makes a contract with the landowners and users concerned, to reach the targets of the active management agreement, after advice from the conservation council and the Walloon Supreme Court for Nature Conservation. If the consultation does not lead to consensus, the Walloon government defines its own measures after advice of the conservation committee (consisting of stakeholders). The contract contains the:

- places, periods and kind of works that need to be executed to reach the conservation targets;
- division of the works between landowners and –users concerned;
- estimate of the expenses necessary to execute the conservation measures.

Management agreements already in place for areas that received a Natura2000 status, and that contribute to reaching the conservation targets, may be considered as an active management agreement.

An active management agreement is valid for ten years. The active management agreement is renewed under the same conditions for ten years again, unless all landowners and –users concerned signed a cancellation of the agreement and notified the Walloon government. The list of prohibited activities and the preventive measures to be taken in or outside the Natura2000 areas are set by the Walloon government after advice of the conservation committee.

When necessary, the management agreements and thus the management plans, can only be changed by initiative of the Walloon government, by one third of the conservation committee, or on substantiated request by a landowner or user, with regard to the developments of scientific knowledge, management techniques and the conservation status of the area. Every request needs an advice by the conservation committee.

### ***Nature NGOs take the lead***

A number of Member States has not allocated funds for the development of management plans, but expect to arrange that through EU funding. In some cases NGOs take the lead and start making the management plans on their own initiative, also arranging funds for writing the plans and the execution of the management. They also take the lead in contacting stakeholders, including landowners and users, the community, and even armed forces. Also the public will be involved, following formal procedures. At Malta for instance, after the management plan has been drafted, the public has six weeks to object or give their opinion. The comments and objections are sent to the Malta Environment and Planning Authority that then either approves or rejects the plan. Approval is essential before any activity can be

carried out on a site. After five years the management plan needs to be renewed. Baseline studies on the conservation status are done by consultants.

This all illustrates that Nature NGOs play an important role in the development of management plans, as well as in their execution. Being critical advisors in many countries, nature NGOs also often own and manage Natura2000 sites, or execute management measures under the authority of landowners or governmental organisations. These organisations consist of very motivated people, often working voluntarily, and are experienced with communication, and ecological and socio-economical aspects of nature management. It is clear that NGOs taking the lead often play an important role where national governments lag behind.

#### **5.4 Stakeholder participation**

In many countries, stakeholder participation was poorly organised or even absent during the designation of Natura2000 sites, which led to many protests and unwillingness for further cooperation (see Van Apeldoorn et al., 2009a). With regard to the necessary involvement of stakeholders in the management of Natura2000 sites, and considering the private ownership of lands, the vast areas to be managed, etc., many countries learned from these earlier mistakes and involve stakeholders more intensively in the development of management plans, management measures and conservation objectives. Moreover, many habitats and species need some human intervention in the management and therefore site management depends on individual owners and users, who need to cooperate voluntarily in most cases. For examples on how conservation objectives can be reached by well conducted integrated management plans, by cooperation or initiatives of socio-economic stakeholders and criteria for integrated management see the third report of the project (De Blust et al., 2009).

In most countries stakeholder participation is formally arranged, although the extent of the organization of stakeholder participation varies widely (see Table 4.1). Even in countries where stakeholder participation is not arranged formally, such as Estonia and Luxemburg, an informal manual for making management plans usually exists that foresees stakeholder involvement. The absence of formal procedures however can make the process of participation a bit unclear for stakeholders, and moreover stakeholders will lack the possibility to go into appeal after incorrectly applied stakeholder participation procedures.

Countries can be characterized by the following types of participation (Unnerstall, 2008) (see also text box *'Examples of types of participation in the Member States'*):

- Informal consultation: the public administration body arranges the management plans and informs the public but does no more. Sometimes the public is welcome to express its opinion, which might possibly be taken into account by the administrative body. Sometimes information meetings are organized, but in some cases, locally posted announcements have not been noticed by the public;
- Formal consultation and approval: the public administration body arranges the management plans, publishes information and stakeholders have legal

rights to express their opinions, which have to be considered by the administration authority. Again, local posted announcements are not always seen by the public;

- Shared responsibilities (full participation): stakeholders (landowners, users, authorities and NGOs) are brought together, often in some kind of management board, are invited to express their opinions and are directly involved in the development of management plans.

The first two approaches can be considered as a top-down approach, where the state arranges the management plans at the local level, whereas in the third approach, stakeholders from local or regional level are directly involved in the arrangement of management plans, usually supervised by regional or national authorities. This is a mix of top-down and bottom-up approaches, and it works in both directions.

It is demonstrated from several capacity-building projects as well as from countries such as France, Finland, and the UK, that early and active stakeholder participation (shared responsibilities) works quite well for writing realistic management plans, and that it is a way to lessen negative attitudes towards Natura2000. At least one third of the Member States facilitate stakeholder participation in the development of management plans, although active stakeholder participation is, in some countries, only applied when the execution of management plans needs to be arranged (i.e. following the development of management plans by governmental authorities), which might be rather late. This is the case in Denmark, for example, where stakeholders are formally consulted in the development of management plans, and there is a possibility that this might be leading to less commitment among stakeholders towards the execution of these plans when communes need to develop the action plans.

With regard to the execution of management plans, in some countries like the Baltic States the landowner or user will have to apply for (scarce) funding himself, whereas in other countries like Luxemburg and Austria the landowners or users are approached by the responsible authorities to set-up management contracts.

## ***Examples of types of participation in the Member States***

### ***Informal, public information***

Stakeholders are informed about the development of management plans, writing of the management plan is done by an organisation that may informally collect objectives and ideas from the stakeholders: Least transparent, least participative way.

*Example:* In Ireland the prescribed farming conditions and measures required to protect the site are communicated with owners and users.

### ***Formal consultation***

Stakeholder participation is foreseen in the legislation. Stakeholders can object to and comment on the development of management plans, although the writing process is done by a third party: Process is more transparent; stakeholders are involved to some extent.

*Example 1:* In Lithuania it is obligatory to consult all stakeholders. Although there is no legal procedure for public participation the Ministry of the Environment can stop the approval of the plan when no public consultation is carried out.

*Example 2:* Organized by regional or national environmental authorities (Finland, Denmark) with steering groups consisting of stakeholders (see also 5.3.4).

*Example 3:* According to the regulation on management plans in Bulgaria (2009), public consultation is compulsory during the elaboration of the management plans. The Minister of Environment is obliged to organize public hearings, seminars, workshops and any other discussions with interested stakeholders. Thirteen days before the official public hearing, it should be announced in the public media, and the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, of Economy, of Agriculture, the relevant municipalities, and the regional authorities concerned with the plan should be invited and informed. During the public hearing the management plan and all related issues are presented. The management plan should be made accessible through the web sites of the competent authorities. All reflections of the public during the public hearing have to be documented and later attached as prove to the management plan.

### ***Shared responsibilities***

The stakeholders are writing the management plans themselves, usually coordinated by an organisation or facilitator. If the stakeholder participation is correctly conducted it can lead to the formulation of common targets and mutual understanding of each others interests: Very transparent, strongly participative.

*Example 1:* In Latvia representatives of all stakeholders of a site are directly involved in the process of preparing a management plan as members of the supervisory board, which meets at least three to four times during the process. At the beginning of the process as well at its finalizing stage wider public hearings are carried out. At the first formal consultation, present people are invited for the Steering Group. However, in many cases local people do not realize the importance of the Steering Group in the development of the conservation objectives, restricted activities and management measures and therefore, due to unawareness, they lack the ambition to become a member of the Steering Group.

Suggestions about protection of species and habitats can be submitted by any person or organisation. The proposals should be handed in to the responsible authority and should include the following information:

- justification of the necessity of the plan
- amount of work and money required
- sources of financing
- developer and cooperation partners
- interest groups influenced by the plan

*Example 2:* See the example of France in section 5.3.4.

### ***Participation at a regional level***

Stakeholder participation is, depending on the Member State and type of site, organized at national level, regional level or local level. In general, management plans are written at individual site level, although some regions of e.g. Finland, Austria and Hungary organise the writing of management plans at a regional level, thereby involving stakeholders at a regional level instead of only at site level, as well as integrating different regional planning aspects like agriculture, spatial planning, forestry, water, industry and tourism (see also text box ‘*An example of public participation on regional level, Niederösterreich (Austria)*’). Also, attention can be given to the ecological coherence of the Natura2000 sites in the region. This makes planning more cost-efficient, flexible and simpler for stakeholders.

#### ***An example of public participation on regional level, Niederösterreich (Austria)***

Niederösterreich (Austria) organises the development of management plans at a regional level, not on site level. They have grouped the 36 Natura 2000 sites in 5 regions, the same regions that exist for regional development planning. At this regional level stakeholder participation, coordination and project development for the management of the Natura 2000 sites is organized.

#### *Advantages*

Through the regional approach synergies are created by

- harmonizing regional tourism, infrastructural planning, municipal development
- harmonizing conflicting conservation objectives between sites – e.g. overlapping bird and habitat areas – and within sites
- goal-oriented finance plans, by selecting and investing in the highest priorities, instead of spreading the money equally over all Natura 2000 sites

*Source: Ellmauer, 2006*

### ***Negotiating conservation objectives***

In contrast to most countries, in Flanders (Belgium) and France, stakeholders are involved in defining conservation objectives of species and habitats. The intention is to encourage active participation in nature conservation and to give stakeholders a sense of ownership of nature conservation, in order to avoid conflicts. Generally this seems to work (see 5.4.1), although the original conservation objectives should be safeguarded. Stakeholder participation in France has already been described in section 5.3.4.

In Flanders the conservation objectives are first defined at Flemish regional level and then at site level (see section 4.5). Representatives of stakeholder groups (e.g. farmers, hunters, etc.) are involved in the formulation of national conservation objectives, starting from objectives provided by the Research Institute for Nature Forest (INBO). This first part has been successfully finished and the environmental authorities will now start with the definition of site objectives. Representatives of stakeholder groups, as well as local stakeholders, will participate in the ‘distribution’ of conservation objectives over the sites. Because the stakeholder groups have been involved in the formulation of regional conservation objectives for species and habitats, they are already informed and will assist in the communication and translation of the objectives to individual (local) landowners and users.

### 5.4.1 Communication, education and capacity building

To change the perception of Natura2000 from a threat to a potential benefit is a key issue. Landowners, land users, other socio-economic stakeholders and even authorities often regard Natura2000 as a threat to development and exploitation, or are not even aware that Natura2000 exists and so needs to be accounted for in the development of areas. Some stakeholders are unaware of the potential benefits of Natura2000, and have not considered the idea that Natura2000 sites often can, or even must, be exploited in some way, albeit without degrading the conservation status. Although many awareness campaigns and other communication efforts have been undertaken by the Member States, knowledge of the meaning of Natura2000 is still underdeveloped, which leads to unnecessary resentment against the implementation of Natura2000.

Experience from France, Finland and many other countries (see also Bouwma et al., 2009) shows that all regions face similar discussions with stakeholders on the consequences of site designation for land use. Independently from the process of implementation and stakeholder consultation, there were and are inevitable conflicts between nature conservation and other human activities. Nature conservation can have significant consequences for other land use activities and hence for the landowner and users, who therefore could probably disagree to these land use changes. It is therefore essential to start a discussion about land use activities that have negative effects, and possible ways to change these land use activities. Such a discussion could be started by nature NGOs or local or regional authorities. It has been noticed throughout the research project, and several other studies show as well (e.g. Bouwma et al, in prep.) that when landowners and users are taken serious early in the process, they are less likely to object than when they have never been informed or consulted at all (see e.g. the positive example of the French development of management plans).

#### ***Initiatives for capacity building, education and communication***

Member States are much more active in communicating Natura2000 to the general public, as well as to stakeholders, when compared with the designation process. Not seldom, this communication strongly emphasises integrated management (see also text box *Two examples on integrated regional capacity building for Austria, Germany, Italy and Slovenia*). Amongst others the following activities are undertaken to promote and communicate Natura2000:

- information stands within the protected areas;
- leaflets and brochures about particular Natura2000 sites;
- TV programmes, shows and films;
- informative meetings during site designation or management plan development;
- articles in newspapers;
- guide books that describe the potential impact of certain development activities on species and habitats, and ways to mitigate the impacts (e.g. White book in Austria);
- inclusion in educational programmes in schools and universities;
- trademarks or certificates for sustainable Natura2000 products, development or activities.

In Flanders (Belgium) the government pays a salary for intermediates in different stakeholder organizations (e.g. the farming organisation, the regional hunting organisation, etc.) to inform the members of the stakeholder organisations about the implications of Natura2000. In this way information is provided by the stakeholder organisations themselves to its members and meanwhile bonds are built between the government and stakeholder groups with regard to Natura2000.

In Niederösterreich (Austria) several initiatives have been raised for communication on Natura2000:

- Info-evenings that can be booked for groups up to 30 people, to inform stakeholders on Natura2000. The region provides the lecturer, who is an expert on agriculture, forestry, spatial planning, or commerce;
- Information boards on Natura2000, specific for each site and placed at each site;
- Information portfolios available at all municipalities, regional and local Chambers of Commerce, district chambers of farmers, etc., containing information on the Natura2000 sites in general, conservation objectives and measures, and the protected species and habitats;
- Project-advice service desk for small, medium and large enterprises that plan new activities at or close to a site, which informs about possible conflicts and solutions. Advice on small projects, or the first day of advice is free;
- Natura2000 hotline (in Austria), where all kinds of questions with regard to Natura2000 are answered.

In France, ATEN (L'Atelier technique des espaces naturels) provides a training programme on Natura2000 for:

- developers of management plans of Natura2000 sites;
- staff of administrations responsible for the implementation of Natura2000;
- technical operators at site level (executing the management);
- members of the steering group ("Comité de Pilotage").

The level of trainings provided is quite extensive. ATEN also facilitates regional and interregional knowledge exchange, through the organisation of seminars, printing of leaflets and newsletters, a website, etc., as well as it prepares guidelines for the contract-based management of sites.

In the UK Natural England, alongside NGOs, is providing public information on the implementation and management of Natura2000. It also provides expertise to site managers by providing:

- site management statements and conservation objectives, and related management advice;
- assistance in writing funding applications, management contracts, etc.;
- information on the distribution of species and habitats, their sensitivity and conservation status.

***Two examples on integrated regional capacity building for Austria, Germany, Italy and Slovenia.***

*Integrated Protected Area Management (IPAM) of the Alps-Adriatic region* ([www.ipam.info](http://www.ipam.info))

Provides general applicable toolboxes for awareness raising and participation, making of species and habitat inventory, monitoring, and development of management plans. It aims to provide best practices and a forum to share experiences and contacts of parties involved.

*AlpNaTour a pilot and guiding programme for the development of management plans in tourist intensive areas in the Alps* ([www.alpnatour.info](http://www.alpnatour.info))

With emphasis on the potential of Natura 2000 for tourism and special focus to examining and guiding the impact of tourists on sites, including examples for Austria, Germany, Italy and Slovenia.

Experience with writing management plans for some Natura2000 sites is shared between Member States, supported by bilateral programmes, Twinning programmes or programmes supported by European funds, like Life Nature, Life Environment or Life+, or PHARE, etc. and is often used as guidance for the development of management plans for other Natura2000 sites (e.g. in Poland, Cyprus, Greece, some states in Germany, etc.) (see also text boxes '*Stakeholder participation, capacity building and communication in Poland, an example of a Twinning project*' and '*Stakeholder participation and site management in the Polish Carpathians in 2009 (South-East Poland)*'). In some countries like Greece and Cyprus, Life projects are currently the only tools for capacity building. So far Cyprus is even completely depending on Life projects. Although aforementioned projects lead to management plan development guidelines and management plans, in many of these Member States like Cyprus, Poland, Latvia those management plans have not been approved yet, even in cases where such plans were developed a couple of years ago.

***Stakeholder participation, capacity building and communication in Poland, an example of a Twinning project***

In Poland management plans for 55 Natura 2000 sites and 15 national species plans were prepared in 2006 and 2007 by means of a similar stakeholder participation process (using local work shops) as that described in *Management Plans for Protected Areas (Eurosites)*.

After translation of this document into Polish (with entertaining cartoons), the process was a matter of “learning by doing” in which, with the aid of a Polish facilitator and the guidance from Dutch and UK experts, local groups of stakeholders produced their own management plan.

During the sessions in the process Polish was translated into English because of the Dutch and UK participants. In spite of the consequences for the translation costs and time the sessions were very successful. Guidance and quality control was exercised by the Dutch and UK experts who suggested an overall framework and contents list for the final Plan documents.

In many cases the workshops on integrated management plans were the first opportunity to participants to voice their concerns or question what Natura2000 was about. They were enabled to discuss with more accurate information the management and requirements of a site with friends and neighbours. Till that moment there had been virtually no effort to inform stakeholders and only limited communication programmes were organized. The first workshops were often highly confrontational for these reasons.

The process convinced the Polish facilitators of the benefits of a participative approach to prepare management plans.

*Source: E. Idle, pers. comm. 2009*

## ***Stakeholder participation and site management in the Polish Carpathians in 2009 (South-East Poland)***

*A pilot project by the Polish National Academy of Sciences supported by the Norwegian Financing Mechanism (European Economic Area Treaty and European Free Trade Association)*

### **Description of the project area**

The size of the alpine Natura2000 region in Poland that is covered with the project is 10,000 km<sup>2</sup>; and most of the activities are targeted to 23 Natura2000 sites of various sizes (from a few ha to ca. 100,000 ha)

### **Stakeholders**

Most important stakeholders are: state forests administration (most of our forest are not private), local authorities (communes), national parks and landscape park administration, regional directorates of environmental protection, tourism facilities owners, and private owners – mainly farmers and local agriculture advisors. The intension is to involve the water management authorities more intensively than now, as they are quite influential on biodiversity. Generally the most “powerful” and at the same time helpful stakeholders are state forests and local authorities.

### **Method**

Maintaining Carpathian biodiversity is the central idea of the whole project. The project leaders follow two roads:

- Changing local authorities and people attitude to nature conservation by a number of meeting, consultation, dissemination of education materials;
- Gaining pure ecological effect by pilot programmes of active conservation (mountain meadows mowing, removal of pine trees from mountain peat bogs etc.).

One of the most important activities is stakeholder participation in the process of management planning for the 23 Natura2000 sites. Another important item is that best practice recommendations are developed for the implementation of practical conservation measures (like natural habitats management) and for Natura2000 planning and inventory practices.

### *Tools:*

- Financing of local initiatives, including active conservation, educational activities
- Dissemination of publications
- Open and frank consultation process

### *Some examples:*

- 15 Farmers received equipment (special fences, shepherd dogs) and training how to protect their sheep flocks against wolves;
- More than 10 local entrepreneurs realised active conservation activities (mowing and forest works);
- More than 600 people took part in trainings and workshops – e.g. on how to apply for new Natura2000 oriented funds within agri-environmental schemes, the state of the Natura2000 designation process, and to discuss the threats they see in Natura2000;
- Set of 9 posters and 7 booklets was disseminated within local communities.

A number of further aims and subprojects are still to be realised, as the project is still underway in its first half.

### **Added value**

- One of the most important is the strengthening of cooperation between scientists, state forest administration and nature conservation authorities
- Improving of flow of information on Natura2000 sites between different stakeholders
- Supporting local cooperation on Natura2000 management

*Source:: W. Mróz, project leader “Natura2000 in the Carpathians”, Institute of Nature Conservation, National Academy of Sciences, Krakow, Poland, pers. comm. 2009*

### 5.4.2 Some challenges in stakeholder participation

In cases where Member States set-up steering groups consisting of stakeholders to develop management plans (see section 5.4), often local stakeholders are unaware of the importance or potential of being member of such a steering group. That is most probably related to insufficient communication towards the stakeholders by authorities, and stakeholders therefore sometimes lack the ambition to be part of such a steering group. It seems that this is especially the case in rural areas of states with (formerly) a strong centralized policy regime and few self-organized participatory processes.

In rural areas in the Baltic States, and possibly also Central-Eastern states as well as in other European countries, local landowners and users are often not open to, what they call, again some meddling by the government with their land use practices. This will be especially the case when these stakeholders lack the resources and experience to change their current land use and invest in a economic development that is more in balance with nature conservation. As the ownership of land is not yet stabilized in many Central and Eastern- European countries, the stakeholder groups quite often undergo profound and dynamic changes. Again, this process hinders an harmonious collaboration.

Organizing effective public consultation requires an efficient organization of the process and collaboration of the different policy levels, as well as sufficient staff and budget and other essential communication means. When communication is restricted to information being posted at municipal notice boards, where nobody reads it, and stakeholders remain in limbo, conservation projects will gain little collaboration and support, as experienced for instance in Latvia. In Italy, public involvement or consultation in the development of management instruments is not mandatory by law. Only in some cases such as an Appropriate Assessment or the reintroduction of species it is suggested to carry out some kind of consultation of local authorities and interested public. Nevertheless, public consultation is the responsibility of local authorities. This task is often not carried out, and if it is, the procedure differs per region, province, municipality, or even per site (see also text box '*Are stakeholders too late involved in the development of management plans?*').

#### ***Are stakeholders too late involved in the development of management plans?***

In Hungary and Lithuania a ministerial order regulates the way of public participation in the process of the preparation of management plans. The moment stakeholder participation is organized usually comes late in the process. Our respondent (see source) describes that the first draft is prepared by a professional, but conservation oriented organization (in Hungary by a national park directorate), after which the ministry approves it. After approval by the ministry, the second draft is sent to the different stakeholders for comments.

The respondent thinks this is a wrong way, since the stakeholders consider the document as something against them. They become immediately resistant, since they have not been involved in the drafting process and have no ownership of the management plan at all. Having no manpower and other necessary means, in many cases the public consultation is formal, stakeholders do not even know about it at all. In these cases the second draft is simply put on the information board of the local community (waiting for comments) where nobody reads it.

*Source: experienced management plan developer for Hungary and Lithuania, pers. comm., 2008*

In Flanders (Belgium) originally the intention of the government was to make detailed management plans compulsory for all Natura2000 sites, together with shared responsibilities for the development of management plans based on consensus. However, after drawing six pilot management plans (Natuurrichtplannen), management plans are now considered as optional. According to the nature conservationists, the consensus based approach leads to goals being set disappointingly low. Furthermore, the government agency which is responsible for the preparation of the plans, states that currently, it is too time-consuming to conduct these processes at every site, and that it should only be used as a tool where suitable. However, an assessment of the conservation status per Natura2000 site, plus a detailed elaboration and definition of the conservation targets concerning the designated habitats and species, is prepared. The results of these studies will be subject to public consultation. Then it will become clear how consensus can be reached and what type of measures have to be taken to achieve the agreed conservation targets.

## **5.5 Management instruments**

A plethora of instruments is used to execute the management plans and to reach the favourable conservation status of Natura2000 species and habitats. The most important instruments are:

- Contracts. Usually voluntarily agreed on between government or a management authority and landowners/users, specifying management measures to be taken or conservation targets to be reached. Measures are in general defined by the stakeholders. Usually compensation is arranged according to nationally arranged compensation schemes, for loss of revenue or to pay for the execution of management measures. Once a contract has been arranged the management has a legal basis and can some times be enforced;
- Letters of intent. A more flexible strategy than a contract, with at least some commitment of the stakeholder, however, it is not enforceable;
- Integration of nature conservation in other support programmes, e.g. for rural development, regional development, tourism, hunting, water, etc. Requirements of such programmes are adapted to support its original aim, as well as nature conservation, in order to reach favourable conservation status. This is similar to the strategy followed by the EU, but may be more elaborate;
- Licensing. Activities on a Natura2000 are regulated through licensing aimed at reaching favourable conservation status for species and habitats. Licences are given by management authority to landowners and users;
- Tax on use of natural resources. The taxing regulates the use of natural resources. The revenue can be used to support management measures to reach the favourable conservation status of species and habitats;
- List of allowed and forbidden activities that can influence the favourable conservation status of species and habitats. These lists are mostly used in combination with licensing;
- Buying of land from private owners or expropriation, after which the government is responsible for the execution of management (not used in all Member States). In some countries publicly-owned Natura2000 sites can not

be sold to private owners. In some countries the government has the first right to buy a Natura2000 site.

### ***Contract based management***

The instrument of contract based management is considered as the basis for site management in most European Member States, and is amongst others related to agri-environmental, rural or regional development schemes. It seems that contract based management is getting more and more popular, in stead of classical nature protection, licensing and the enforcement of restrictions.

Landowners or users are paid for carrying out measures, for compensation, or for reaching certain conservation targets, or receive tax exemption. In most Member States such contracts are based on voluntary participation, which is an advantage for obtaining the support of the local community.

### ***Challenges***

The disadvantage of this approach is that it can not be imposed on unwilling landowners or users, except for some countries like the UK, Estonia, Latvia or Bulgaria where in theory management could be enforced.

Another challenge of voluntary management agreements is that when Natura2000 sites are situated in rural regions that suffer depopulation it is very difficult to involve the landowners that live elsewhere, with often little or no interest in rural life, which is the case in Portugal and throughout Europe.

Also in Austria differences in interest for voluntary management programmes vary, where the majority of small and well-cared-for Natura2000 sites entered into a voluntary management agreement compared to only up to 7% of larger and less- or not-cared-for Natura2000 areas (Suske, 2005).

In some Member States (e.g. Baltic States, Greece, Malta) there is little money available for implementing the contracts. And will (EU) supporting funds be sufficient for Hungary for 1.3 million hectares that are managed based on an approach of motivation rather than penalization?

### ***Examples of contracts***

In France different types of management contracts can be signed (also for marine sites), depending on the management activities are related to productive or non-productive measures. The most important contracts are:

- 'Natura2000 contract' for non-agricultural and non- forestry sites, managed by the Ministry of Environment;
- 'Sustainable Agricultural Contract' (CAD) managed by the Ministry of Agriculture.

The Sustainable Agricultural Contract is a bit different from a 'Natura2000 contract', as only farmers and foresters can sign it. When a farmer wants to sign such a contract, a complete diagnosis of his farm will be carried out, in order to decide on the different measures to be mentioned in the contract. A number of measures are compulsory (e.g. limitation of herbicides) and some are optional (e.g. mechanical weeding). Each measure has specifications that the farmer must follow for five years

(the duration time of the contract) to receive the payment. Subsidies are granted annually, per hectare under cultivation, with a maximum per farm for a contract. A weakness of the Sustainable Agricultural Contract is the complex administrative process that needs to be followed in order to qualify, which scares off farmers.

UK policy, until 2001, made compensation payable to any landowner or user who made a claim for a loss of profits as a consequence of being prohibited to carry out a damaging activity. Nowadays paying of public money is prohibited unless a positive shift in management is undertaken. In general, money will only be paid for measures that go beyond good land management practice.

### *Site licensing*

In many countries a licensing system is used to control site use and to protect sites. In general a list has been constructed of activities which are allowed, disallowed or to be assessed on an individual basis. In this way certain conditions can be reached to attain the favourable conservation status. Such a system also can relieve the administration because it will avoid appropriate assessment procedures for every single activity executed on a Natura2000 site. Examples of such activities are related to farming, logging, construction of buildings, hunting and breeding of game. In countries where different sectors like water management, hunting, environment and nature protection are under the responsibility of one single ministry or authority, such as in Hungary and Denmark, integrated permits can be issued that encompass all relevant sectors that can influence site goals and conservation objectives.

In Ireland owners and users will be informed about a list with activities (the Notifiable Actions) that can harm specific sites and which should not be undertaken without consent of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Any future change in farming and other practices will have to take into account the ecological requirements.

Although not widely researched, in some countries activities that already were carried out on sites, before they were designated as Natura2000 site, are legally allowed to be continued, unless the nature of the activities change.

### *Some challenges*

Control of licences and land use should be executed, however, not all countries have sufficient capacity. This is illustrated by SPAs where traditional but now illegal bird trapping is happening (e.g. coastal areas on Malta). Such areas are often officially licensed for agricultural use, however, in many cases land is cleared for the clapping nets by using herbicides, which has a strong negative impact on habitats and breeding success of bird species. Also illegal hideaways are built.

In general the few staff members having inspection duties have to pay attention to many other activities (varying from prostitution, trade, to the environment) so that little time has been left to enforce Natura2000 regulations.

In some countries procedures to obtain a site licence are restricted to specific Natura2000 sites such as National Parks and are not transparent (e.g. Romania) which can result in licences based on ambiguous grounds. Moreover, when

management plans, being the framework on which licensing is based, have been developed for only a small number of such sites protected sites, it can be concluded for these countries that there is a strong need for improvement of the licensing system.

### ***List of allowed and forbidden activities; national or region wide regulations***

Many countries define certain uniform minimum protection and management measures on country or state level for Natura2000 sites, apart from management plans that address a Natura2000 site, or a group of sites. An example is Italy that adopted a decree on uniform and minimum criteria for the definition of conservation measures (October 17<sup>th</sup> 2007). The decree reports the minimum uniform criteria for the definition of conservation measures for SACs and SPAs, to assure the coherence of the Natura2000 network and the suitability of the management on the national territory.

For the SACs, general conservation criteria are established, such as the obligation of assuring the vegetal cover and the maintenance of suitable agronomic practices in certain areas. As well as prohibition of:

- burning straw or vegetation remaining at the end of cultural cycles in certain areas;
- hunting activities in January, with some exceptions;
- wildlife repopulation for hunting purposes;
- training of hunting dogs after closure of the hunting season;
- killing particular species;
- intentional destruction of nests and recover areas;
- realizing new cableways or opening of new mines ;
- eliminating existing agricultural elements such as dry stone walls.

Additional SPA specific criteria have been developed for the 13 SPA categories.

### ***Assigning nature protected area status***

Reaching the favourable conservation status of a site, is often primarily pursued by ensuring its proper protection in the form of national or regional parks, strict nature reserves, and alike. It is a more traditional approach of nature conservation and is based in the first place on prohibition of activities and ‘classical’ nature protection. Management planning and practical site management is then often a continuation of previous work and experience, although adaptation to Natura2000 objectives is necessary. Such is happening in countries as Malta, where designation as bird sanctuary, national park or nature reserve, gives extra protection to a site, in addition to protection measures that are developed in management plans.

### ***Some challenge***

In some Member States (e.g. Germany) privately owned parts of Natura2000 sites do not receive a legal nature protected status because of resistance from landowners and users: the responsible authorities opt for (voluntary) contracts with landowners and users. Landowners and users are more open to such contracts, as they still can have some influence on the content of the contract and the way management measures are arranged, they will feel less confined and are more willing to cooperate.

### ***Land purchase***

In many countries, but not all, land purchase is an instrument of the existing nature protection policy to control the management and use of the protected areas. A disadvantage of land purchase is that it will be too costly with regard to the huge areas that are assigned the Natura2000 status. For this reason many countries slowed down land purchase (Flanders, Belgium, the Netherlands) or do not purchase land at all (Greece) for the protection of Natura2000. Moreover, it ignores the general idea of Natura2000 that socio-economic activities in Natura2000 sites should be able to go hand in hand with nature protection. Funds for nature protection are relatively limited anyway in the European Member States, and many of them seem to prefer for that reason to allocate the money to contract based management.

In Latvia the law on Specially Protected Nature Territories states that protected nature areas that are owned by a government can not be alienated, i.e. sold to private parties. It also states that landownership change or renewal can only occur when obeying to the new, protective rules and measures.

In Flanders (Belgium), like in a few other Member States, the government has the first right to buy land, which is designated as Natura2000 site, for a market-conform price.

Sometimes it can be really difficult to convince landowners and users to stop certain damaging activities. This can force authorities to purchase the protected land. This is illustrated in Ireland and the UK where the competent organization (Natural England) could not convince landowners to protect degraded raised bogs by finishing peat extraction. As a consequence Natural England had to purchase the peat extraction rights from a large number of private holders, at a significant financial cost.

### ***Land expropriation***

Expropriation of land is a legal instrument for nature conservation that can be used in some countries (Estonia, Bulgaria, Latvia, and UK) when management plans, contracts, or other conservation instruments do not work and the defined objectives are not observed (see text box '*Latvia law On Specially protected Nature territories*'). However, no examples have been collected in this project. Member States seem to hesitate to apply this strong instrument in order to avoid unnecessary resentment among stakeholder and for whom the eventual management must be acceptable.

#### ***Latvia law On Specially protected Nature territories:***

“In cases where the protection and use regulations of a protected territory are violated, as well as nature protection plans are not observed, the State has the right to expropriate land from its owner in accordance with procedures prescribed by regulatory enactments.”

## **5.6 Support programmes**

There are a number of EU funding sources that can be used for Natura2000 purposes, in particular the EU agricultural fund, the Structural Funds and Life. These

funds are used for the development of management plans, of guidelines, for capacity building and developing integrated management, and for the execution of management. Some funds are not available to all Member States or regions.

The importance of these funds for the Member States to facilitate the implementation and the proper management of the Natura2000 network, varies considerably. The rural development 'pillar' of the CAP for instance has been used by all Member States as it provides means for agri-environmental management payments to farmers or for training that supports management actions at sites. Portugal, amongst others, plans to use the Common Agricultural Policy measure intensively for the management of Natura2000 sites. For about three-quarter of their terrestrial Natura2000 sites, plans are drafted that regulate CAP-subsidies, the so called Integrated Territorial Interventions. In Hungary management of grassland Natura2000 habitats is mainly carried out through agri-environmental contracts. In many countries, the Life and Life+ programmes were and are undoubtedly the most popular to help to realize the Natura2000 network. Especially the focus on stakeholder participation and on the practical execution of management measures and restoration projects, contributed to their success.

#### ***Funding challenges in some of the Member States***

In Latvia and Lithuania funds for incentives or management support are very small. In Latvia one can apply for national funding within the Latvian Environmental Protection Fund or Nature Protection Board but financial resources seem to be insufficient. There is so little money available, that some management plans already wait for execution for about 4 to 5 years. As a management plan is only valid for 10 years, this may cause problems in the near future. Apart from the limited budgets, the remuneration may also hinder optimal implementation. Indeed, regardless of the complexity of the management measures that have to be taken, the amount of money available is fixed.

### **5.7 Monitoring conservation**

Periodical reports (every 6 years) from each of the EU Member States are not only seen as a means of enforcing implementation of the requirements set in the directive, but data submitted by the Member States is also expected to fulfil a crucial role in overall assessment of biodiversity trends in Europe. For the individual Member States, the monitoring may serve two purposes. In the first place, monitoring data will be used to assess the favourable conservation status of habitats and species and thus will document the 'distance to target'. Secondly, monitoring of the status of habitats and species at particular sites, will yield the data to judge the effectiveness of the management measures applied. The first relates to Member States' reporting obligation to the Commission and to the general policy of the countries. It will give indications where efforts and targeted actions are needed. The latter is important to collect evidence about the usefulness of management techniques and the eventually need to change practices. Adaptive management, based on a clear understanding of the relations between management techniques and biodiversity performance, is indeed a prerequisite to achieve, in an ever changing world, the objectives of current biodiversity policy.

Monitoring to assess the favourable conservation status of species and habitats and to assess the effectiveness of particular management measures, are two different activities that start from a different rationale and rely on different strategies to collect the data. Unlike the first, monitoring of the effectiveness of measures will have a close relation with the management plan concerned. So, ideally, guidelines for this monitoring should be part of the management plan. It has been noticed however, that this is seldom the case. Monitoring programmes to assess the favourable conservation status of designated sites and species are currently under development in most of the Member States. Denmark and Latvia already implemented a nation wide monitoring system that meets the requirements of Natura2000.

As argued, a targeted monitoring can eventually result in applying new or changed management methods for a Natura2000 site or a species. Consequently, the more intensive the management of a site, the more elaborated its monitoring will be. This link was one of the guiding principles for the establishment of the Swedish biodiversity monitoring system in the Natura2000 areas. Thus, if a minimal management intervention is required, the site will also have a low frequency monitoring system. In sites with reoccurring or restoration management, a high frequency monitoring will be integrated into the management system (see text box '*Importance of monitoring for management effectiveness*'). It should be noted finally that, in order to create a focused and effective system that does not gather excessive data, it is crucial to set clear conservation objectives for a given site. So, setting appropriate reference values is one of the current challenges in determining the conservation status of species and habitats in Sweden.

#### ***Importance of monitoring for management effectiveness***

Monitoring of biodiversity in each of the Member States, as required by the Birds and Habitats Directives, is expected to yield the necessary information to support the Europe-wide efforts of halting loss of biodiversity. One of the key messages of the seminars held by the Baltic Environmental Forum in 2005 has been that monitoring has to be tied to management, i.e., monitoring is done to be able to know what management methods to apply, and to see how management is working. Dr. Thomas Ellmauer of the Federal Environmental Agency of Austria believes that the higher the need for habitat management, the higher the need for more data. According to this ratio, the UK and Austria needs much more precise data than, for instance, Sweden and Finland. Those countries have extensive natural areas that do not require management at all. Austria is currently working on a concept of Biodiversity Monitoring System, which will be based on the existing individual monitoring systems, e.g., forest, water quality, and agri-environmental measures. The new system is being designed to yield data for the assessment of the conservation status of species and habitats in the country. Appropriate and effective indicators are seen as one of the key aspects for successful biodiversity monitoring. Indicators have been created for all 66 habitat types found in Austria as well as for all Annex 2 (HD) species. The monitoring system has to identify indicators to be recorded like favourable conservation status indicators, and early warning indicators.

## **6 Challenges and solutions for proper management**

In the previous sections, the ways of organizing the Natura2000 management in the 27 EU Member States have been described. Based on this information an overview is provided of challenges that Member States encounter while arranging the management. It must be emphasized that these challenges are occurring to different degrees in the various Member States, and that, depending on the organisation, some countries have more difficulties than others. Nevertheless, the challenges are generally applicable.

### **6.1 Communication**

First of all, although most countries have improved communication about Natura2000 and improved stakeholder participation, landowners, users and even authorities are still often not aware about the key issue of Natura2000: socio-economic development in combination with nature protection. Stakeholders often still see Natura2000 as a classical nature protection project that forbids all socio-economic activities at a site. Secondly, resentment in many countries still exists towards Natura2000, due to little or no:

- communication during the designation process;
- information on what is going to happen with their site, what the procedure will be and what the role of the landowner or user can be;
- involvement in the development of management.

In former Eastern European countries – although not limited to them – there is little experience of working together to prepare a management plan, e.g. with regard to define and agree upon the problems and to seek appropriate solutions. Not seldom, one of the main difficulties remains in the obvious doubts and suspicions held by senior staff of the responsible ministry or administration, that stakeholder participation could deliver a useful management plan.

It is advisable to improve further the communication towards stakeholders, to emphasize and demonstrate the meaning and potential of Natura2000, to support capacity-building projects, and to give clear guidance and demonstrate the strategy, as it is a key to stakeholder involvement and to successful and sustainable management development. Communication towards all stakeholders is very important in all stages of the management plan development of Natura2000 sites. When stakeholders are given a sense of ownership of nature protection, greater progress can be made.

Experience from EU Twinning projects and other capacity-building projects shows that dialogue with representatives of local communities and different groups of interest can change the negative attitude towards Natura2000.

Capacity-building projects convince facilitators of the benefits of a participative approach to the preparation of any management plan.

## 6.2 Conservation objectives

First of all, there is often too little data on the status of species and habitats at the Natura2000 sites, to formulate sound conservation objectives.

Secondly, when no strict requirements are set, conservation objectives for the Natura2000 species and habitats are often vaguely described in management plans. That makes the conservation efforts and effects less verifiable, and also provides stakeholders with only a vague view of the targets to be reached and, thus, of the commitments they must make. This may jeopardize the favourable conservation status of species and habitats.

Thirdly, landowners and users, and other socio-economic stakeholders of Natura2000 sites do not always agree with the conservation objectives for sites, partly because of the sometimes incorrect data of the status of species and habitats.

In order to address these issues, Member States are adapting existing monitoring schemes, or setting up new ones, although a few countries do very little effort until now. NGOs in particular, but also research institutes and universities, are playing a major role in the collection of data on the conservation status of species and habitats. The potential of these organisations should be exploited, and collaboration should be encouraged, especially in many Member States from former Eastern Europe, where authorities sometimes distrust NGOs, as they are unfamiliar with their intentions.

A few countries organise the conservation objectives on a national or regional level as well as on site level. They also involve the stakeholders in the development and 'distribution' of the conservation objectives for the regions and sites. In this way a more flexible system to reach the favourable conservation status of species and habitats in a country arises, and stakeholders also develop a sense of ownership of, and responsibility for, the achievement of the favourable conservation status of species and habitats.

Requirements should be set by the authorities for the unambiguous formulation of conservation objectives in management plans or other regulatory documents, in order to avoid vaguely-formulated objectives, unclear responsibilities and unverifiable management efforts, all of which could jeopardize conservation objectives and can cause conflicts.

## 6.3 Capacity shortage

About one third of the Member States are over half way towards arranging management plans (some have almost completed this). Such Member States made clear plans, developed a strategy and arranged sufficient staff or an organized writing structure. In about a fifth of the Member States, good progress is made with the development of management plans, but they have not yet reached the half way point. For the rest, the development of management plans is still in its infancy, and a few do not yet have any approved management plans. The latter is primarily due to either a late start, the absence of a clear strategy and/or insufficient capacity in terms of staff and funding, all leading to disorientation of stakeholders, delays and distrust.

Some countries have not allocated funds for the development of management plans, but are expecting to arrange that through EU funding.

Another problem is that although some countries are advanced with the development of management plans, there is no funding structure yet or the existing one is insufficient for the execution of management.

When communes and municipalities have the responsibility for the execution of the management of the designated sites, it seems that this task is often treated with low priority. Insufficient knowledge, experience and funding, but also low capacity due to the depopulation of the countryside, can be important reasons.

Solutions that Member States have found to address some of the challenges are:

- The involvement of NGOs, stakeholders, national park administrations, etc. in the development and (preparation of) execution of management plans;
- The combination of nature protection with socio-economic development;
- The use of EU funds and additional funding structures;
- The adoption of arrangements that facilitate a reasonable share of responsibilities between all parties involved in the management.

Problems remain regarding the acceptance of protected sites under Natura2000. Not seldom, rural communities in the Baltic States, and presumably in other former Eastern European Member States as well, have neither the will, the trust nor the means for sustainable exploitation of the Natura2000 sites in their region. In general, 'the public' first thinks that a Natura2000 designation is a European 'take-over' of their land and so, understandably, voice strong opposition.

Another weakness that may hamper the effective management of Natura2000 sites in former Eastern European countries, is the often subordinate position of biodiversity policy and the related executive administration, compared to other policy domains. As said before, not seldom, the ad hoc and traditional "top-down" approaches are maintained, and collaboration with nature conservation NGOs is not self-evident. But also the 'public' is not easily inclined to join NGOs. All disadvantages that are obstacles for a prompt implementation of the Natura2000 objectives.

A well-considered participative approach to the preparation of management plans helps to deal with many of these problems. Some deep-rooted issues however, may require government intervention. In that case, the process of preparation can be lengthy. Nevertheless, achieving consensus and support of a management plan through collaboration of all parties involved, is as important as the content of the plan itself. This is indeed a prerequisite to pursue and execute the plan successfully.

## **6.4 Continuity**

A general complaint is that continuity in management planning and execution is often lacking. Many projects are short-termed, or sponsors and authorities only fund activities that attract attention in the news, while they neglect the necessity of some basic structural funding. Capacity building, or other pilot projects – e.g. Life Nature –

are gratefully received, but the application of acquired knowledge and the possible continuation of these projects is often neglected due to low priority given by national and regional authorities. Even newly established management authorities can be victims of the low priority that some Ministries of Environment give to nature protection. Management authorities hamper basic continuous funding and therefore cycle between periods of activity and inactivity, leading to distrust among stakeholders and loss of experience, knowledge and qualified personnel.

In order to safeguard successful implementation of Natura2000, Member States need to allocate at least a basic amount of money for a basic nature protection 'infrastructure' to guarantee the continuity of management and its control. It is the responsibility of Member States to reach or maintain the favourable conservation status of species and habitats and for that, stakeholder cooperation, qualified staff and sufficient funding.

## **6.5 Strategy and guidelines**

It is shown that the absence of a strategy and clear guidelines also leads to distrust and confusion among stakeholders, delays and variable quality of nature conservation. Unfortunately there are still countries or regions that have little or no strategy or guidelines developed, which results in all or some of the following:

- highly variable content and quality of management plans;
- unclear responsibilities and, therefore, inertia in taking up responsibilities by authorities and other stakeholders;
- unclear targets, potentially threatening favourable conservation status;
- development at sites damaging the conservation status of species and habitats;
- little or no communication;
- lack of clarity about the potential of Natura2000 for socio-economic development;
- distrust and resentment from stakeholders.

In such cases, NGOs, that probably played a critical role in the selection of Natura2000 sites, often have also a major role in developing management plans and guidelines.

Nevertheless, the responsibility for implementing Natura2000 cannot be borne by NGOs alone. So, authorities should set up basic requirements for the management of Natura2000 sites, specifying amongst others:

- who is responsible for what;
- clear and verifiable conservation objectives;
- procedures for stakeholder participation and other organisational processes;
- management approaches for species and habitats;
- potential of Natura2000 socio-economic development in combination with nature protection.

Because of the very diverse nature of Natura2000 sites, Member States should adapt management measures to the specific nature of the sites. It has been observed that guidelines can sometimes be too rigid to be applied to individual sites. It is therefore

advisable to encourage local initiatives, to start from the ecology of the sites and use general guidelines only to ensure that local actors respect and support the general conservation objectives, while at the same time the one way and top-down approaches are avoided to become too decisive.

EU Twinning, Life Nature and various other projects appear to be essential in the development of experience with stakeholder participation, integrated management, socio-economic development in conjunction with nature protection, awareness-raising about Natura2000, the development of guidelines, etc. Such projects contribute to the successful implementation of Natura2000, but are currently operating at a level that is insufficient to cover all Natura2000 sites in the European Union. Therefore extra efforts by Member States and the European Commission seem to be needed.

Traditional nature conservation NGOs play a major role in the implementation of Natura2000 and should therefore be nurtured. But it is evenly important to give stakeholders, land owners and land users, a sense of ownership of nature protection. Agreeing upon common goals will facilitate the successful achievement of the favourable conservation status of species and habitats and is more likely to lead to sustainable socio-economic development.

## 7 Towards truly integrated management

Inevitably the management of Natura2000 sites will include the participation of land owners, land users and private sectors and calls for integrated management plans. The extent of the participation, the share and the allocation of responsibilities and tasks, the partners involved, will all vary widely according to the spatial and ecological characteristics of a Natura2000 site and its policy and social context.

With integrated management of Natura2000 sites we mean a management approach in which interested parties, stakeholders and regulators reach general agreement on the best mix of conservation objectives and measures, the sustainable use of natural resources and the development strategies for Natura2000 sites. Moreover, they agree upon the shared responsibility for the collaborative execution and the follow-up of the management plan. The coordination serves the management of the Natura2000 site as a whole, taking full account of its relationship with the wider surroundings.

In the report Towards Integrated management (Main report 3) by De Blust et al. (2009) the topics of chapter 4, 5 and 6 of this report will be elaborated and documented with examples from different integrated management plans and projects throughout Europe. Besides, approaches and results will be confronted with conclusions and 'lessons learned' from literature. This is done in order to be able to propose a 'checklist' or a guideline for effective integrated management plans.

In the Main report 3, examples of integrated management plans will be presented. They are chosen because they illustrate the different aspects of integration:

- mutual and shared objectives;
- economic stakeholders engaging in reaching biodiversity or Natura2000 objectives;
- integration of the Natura2000 site in the wider surroundings by means of integrated management;
- active participation of public and private sectors to reach set goals in the planning phase, and in the execution phase.



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## Websites

### All countries or specific regions:

Good overview on Natura2000 Networking Program: National Natura2000 links

- <http://natura2000networkingprogramma.blogspot.com/2007/04/national-natura-2000-links>
- <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature>
- [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/db\\_gis/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/db_gis/index_en.htm)
- [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/current\\_biodiversity\\_policy/eu\\_biodiversity\\_legislation/habitats\\_birds\\_directives/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/current_biodiversity_policy/eu_biodiversity_legislation/habitats_birds_directives/index_en.htm)
- <http://biodiversity.eionet.europa.eu>
- <http://www.carpates.org/links.html>
- <http://www.ceeweb.org>

### Per country

#### Austria

- <http://www.lebensministerium.at/umwelt>
- <http://www.ris.bka.at>
- <http://www.biodiv.at>
- <http://www.naturschutz.at>
- <http://www.rechnungshof.gv.at>

#### Belgium

##### Flanders

- [http://www.inbo.be/content/page.asp?pid=BEL\\_INT\\_NAT\\_start](http://www.inbo.be/content/page.asp?pid=BEL_INT_NAT_start)
- <http://www.natuurindicatoren.be>
- <http://www.mina.be/natuurrichtplan.html>
- <http://geo-vlaanderen.agiv.be/geo-vlaanderen/natura2000/>

##### Wallonia

- <http://natura2000.wallonie.be/>
- <http://biodiversite.wallonie.be/sites/natura2000/>
- <http://biodiversite.wallonie.be/sites/natura2000/n2000full.pdf>

##### Brussels Capital Region

- <http://www.ibgebim.be/Templates/Particuliers/Niveau2.aspx?id=2056&langtype=2060>
- <http://www.ibgebim.be/Templates/Particuliers/Niveau2.aspx?id=2056&langtype=2067>

#### Bulgaria

- <http://natura2000bg.org/>

## **Cyprus**

- <http://www.moa.gov.cy/moa>
- <http://www.moa.gov.cy/moa/agriculture.nsf/all/f610b49e8835dc09c22573f100271fe9?opendocument>
- [http://www.life-natura-sites.cy.net/page21\\_0.html](http://www.life-natura-sites.cy.net/page21_0.html)

## **Czech Republic**

- <http://www.natura.cz/natura2000-design-en/hp.php>

## **Denmark**

- [www.vandognatur.dk](http://www.vandognatur.dk)
- [www.skovognatur.dk](http://www.skovognatur.dk)
- [www.dmu.dk](http://www.dmu.dk)
- [www.blst.dk](http://www.blst.dk)
- [www.mim.dk](http://www.mim.dk)
- [www.retsinformation.dk](http://www.retsinformation.dk)

## **Estonia**

- [www.envir.ee/natura2000](http://www.envir.ee/natura2000)
- <http://eelis.icenvir.ee:8080/biomultifarious>

## **France**

- [www.legifrance.com](http://www.legifrance.com)
- [www.natura2000.fr](http://www.natura2000.fr)
- [www.espaces-naturels.fr](http://www.espaces-naturels.fr)
- <http://www.rhone-alpes.ecologie.gouv.fr>

## **Finland**

- [www.outdoors.fi](http://www.outdoors.fi)
- [www.metsa.fi](http://www.metsa.fi)
- [www.environment.fi](http://www.environment.fi)
- [www.ymparisto.fi](http://www.ymparisto.fi)
- [www.finlex.fi](http://www.finlex.fi)

## **Germany**

- <http://www.naturschutz-fachinformationssysteme-nrw.de/natura2000-netzwerk/content/>

## **Greece:**

- <http://www.biodiv-chm.gr/information>
- <http://www.minenv.gr>
- <http://www.callisto.gr/en/stathmoi.php>

## **Hungary**

- <http://www.natura.2000.u/index.php?p=nyito&nyelv=eng>

## **Ireland**

- [www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie)

## **Italy**

- [http://www.minambiente.it/index.php?id\\_sezione=1475](http://www.minambiente.it/index.php?id_sezione=1475)
- [http://www.minambiente.it/moduli/output\\_immagine.php?id=2233](http://www.minambiente.it/moduli/output_immagine.php?id=2233)
- <http://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/022211.htm>
- <http://www.bioitaly.casaccia.enea.it/wwwbioitaly>

## **Latvia**

- <http://www.vidm.gov.lv/eng/likumdosana/?doc=3318>
- <http://www.dap.gov.lv/?objid=285>

## **Luxemburg**

- <http://www.emwelt.lu>

## **Malta**

- <http://www.mepa.org.mt>

## **The Netherlands**

- [http://www.minlnv.nl/portal/page?\\_pageid=116,1640893&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PO](http://www.minlnv.nl/portal/page?_pageid=116,1640893&_dad=portal&_schema=PO)
- <http://www.synbiosys.alterra.nl/natura2000/>
- [http://minlnv.nl/portal/pageid=116,1640408&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PO](http://minlnv.nl/portal/pageid=116,1640408&_dad=portal&_schema=PO)
- <http://www.natura2000.nl>

## **Poland**

- <http://natura2000.mos.gov.pl/natura2000/index.php?lang=1>
- <http://www.pieninypl.pl/>
- <http://www.poleskipn.pl/>

## **Portugal**

- <http://portal.icnb.pt/INCPortal/vENV2007/>
- <http://www.maotdr.gov.pt/en/>

## **Romania**

- <http://www.natura2000.ro>
- [http://www.mmediu.ro/index\\_en.html](http://www.mmediu.ro/index_en.html)
- <http://www.anpm.ro/content.aspx>

## **Slovakia**

- <http://www.sopsr.sk/natura/index1.php?p=4&lang=en>

## **Slovenia:**

- <http://www.natura2000.gov.si>

## **Spain**

- <http://www.mma.es/en>

## **Sweden**

- [www.naturvardsverket.se](http://www.naturvardsverket.se)
- <http://w3.vic-metria.nu/n2k/jsp/search.do>
- [www.lanstyrelsen.se](http://www.lanstyrelsen.se)
- [www.riksdagen.se](http://www.riksdagen.se)
- <http://www.lanstyrelsen.se/NR/rdonlyres/EF00F1C3-E4BF-4CD3-A8E1-9A781F1E4BB1/109764/BevarandeplanBörseboochHolmen.pdf>
- [http://www.lanstyrelsen.se/NR/rdonlyres/EF00F1C3-E4BF-4CD3-A8E1-9A781F1E4BB1/79365/bevarandeplan\\_brusaan\\_hegu\\_webb.pdf](http://www.lanstyrelsen.se/NR/rdonlyres/EF00F1C3-E4BF-4CD3-A8E1-9A781F1E4BB1/79365/bevarandeplan_brusaan_hegu_webb.pdf)
- <http://www.y.lst.se/download/18.a8c19b108dd8cce998000601/Stormyrskogen+%C3%85nge-Sundsvalls+kommun.pdf>

## **UK**

- <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/pdf/protected-areas/ssi-code.pdf> <http://www.jncc.gov.uk>
- <http://ukbap.org.uk>

## **Annexes**

- Annex 1 Questionnaire
- Annex 2 List of Contributors
- Annex 3 Technical manual in Italy
- Annex 4 Authorities responsible for management and progress in writing and approval of management plans, per country



## ANNEX 1 Questionnaire

### QUESTIONNAIRE

#### Information and communication on the designation and management of Natura2000 sites

Preparatory actions for Natura 2000, Lot 2/2007

#### **Introduction**

Based on the Birds and Habitats Directives (BHD), the Natura2000 network of protected areas is a key pillar of Community action for the conservation of biodiversity. After finishing the selection of sites in nearly all EU Member States the attention now turns more towards the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and their management.

Within 6 years after the selection as Sites of Community Importance (SCI) the Member States will designate these sites as SACs, establishing priorities in the light of the importance of the sites for the maintenance or restoration, at a favorable conservation status, of a natural habitat type in Annex I or a species in Annex II and for the coherence of Natura 2000, and in the light of the threats of degradation or destruction to which those sites are exposed.

For each SAC, the necessary conservation measures have to be established involving, if need be, appropriate management plans specifically designed for the sites or integrated into other development plans, and appropriate statutory, administrative or contractual measures.

While establishing the most appropriate methods and instruments for implementing these provisions, Member States should take into account the economic, social and cultural requirements and regional and local characteristics.

Considering the large variety of approaches and the considerable amount of experience and best practices, the European Commission (DG Environment) has decided to collect and make available information on the SACs designation process and on the management instruments that are being put into place, including information on best practice in integrated site management. In the context of the same preparatory action for Natura 2000, the Commission has further decided to establish a new communication tool in order to promote the pro-active involvement of socio-economic stakeholders in the management of Natura 2000 sites. Finally, the preparatory action also includes the development of a new scheme for the award of the title "Natura2000 Partner" to actors who have a special merit in the management of or the communication on Natura 2000.

This questionnaire is part of the preparatory action. Its objective is to collect information on the SAC designation processes in the different Member States and on the management instruments that are being put into place in that context.

The following questionnaire consists of 2 parts, each with a few 'QUICK RESPONSE' questions and with a more 'ELABORATED INQUIRY'. We would very much appreciate if at least the 'quick response' part could be completed with valuable and precise information

and returned at short notice. If possible, the more detailed information requested in the 'elaborated inquiry' should also be provided together with the 'quick response' or provided in a second step, as soon as possible.

We thank you very much in advance for devoting some of your valuable time to help us collecting this information which will surely be of interest to everybody in the Member States involved in the SAC designation process and the management of Natura 2000 sites. Please note that the information collected will be used exclusively for establishing a synthesis report on the SAC designation process in the different Member States and the experience with integrated management plans for Natura 2000. The report will be made available to the Nature Directors and the Coordinating Group on Nature and Biodiversity. The overall objective is to enhance the exchange of information between competent authorities in the Member States on the SAC designation process and the management of Natura 2000 sites.

**Rob van Apeldoorn,** Alterra , Wageningen University & Research Centre  
(WUR, Wageningen, the Netherlands)

**Geert De Blust,** Research Institute for Nature and Forest  
(INBO, Brussels, Belgium)

**Rink W. Kruk** Research Institute for Nature and Forest  
(INBO, Brussels, Belgium)

**Andrew Sier,** Centre for Ecology and Hydrology  
(CEH, Swindon, England)

CONTACT PERSON who filled in this questionnaire:

Name:

Profession:

Organization

Email:

Telephone:

Number of attached appendices:

## **Part A. THE SAC DESIGNATION PROCESS**

### **I. Quick response; reference to existing information**

I. 1 Please, give the name of CONTACT PERSONS for information regarding the designation process of SAC's

- formal designation process:

CONTACT PERSON:

Name:

Profession:

Organization

Email:

Telephone:

- experience with actual or effective designation processes; well placed to provide in depth information on for instance interpretation of formal procedures, site-depending procedural alternatives and implementation, etc.:

**CONTACT PERSON:**

Name:  
 Profession:  
 Organization  
 Email:  
 Telephone:

I. 2. Please give a list with main reference(s) to documents, publications, websites, describing and / or analyzing the designation process of SAC's, applied in your country. These documents should provide information regarding

- the designation process (successive steps, competent administrations or authorities involved, role of policy, public consultation, stakeholder participation, timing;
- the content and extent of the designation process (regarding site delimitation, conservation objects (habitats and / or species), conservation objectives, management instruments (management plans, voluntary agreements,...)
- any other arrangements concerning for example steering bodies, monitoring, financing, integration with other sectoral policy instruments and measures,...

**II. More elaborated inquiry, to be filled in where part I.2. provides incomplete information**

II. 1. Please describe the designation process: (who is the lead organization/administration responsible for the SAC designation process, which stakeholders participate, what are their role and/or responsibilities?).

II. 2. On which legal framework the process is based ?

II. 3. Please describe the structure and content of designation acts (please give references and/or websites where to find these documents; send a specimen).

Please comment the content of the designation decision acts, regarding:

- the site delimitation (site borders),
- the conservation objects (habitats and / or species for which the site was designated),
- the establishment of conservation objectives,

- the management instruments,
  - the stakeholder participation,
  - the integration with other sectoral policy instruments and measures.
- II. 4. Please describe public consultation procedures. Who else than the public is consulted? Is public consultation required by law/ decree?
- II. 5. What is the time schedule of the designation process ?
- II. 6. What is the actual state of progress ?

## Part B. THE (FUTURE) MANAGEMENT OF NATURA 2000 SITES

### I. Quick response; reference to existing information

- I. 1. Please, give the name of CONTACT PERSONS for information regarding the management of SAC's
- Formal management instruments/procedures

CONTACT PERSON:

Name:  
 Profession:  
 Organization  
 Email:  
 Telephone:

- Experience with actual or effective management plan development; well placed to provide in-depth information on for instance the interpretation of formal procedures, site-dependending management alternatives and implementation, ...

CONTACT PERSON:

Name:  
 Profession:  
 Organization  
 Email:  
 Telephone:

- I. 2. Please give a list with main reference(s) to documents, publications, websites, describing and / or analyzing the (foreseen) elaboration of management plans for SAC's, applied in your country. These documents should provide information regarding

- the preparation and elaboration of management plans (successive steps, participants involved, role of stakeholders and experts, timing)
- the content of the management plan (site specific conservation objectives, analyses of management needs, arrangements with land users, stakeholders, measures and techniques foreseen, etc.).

I. 3. Please describe the communication tool(s) (e.g. websites or newsletters) in your country related to Natura2000?

Please provide details and include web address or other contact reference.

Are the communication tools specific to one or more socio-economic sectors, like industry, agriculture, tourism? If so which?

I. 4. We would like to consult you about developing the Natura 2000 Communication platform, a new communication tool (website) promoting the pro-active involvement of socio-economic sectors in the management of Natura2000 sites. Who is the best person in your administration / country to contact with this regard?

CONTACT PERSON:

Name:

Profession:

Organization

Email:

Telephone:

**II. More elaborated inquiry, to be filled in where part I.2. provides incomplete information**

II. 1. Is there a legal obligation for the development and implementation of management plans for the SAC's. Please give reference to the legal framework and list relevant legislation, documents, publications, websites.

II. 2. Which management approaches for SAC's exist in your country regarding the relationship between and the responsibilities of the different parties involved? What are the respective tasks regarding:

- a) the establishment of conservation objectives for individual SACs;
- b) the preparation management plans;
- c) the implementation of management plans?

Comment: An example of an approach is writing management plans by a steering committee comprising representatives from relevant stakeholder groups and local authorities and effective management by the local landowners / users in accordance with the plan. Details can be given with next questions

- II. 3. Do public consultation procedures take place regarding a) and b) of question II. 2? Please describe such procedures.
- II. 4. What is the time schedule of the process for formulating and implementing the necessary management?
- II. 5. Once the management plans have been adopted, which management strategy will be used (management by public authorities, by NGOs, by specialized contractors, by landowners or land users on the basis of a voluntary agreement / contracts)?
  - in case of management by landowners or land users, what are the incentives, eventual support given, the content of the agreements?
  - in general, please describe the content of the management instruments (if possible, please send a copy of a plan/ or a specimen)
  - on which legal arrangements are the management instruments based (decrees, regulations)?
- II. 6. Is the actual conservation status of habitat types and Species being assessed for each site and is this status being used as a starting point for establishing conservation objectives and formulating management instruments? In what kind of document is this information presented?
- II. 7. How are the site management and the achievement of the conservation objectives being monitored? Who is responsible for the monitoring? Does the monitoring cover all habitat types and species for which the sites have been designated?
- II. 8. In case it is not the intention to develop a proper monitoring system, what are the main obstacles/difficulties (lack of experts, organizational structures, methods, budget,)?
- II. 9. Please mention at least two sites (if possible) where truly integrated management is being carried out (integrated management focuses on biodiversity objectives as well as on other sectoral objectives of e.g. forestry, agriculture, recreation, fisheries, on the condition that synergies are being encouraged and mutual negative impacts avoided). Please indicate contact persons and/or websites for such sites.

## ANNEX 2 List of contributors

<i>country</i>	<i>information provided by</i>
Austria	Umweltbundesamt, Wien (Th. Ellmauer)
Belgium	Agricultural University of Gembloux, Gembloux (J. Taymans) Brussels Institute for Environmental Management, Brussels (B. Van der Wijden) Catholic University Leuven (KUL), Leuven (S. Meuris) Catholic University Leuven (UCL), Louvain- La- Neuve (V. Grogna) Walloon Public Service, Department of Nature and Forests, Jambes (M. Fautsch, M. Dufrêne) Walloon Public Service, Department of Nature and Forests, Namur (F. Laviolette)
Bulgaria	Ministry of Environment and waters (Natura2000 Department), Sofia (N. Nedyalkov) Central Laboratory for General Ecology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia (V. Biserkov) Balkani Wildlife Society, Sofia (A. Kovathev)
Cyprus	Federation of Environmental and Ecological Organizations of Cyprus, (C. Theodorou) BirdLife Cyprus, (M. Hellicar) Environment Service Ministry of Agriculture & Environment, Engomi (C. Pantazi)
Czech Republic	Orbicon, Copenhagen (K. Madsen) NABU, Berlin (M. Herrmann; O. Leskelä ) Institute of Applied Ecology Daphne, Prague (J. Dysek) Ministry of Environment, Prague (P. Roth) ECN.cz, Prague (M. Vlašín)
Denmark	Orbicon A/S, Viby (K. Seeberg- Kitnaes) Danish Centre for Forest & Landscape, (H. Vejre)
Estonia	Ministry of Environment, Talinn (H. Zigel) State Nature Conservation Centre, Talinn (R. Martverk, R. Müür) Stockholm Environment Institute Talinn Centre (SEI), Talinn (P. Kuldna, K. Peterson) University of Tartu, Talinn (B. Pensoo) Estonian Fund for Nature, Tartu (J-O. Salm)

Finland	Natural Heritage Service, Helsinki (M. Heinonen) Ministry of Environment, Helsinki (H. Korpelainen) University of Joensuu, Joensuu (P. Jokinen) University of Turku, Turku (A. Malmsten)
France	L'Atelier Technique des Espaces Naturels (G.I.P-ATEN), Montpellier (L. De Sousa)
Germany	Bundesamt für Naturschutz, Bonn (A. Ssymank; G. Ellwanger) Umweltamt Riedstadt, Riedstadt (M. Harnisch) Naturschutzbund Deutschland (NABU), Berlin (M. Herrmann, O. Leskelä)
Greece	National Agricultural Research Institute (Nagref), Athene (K. Pitatopoulou) Forest Directory Epirus Region, Epirus (K. Papageorgiou) University of Reading, Reading (I. Vogiatzakis) Axios Loudias Aliakmonas Management Authority, Thessaloniki (S. Varelzodou)
Hungary	BirdLife Hungary, Budapest (A. Králl) Hortobagy National Park Directorate, (S. Levente)
Ireland	Ministry of Environment, Heritage & Local Government, Dublin (R. Jeffrey) An Taisce, the National Trust for Ireland, Dublin (A. Murray)
Italy	Bologna University (Agrarian Faculty), Bologna (M. Speranza; F. Ferranti) Regione Emilia Romagna (Direzione Generale Ambiente e Difesa del Suolo e della Costa, Servizio Parchi e Risorse Forestali), Bologna (M. C. Cera) Regione Toscana (Direzione Generale Politiche Territoriali e Ambientali), Firenze (A. Casadio)
Latvia	Ministry of Environment, Riga (V. Busa) Latvian Fund for Nature, Riga (I. Racinska)
Lithuania	Lithuanian Fund for Nature, Vilnius (M. Zableckis, P. Mierauskas) BEF. Ltd., Vilnius (Z. Morkvenas)
Luxembourg	Ministry of Environment, Luxembourg (L. Schley) BirdLife Luxembourg, Luxembourg (P. Lorgé) Consultancy Bureau MB, Bertrange (M. Bunusevac) Naturschutzbund Deutschland (NABU), Berlin (M. Herrmann)

Malta	Management Authority for the Environment (MEPA), Valetta (D. Stevens) BirdLife Malta, Valetta (A. Raine) Nature Trust, Valetta (V. Attard)
The Netherlands	Alterra, Wageningen, the Netherlands (Mrs. V. Simeonova)
Poland	University of Life Sciences, Lublin (T.J. Chmielewski) National Academy of Sciences, Krakow (M. Makomaska- Juchiewicz, W. Mróz) Polish Society for the Protection of Birds, Warszawa (J. Krogulec) Pronatura-Polish Society of Wildlife Friends (M. Beresowska) Jagielonski University, Krakow (J. Cent) EKO-Tourist, Krakow (P. Dabrowski) Arcadis, Hoofddorp, NL (B. Nijhoff) Darwin Initiative, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, (UK) Penicuik (E. Idle)
Portugal	None
Romania	University of Bucharest, Bucharest (N.A. Geamănă) Transilvania University of Brasov, Brasov (G. Predoiu)
Slovakia	The Institute of Landscape Ecology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava (J. Spulerova)
Slovenia	Triglav National Park Authority (M. Solar) University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana (A. Sajovic)
Spain	Department of Environment Cataluna, Barcelona (C. Castell Puig) SEO/BirdLife Spain, Madrid (O. Infante)
Sweden	Swedish EPA (Naturvårdsverket), Stockholm (A. Lindhagen)
UK	Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough (W. Jones) Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Lancaster (A.R.J. Sier)
International	Colorado State University, USA (S. Cottrell) WWF European Policy Office, Brussels (A. Baumüller) European State Forest Association, Brussels (E. Kosenkranius) UNESCO/MAB, Paris (M. Bouamrane)

### ANNEX 3 Technical manual in Italy

In Italy a diverse system exists that allows the site management to be integrated into sectoral or local policies, which might result in a too diverse and confusing panorama of management measures that undermines the coherence of the Natura2000 network. To avoid complications, the Ministry of Environment adopted the Decree Guidelines for Natura2000 management (Decree September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2002), together with a technical manual (Manuale delle linee guida per la redazione dei piani di gestione dei siti Natura2000) addressed to stakeholders and administrative bodies. The Management guidelines and the draft of 9 pilot management plans have been funded by the Life-1999 project “Verification of Natura2000 Network in Italy: Management models”.

The manual is linked to the European Commission’s booklet regarding the interpretation of Habitats Directive, Art. 6.

- In the first chapter the Ministerial management guidelines are explained.
- The second chapter is dedicated to the Appropriate Assessment procedure.
- The third chapter provides a normative overview for the institutions involved with Natura2000, from the European to the regional level.
- The fourth chapter deals with the identification of indicators for the conservative status and prospects for the site. The indicators can be used for the definition of management measures, for the Appropriate Assessment and for monitoring.
- The fifth chapter, the central body of the technical manual, describes the management frameworks for 24 site types that are distinguished in Italy.
- The last chapter discusses the characteristics for the elaboration of management plans, using nine pilot plans founded by the aforementioned LIFE1999 project.

The manual, following the Ministry’s Management Guidelines, asserts the importance of integrating the management of Natura2000 sites in other policies. It promotes the integration of management measures in sectoral or land use plans. The legislative levels at which site management is supposed to be integrated are the Region, the Province, the Municipality or the water basin. At the regional or provincial level, the management should be integrated in sectoral plans, financial programs, structural funds allocations, and general and sectoral normatives. Integration of management measures in a plan or law implies that the responsible authority for that plan or law is responsible for the execution of these management measures.

Management plans as such are not mandatory according to Italian law, however they must be created when sites cannot be included into broader territorial plans, which is on the discretion of the Regions that monitor and identify indicators for the conservation status of endangered habitats and species. It implies that if the actual land use of an area does not threaten the conservation status of the Natura2000 site, the management will only involve the monitoring of this status. For example, when the site is included in an existing National Park, it will be sufficient to incorporate the site conservation objectives in the Park Plan, provided that the objectives of Natura2000 are met.

The manual defines the general management criteria for Natura2000 sites, and the steps to create a conservation scheme. The steps to follow are:

- analysis of the informative file regarding the site;

- identification of Natura2000 species and habitats characteristic for the site;
- study of the conservation status and of the critical factors;
- identification of the impact of actual land use;
- elaboration of management strategies through identification of the factors with greater impact, making the general management objectives and the eventual conflicts among them explicit;
- definition of the intervention priorities.

The general management measures to apply through management plans or other management tools can be exemplified by:

- fire control measures;
- regulation of tourist visitor flows;
- regulation of grazing intensity with respect to the flora and fauna characteristics;
- application of forestry measures which respect the natural characteristic of the area, such as the conservation of mixed forests and clearings;
- treating of pathogen species and monitoring of exotic species;
- predisposition of contractual measures for zones surrounding the protected sites

A list of actions to avoid is also provided by the manual, such as the introduction of exotic species, collection of mushrooms and truffles, pollution of the ground water and modification of the water basin structure.

The manual has some further general recommendations with regard to the conservation efforts that must consider the status of conservation, soil and hydrologic system, the monitoring level, the natural evolution of ecosystems, the avoidance of the landscape fragmentation and the maintenance of traditional “environmental-friendly” activities that helped creating the actual natural ecosystems.

It also defines the use of indicators to make conservation efforts more effective. The indicators must be ecologically significant, sensible to rapid changes, applicable at the national scale, simple and low-cost to measure; they must moreover give concrete information on the conservation status of elements to preserve and on the principal degrading factors. The indicators must regard ecological issues, but also socio-economic factors and possible anthropologic threats for the site.

The indicators are grouped in categories, such as:

- complexity and organization of the territory, such as list of the habitats recurring in the site, extension and aggregation level of the habitats;
- floristic and vegetation asset, such as a list of the vegetal species, presence of exotic species, phyto-sociologic analysis. Indicators for the forest asset, such as structure of the forest habitat, distribution of the dimensional classes, regeneration processes’ functioning;
- wildlife asset, such as wildlife composition, presence of rare or endangered species, wildlife importance at the national scale;
- hydro-biologic assets;
- disturbance factors;
- socio-economic assets (related to the municipality in which the sites fall), such as partition of the property rights within the site, unemployment rate, education rate, tourism incidence.

The main body of the manual is dedicated to the creation of management plans. The eventual realization of management plan has to follow an iterative process as described in paragraph 5.3.2 (Writing a management plan).

The sites recurring on the Italian territory are classified in 24 typologies. For every typology guidelines are formulated that refer to the ecological characteristics and land use, as well as to indicators defining the conservation status and principal threats, that are characteristic for that site. The categorization of more than 2500 sites into 24 typologies is useful to give general management indications and concise models to refer to.

## ANNEX 4 Authorities responsible for management and progress in writing and approval of management plans, per country

Member State	Responsible	Progress	Remarks
Austria	Provincial Naturschutz Unterbehörde Supervision by: Länder Liaison Office, Ministry of Agriculture, Forest, Environment and Water management.	progress (diverse)	
Belgium	Flanders: Agency for Nature and Forest; Wallonia: Department for Forest and Wood; Brussels Capital Region: Brussels Institute for Environmental Management	Wallonia & Brussels Capital Region: > 50; Flanders: starting (slow progress)	
Bulgaria	Ministry of Environment and Waters (responsibilities not clearly defined)	Started January 2009	
Cyprus	Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment (responsibilities not clearly defined)	None	No strategy yet
Czech Republic	Agency for Nature protection	Started in 2009	Foresees 10% in 2009, 20-30% in 2010, ready in 2014
Denmark	Regional Environmental Authorities	Ready	Ready in 2009
Estonia	Environmental Board	< 50%	33 ready, 45 in progress
Finland	Private land: 13 Regional Environment Centres; Publicly owned: Natural Heritage Services (Metsähallitus)	50%	ready in 2012
France	Prefect of the Departement and the Conservation committee (consisting of stakeholders)	50%	25% in progress
Greece	Management Authority for National Parks, and for the rest the Ministry of Environment (and not clearly defined)	Starting	Little progress
Hungary	Nature Park Directorates	Starting	Most SPAs have a MP, most SACs do not (except for grasslands)
Ireland	National Park and Wildlife Service	unclear	
Latvia	Nature Protection Board	<50%	10-13 management plans per year
Lithuania	Protected Area administration, also responsible for neighbouring sites without administration	>50%	Few hundred written, minor part approved. Slow approval process.
Luxembourg	Ministry of Environment, Department Waters and Forests	<50%	Since 2002: 17 are processed of which 13 are ready, 4 are stuck at governmental level.
Malta	Malta Environment and Planning Authority	Not yet started	Government applied for EU funds to finance drafting of management plans
Netherlands	National government for state property, Provinces (other areas)	<50%	

Member State	Responsible	Progress	Remarks
Poland	Regional Director of Environmental Protection / State Forests (for plans of management tasks). Ministry of Environment (for management plans)	Starting	14 management plans of relatively good quality have been drafted in 2005 in a PHARE project, none have have been approved yet; 55 pre-MPs have been drafted + 15 for species in 2007 in Twinning project; 22 management plans in progress
Portugal	Institute for Nature Conservation and Biodiversity	<50%	24 management plans written and approved
Romania	Decentralised agencies of the Ministry of Environment: Local Environmental Protection Agency (site in one county) Regional Environmental Protection Agency (more than one county).	Starting	3 management plans written and approved
Slovakia	State Nature Conservancy SR	<50%	10 ready (small existing nature protected areas), 23 in progress (national parks and alike), ready 2014-2016
Slovenia	Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning	Ready	mid term evaluation in 2010
Sweden	Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Naturvårdsverket)	unclear	
UK	England: Natural England, Wales: Countryside Council for Wales; Northern Ireland: Environmental & Heritage Service; Scotland: Scottish Natural Heritage	>50%	

As precise data on the progress of management plan development and approval is often not available in the Member States, progress has been classified in six categories:

- (1) none
- (2) started
- (3) progress but still less than 50% (<50%)
- (4) half-way (50%)
- (5) progress and over half way (>50%)
- (6) ready