



for a living planet®

NATURA 2000

SUCCESSFUL - FLEXIBLE - MODERN

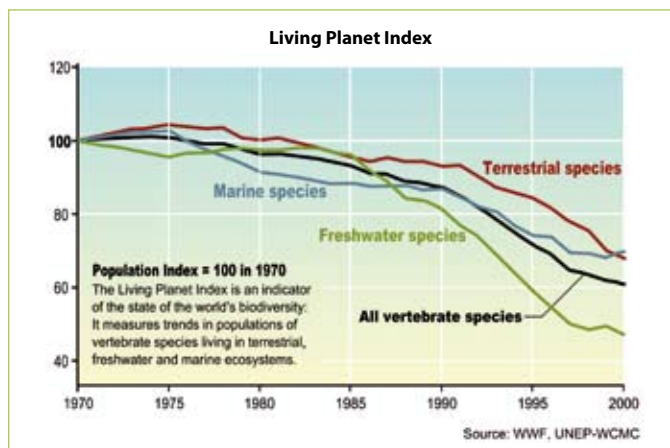


Nature is the basis of human life - of people's well-being and health. Thanks to its diverse resources, the natural environment also provides the foundation for commercial production. A loss of nature ultimately leads to a decrease in social and economic development. In recent decades, there has been concern that Europe's valuable natural resources are being irrevocably destroyed. Natura 2000 is the most significant of all EU Member States' responses to these alarming developments. The EU has successfully established a modern conservation system through Natura 2000.

NATURE IS OUR HOME

The European landscape is characterised by a particularly rich diversity of habitats. Pristine river beds, steep coasts, small terraced vineyards, wildflower meadows and vast natural forests define the character of its natural heritage. Many of these habitats are the result of traditional land use practices, which have gradually evolved to become best suited to the natural environment. Nature and landscapes provide the basis for people's livelihoods as well as their home.

In recent decades, human activities, including the use of nature and landscapes, have changed considerably. Biodiversity has changed more dramatically in the last 50 years than in the whole history of humanity. As reported in the UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, human activities are causing species to die out 1,000 times faster than they would under natural circumstances. Since 1945, for example, 50 species of butterflies have become rare. Currently 10-30% of mammals, birds and amphibians are globally endangered. From 1970 to 2003, reductions in the populations of 1,300 monitored species averaged at 30%. These losses diminish the productivity of nature and thereby threaten long-term human wellbeing.



EUROPEAN NATURE CONSERVATION POLICY


Economic growth since the 1950s has demonstrated how unsustainable economic development seriously threatens biodiversity and ecosystems.

In 1979, the decline of many formerly common bird species led to the adoption of the EU Birds Directive. At the same time, the Council of Europe and some other states adopted the Bern Convention to conserve European wild animals and plants within their natural habitats. Its implementation was accelerated in 1992, with the adoption of the EU Habitats Directive.

 **The Birds and Habitats Directives are the cornerstones of EU nature conservation policy.**

Successful: On the basis of these directives and according to common scientific criteria, the EU Member States have designated more than 25,000 sites known as "Natura 2000". After 15 years, the success of this protected areas network is now visible: some populations of rare species are recovering and the loss of valuable habitats is slowing down.


Flexible and modern: EU Nature Policy does not only attach great importance to Europe's pristine natural areas, but also to its centuries' old and very diverse cultural landscapes. Natura 2000, the European network of protected areas, encourages people to work with nature. It supports the development of sustainable forms of land use which are so characteristic of our continent. Natura 2000 is therefore a flexible and modern instrument for protecting European natural heritage.

 **Natura 2000 is successful, flexible and modern.**
→ **Natura 2000 guarantees sustainable development for people and nature.**

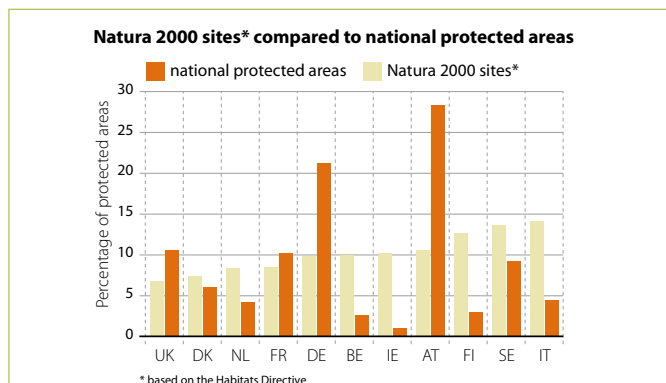


EQUAL RULES OF THE GAME

To be unified, Europe needs common rules. Differences in social and environmental protection standards can act as obstacles to fair market competition. All EU Member States have designated Natura 2000 sites according to common scientific criteria. Every Member State must establish adequate measures to ensure its protected areas are in a good state and report regularly to the European Commission. Equal implementation of the directives ensures a level playing field across all Member States, providing a common approach to nature protection.

 The fairness of a common nature protection network can be seen by comparing national protected area networks with the European Natura 2000 network: in each Member State the average percentage of land covered by Natura 2000 sites is much more balanced than that covered by national protected areas.

→ Natura 2000 leads to fair and balanced coverage of protected areas.



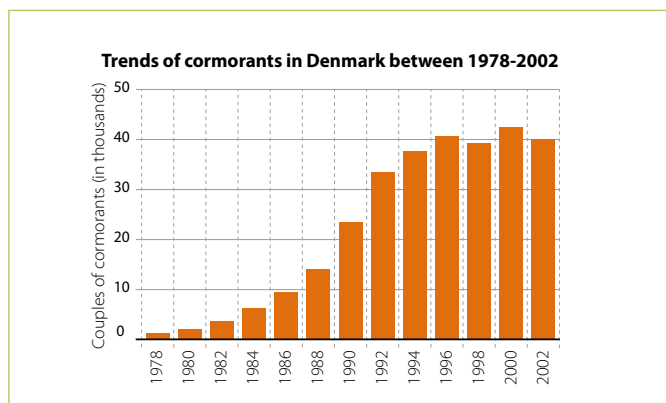
FLEXIBLE MANAGEMENT

Nature is not static. Flexibility is therefore an integral component of the nature directives, allowing for adjustments in the conservation objectives and management plans of Natura 2000 sites. In areas where long-term trends such as climate change are causing fundamental changes and some species are shifting their habitats to new climatic zones, Member States can adapt their regulations and management plans.

Under special circumstances the annexes of the directives can also be changed. For example, the Cormorant was deleted from Annex I of the Birds Directive in 1997 after its European population was restored. With immediate effect, no further protected areas were designated for the Cormorant.

 Natura 2000 sites are managed in a flexible way to better respond to the changing conservation needs of species and habitats.

→ Natura 2000 allows for flexible management to protect natural sites.



In the same way, if the Cormorant becomes under threat in the future, it will be added to Annex I again.

MODERN ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

Many plants and animals react rapidly and sensitively to certain interventions. For example, harvesting in forests during the breeding season could cause a pair of White-tailed sea eagles to leave a nesting site, whilst the same activity at another time of year would be completely unproblematic.

The foreseen impact of a project on the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site and the network is the criterion used to determine whether an assessment is obligatory under the nature directives.

 Natura 2000 provides a modern assessment model for the protection of complex and sensitive ecosystems.

→ Natura 2000 does not take into account the type of project, but its impact on the site.



ACHIEVEMENTS FOR NATURE

The nature directives aim to improve and restore the conservation status of species and habitats at cross-border level. This makes them unique and effective as species do not recognise country borders.

The EU can show measurable achievements in fulfilment of its nature protection aims. For example, the implementation of the Birds Directive by Member States has helped to reverse the negative population trends of formerly threatened bird species such as the Spoonbill. The designation of Natura 2000 sites contributes to such successes.



🍀 **EU nature conservation policy and measures taken by Member States are important achievements for nature protection.**

→ **Natura 2000 guarantees effective protection for habitats and species.**

THE ECONOMY AND NATURE CONSERVATION

Natura 2000 allows for sustainable economic development. Assessments allow nature protection objectives to be compared with the objectives of other public interests. The economic public benefits of the Rotterdam harbour development in 2003, for example, were given priority over certain nature conservation interests. However, due to the conser-

vation value of the site, the harbour enlargement included compensatory measures for Natura 2000. The nature directives set new standards for developing projects, and require better advance planning and assessment. Those who follow the law and act professionally can find solutions to conflicts and benefit from planning security.

🍀 **Assessments undertaken in Natura 2000 sites show that a wide variety of projects and initiatives – large and small - are compatible with conservation objectives, demonstrating that economic development and nature protection can co-exist harmoniously.**

→ **Natura 2000 is a driver of sustainable economic development.**

NATURE PROTECTION: A SOCIO-ECONOMIC NECESSITY

Natura 2000 areas are key parts of the ecosystems on which we all depend: ancient forests and peatlands act as carbon sinks, helping to mitigate climate change; wetlands provide natural water storage and help reduce flooding; and forests can provide effective protection against avalanches. Protecting nature helps to buffer against natural disasters (e.g. those caused by climate change) whilst at the same time gives a good return, and reduces damage costs. The insurance company, Munich Re, calculates that if the number of natural disasters continues to increase at the current rate, by 2060 the world's GDP will no longer be able to cover the damage. The costs of inaction will therefore be much higher than the costs of investing in nature conservation today.

China spends €42 billion a year repairing ecological damage – this is not the case in the EU because of the



strict environmental laws of the 1970s and 1980s which enabled Europe to decouple air and water pollution from economic growth.


🍀 **Protecting nature through Natura 2000 limits the harmful impacts of climate change.**

→ **Natura 2000 reduces the costs of damage from natural disasters.**

NATURE CONSERVATION SUPPORTS TOURISM

Europe's most spectacular and characteristic landscapes and wildlife are protected by their designation as Natura 2000 sites. Many studies show that protected areas make a major contribution to tourism. Every year, some 290 million people visit protected areas in Germany. In Romania, a protected area in the Danube Delta experienced a 40% increase in the overnight stays of tourists between 2000 and 2006. Appropriate management of protected areas creates employment: for example, in 2001, more than 125,000 jobs related directly to nature conservation activities in the EU 15.



 The increasing demand for peace and quiet, fresh air and clean water is not a short-term trend, but reflects long-term societal changes.

→ Natura 2000 is a tourist attraction.

NATURE CONSERVATION SUPPORTS ECONOMICALLY WEAK REGIONS

Many Natura 2000 sites are located in peripheral, economically underdeveloped and rural regions. Through targeted financial support in protected areas it is possible to minimise the decline in traditional agriculture, rural depopulation and increases in commuting. In Germany, farmers generated three times the market price for fruit from extensively managed orchards compared to fruit generated from con-

ventional orchards, reflecting the increasing societal demand for products produced in healthy environments. 250 Danish farmers successfully changed from failed intensive agricultural practices to cultivating valuable salt meadows in the Vardetal Natura 2000 site. The farmers' futures, as well as the conservation of valuable salt meadows in the region, are now assured.

In recent years financial support for conservation activities in rural areas has increased considerably and become an essential source of income for farmers.

 Natura 2000 helps to conserve diverse landscapes, which are important for local recreation and quality of life.

→ Natura 2000 offers successful support for economically weak areas.

FOR THE FUTURE OF NATURA 2000:

- Natura 2000 site designation must be finalised by 2010. This will allow all EU Member States to concentrate on managing the Natura 2000 network effectively.
- Natura 2000 is a key tool to help halt biodiversity loss and must be supported by all relevant policies at the EU, national and local level, in order to achieve the EU 2010 Biodiversity Target.
- Financing Natura 2000 helps nature and people. In their future budgets, the EU and its Member States must commit to stronger economic support for nature conservation.

In collaboration with :



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- conserving the world's biological diversity
- ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable
- promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption

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