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**INNOVATIVE USE OF EU FUNDS  
TO FINANCE MANAGEMENT MEASURES & ACTIVITIES  
IN NATURA 2000 SITES**

**- A collection of good practise examples -**

**Final report**

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**The report was:**

**Coordinated by:** Alberto Arroyo Schnell, Andreas Baumüller (WWF)  
With support from Erik Gerritsen (WWF) and Marianne Kettunen (IEEP)

**Language editing by:** Janice Weatherley

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## ACRONYMS

EAFRD .....	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EAGGF .....	European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund
EFF.....	European Fisheries Funds
ERDF .....	European Rural Development Fund
EC .....	European Commission
EU .....	European Union
HNV.....	High Nature Value
LIPU.....	Lega Italiana Protezioni Uccelli (BirdLife Italy)
LPO.....	Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux
RDP.....	Rural Development Plan
SAC.....	Special Area of Conservation
SCI .....	Site of Community Interest
SPA .....	Special Protection Area
SSSI.....	Site of Special Scientific Interest
ZON .....	Slovenian Nature Conservation Act

## I INTRODUCTION

The EU has made significant commitments to save biodiversity. In 2001, the EU Heads of State or Governments agreed “to halt the decline of biodiversity [in Europe] by 2010” and in 2002, they joined some 130 world leaders in agreeing “to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss [globally] by 2010”.

The Birds and Habitats Directives form the basis of biodiversity conservation in the EU and are widely regarded as the cornerstone of the EU’s biodiversity protection work. One of the main aims of these directives is to establish a coherent network of protected areas that are designed to safeguard the most unique habitats and species within the EU, i.e. the Natura 2000 network.

As the establishment of Natura 2000 network is now nearing completion, an increasing amount of attention is being given to securing its appropriate maintenance and management. This includes guaranteeing sufficient funding for Natura 2000 site management, including through EU funding instruments.



The closely interlocked cultural landscapes created and maintained by farmers for centuries, together with the largely pristine natural landscape, are Characteristic of the “Hohe Tauern” Natura 2000 site.

© Lerch, NPVSalzburg



The Redshank (*Tringa tetanus*) is one of the bird species that benefits of restoration and improved agri-environmental measures in the Danish river Varde valley.

© Klaus Mortensen/Naturplan

The EU LIFE Programme has traditionally been an important source of funding for Natura 2000, in particular financing best practice demonstration projects. Since 1992, LIFE has provided co-financing for some 2,750 projects, contributing approximately €1.35 billion to environmental protection including Natura 2000. However, despite of its merits it has been widely acknowledged that the LIFE budget is still rather limited and it cannot cover all Natura 2000 related financing needs.

Therefore, in addition to the LIFE Programme, a number of other EU funds (such as the EU Structural Funds, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Fisheries Funds (EFF)) are also available to support the management of Natura 2000 Network (i.e. the so called “integrated model” for financing Natura 2000). These funds can significantly benefit Natura 2000, however, in the majority of cases obtaining financial support for Natura sites from these financing instruments requires that their management objectives can be linked with the wider regional and/or rural development objectives in the area. Therefore, it is generally considered that increased information is required about the

potential and effectiveness of different EU funding streams for supporting Natura 2000, in order to enhance the overall financing of the network.

For that reason an EC Funding Handbook and IT Tool for Natura 2000 have been developed to help Natura 2000 practitioners to explore different EU co-financing opportunities and to prepare their project proposals. Both the Handbook and the IT Tool provide general information on which budget lines can be used to finance Natura 2000 and, more specifically, which EU funds can be targeted for specific management activities. Both tools are published online:

- **Financing Natura 2000 Handbook:** [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/financing/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/financing/index_en.htm)
- **Financing Natura 2000 IT Tool:** <http://www.financing-natura2000.moccu.com/pub/index.html>

To follow up on these efforts, good case study examples on financing Natura 2000 from the different Community funds are needed to demonstrate the use of the EU fund in practice.



Pupils participating in an excursion near Adamov, along the Slovakian side of the Morava river. © Marek Brinzík



Slovenian beech forest. Sustainably managed forests cover 70 % of Slovenian Natura 2000 network.

© Andrej Bibic



Volunteers of BirdLife France helping a farmer to plant 400 metres of hedge, using local species, in the Midi-Pyrénées. © Magali Trille / LPO Aveyron



The Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*) is one of the species that benefits from increased variation in the landscape like the restoration of hedgerows.

© Thierry Vergely

## II AIMS & CONTENT OF THIS REPORT

The aim of this report is to present a selection of existing case study examples on financing Natura 2000 by using a variety of different EU funds, i.e. illustrating the application of the integrated EU financing model for Natura 2000 in practise.

It is hoped that this collection of case studies would motivate and encourage people to make the best possible use of the variety of financing possibilities for Natura 2000 available under different EU funds.

The selected ten (10) examples have been identified from a larger set of potential cases collected in cooperation with WWF & partners, the European Commission and the Member States.

The documented case studies range from smaller scale initiatives that focus on specific management and outreach activities to larger projects supporting various management activities at a site. All of these documented case studies, regardless of their size and specific focus, have played an important role in contributing to reaching the conservation objectives of a given site. In addition, an example of an overarching national approach aiming to systematically integrate financing of Natura 2000 sites into the different EU funds during the current 2007-2013 funding period is provided (see case study number 10).

**Please note:** this report does not cover examples of purely LIFE funded cases as the European Commission already provides several best practice examples of LIFE projects on its homepage (see <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/index.htm>).

The collected case studies are presented in Chapters 1-10 of this report. In addition, the general main findings from the case studies are presented in Chapter IV below. Finally, some general insights on the integrated funding model for financing Natura 2000 are given in Chapter V.

Case studies:

- **Chapter 1.** River Varde Valley and the Meadows of Ho Bay, Syddanmark, Denmark
- **Chapter 2.** Integrated River Management of the Weser Estuary: Restoration and River Basin Management, Free Hanseatic City of Bremen, Germany
- **Chapter 3.** Heves Lowland (Hevesi síkság), Northern Hungary
- **Chapter 4.** Species Related Actions in the Island of Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain
- **Chapter 5.** The Arran Access Project, Highlands and Islands of Scotland, United Kingdom
- **Chapter 6.** “Cosy Places” – An exhibition of Tyrolean farmers’ favourite natural places, Tyrol Region, Austria
- **Chapter 7.** Tarn Valley, Causse Noir & Dourbie Gorge, Midi-Pyrénées, France

- **Chapter 8.** Action Plan for the Conservation of the Egyptian Vulture and Conservation Measures for Lesser Kestrel, Black Kite, and Red Kite, Puglia, Italy
- **Chapter 9.** Developing Eco-tourism Activities in Protected Areas in the Morava Floodplain Area, Zahorie region, Bratislava & Trnave, Slovakia
- **Chapter 10.** The Slovenian Natura 2000 Site Management Programme 2007-2013

Information for each case study is presented using the following structure:

- A short description of the Natura 2000 sites
- Information on the EU funds used, including where relevant, specific beneficiary and budgetary information
- Information on the EU funded project, including the contact details of the relevant person in case further information is needed
- General benefits of the project, including conservation benefits, economic benefits, social benefits and ecosystem services
- Evaluation and lessons learnt.

### **III METHODOLOGY USED TO IDENTIFY AND COMPILE THE SELECTED CASE STUDIES**

In order to identify potential examples demonstrating successful financing of Natura 2000 a questionnaire was developed (see Annex I) and sent out to different stakeholders. The targeted stakeholders included: Member States forming part of the Commission ad hoc working group on Financing Natura 2000 (Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Sweden and the United Kingdom); NGOs (European partner organizations of WWF, BirdLife, EEB and the European Habitats Forum); and some individual Natura 2000 experts who deal with Natura 2000 on a national level.

The questionnaire resulted in altogether 27 responses (see Annex II). Out of these 27 potential cases ten examples were selected to be included in the study. This selection of final case studies was made with the agreement of the Commission working group on Financing Natura 2000. The criteria for the selection of the cases were based on the following consideration:

- Type and variety of benefits provided by the site (conservation, economic, social, or ecosystem services);
- Involvement of local people/stakeholders, e.g. involvement of non-environmental stakeholders;
- Innovative ideas (e.g. non-traditional funding opportunities) followed up in the project;
- Success in securing medium/long term financing;
- Relevance to other EU Member States and regions, e.g. the applicability of lessons learner; and
- Opportunities to communicate project's success to wider audiences (e.g. inspiring and catchy story lines).

In addition to the criteria above, the availability and quality of information and the geographic representativeness of case studies were taken into consideration.

For each of the ten individual case studies more detailed information was collected with the help of national WWF and BirdLife partner organizations, Member States experts and individual consultants in accordance with the guidance format (see Annex III). The information received was evaluated and compiled in a similar format. Finally, the final case studies were reviewed by the Member State experts.

## IV MAIN FINDINGS

### Overview of the case studies' funding base

The total funding for the ten selected case studies varied between 53.200 - 146.900.000 EUR. Table 1 shows the variety of co-financing provided by the European Union. It starts with 24 per cent co-financing of the UK case and goes up to 90 per cent of the Denmark case. The cases from France and Slovakia illustrate the most diverse funding base with financing from the Community, national, regional and other sources (see footnote for more details).

The ten case studies show that national funding is the most common way to match EU's co-financing requirements. Regional and other funding sources play a less important role in complementing the Community funds.

**Table 4.1. Total costs of case study projects and the level of EU co-financing.**

No	Case	Total €	% EU	% National	% Regional	% OTHER
1	Denmark	23,000,000.00	90	10	0	0
2	Germany	5,000,000.00	50	50	0	0
3	Hungary	609,769.75	80	20	0	0
4	Spain	911,000.00	82,4	0	17,6	0
5	UK	600,000.00	24	0	4	72 (#3)
6	Austria	40,513.90	40	26	34	0
7	France	53,200.00	35	20	20	25 (#1)
8	Italy	352,170.00	98	0	2	0
9	Slovakia	132,595.85	57	28	12	3 (#2)
10	Slovenia	146,900,000.00	64,3	35,7	0	0

1: Crédit Agricole (Bank), LPO Aveyron, APABA, FRCIVAM and FARRE

2: SOS/BirdLife Slovakia

3: Heritage Lottery Fund, Scottish Natural Heritage, Argyll and Islands Enterprise, Forest Enterprise and Historic Scotland

### Future funding security

Obtaining funding for long-term, e.g. beyond the duration of EU financed projects, has been recognised as one of the key challenges for managing Natura 2000 sites and other protected areas. In the context of the ten case studies, only two out of ten cases have not been able to secure future funding beyond the EU co-funded project (Table 2). In three cases continuation of EU co-financed activities has been unnecessary as the projects have focused on one-off measures with no need for follow-up actions. These insights are encouraging, however it is not possible to draw any general conclusions based on such a limited number of examples.

**Table 2. Long-term financing prospects for the case study projects.**

No	Case	Funding secured	Funding unsecured	No follow-up needed
1	Denmark	X	0	0
2	Germany	X	0	0

3	Hungary	X	0	0
4	Spain	X	0	0
5	UK	0	0	X
6	Austria	0	0	X
7	France	0	X	0
8	Italy	0	0	X
9	Slovakia	0	X	0
10	Slovenia	X	0	0

## Key insights from the case studies

The ten examples presented in this report show that the so-called integration option can allow for a successful financing of Natura 2000 from a combination of EU and national funds. Some general conclusions and lessons learned are listed below:

**Combining LIFE and other EU funds:** Combining LIFE funds with other EU funds like Structural or Agriculture funds can be a successful approach. For example, the combination of the agri-environmental measures together with LIFE. Whilst LIFE funding can be used to define key planning activities, develop pilot actions and carry out specific conservation activities during the initial establishment of Natura 2000 sites, agri-environmental measures can ensure the long term development of necessary measures, ensuring support from relevant actors such as farmers. Moreover, obtaining funding from a larger variety of sources with slightly different priorities enables a more holistic approach to be taken. However, aligning the various funding sources requires some effort especially as some EU funding procedures take more than a year between application and approval (e.g. LIFE+).

**Stakeholder Involvement:** Successful implementation requires involvement from people in different sectors, including listening to and learning from each other. This helps to identify positive messages that are easily understood by all from the start, which is often essential to the success of a project. Moreover, successful cooperation between local citizens and authorities benefits the management of Natura 2000 sites in the long term.

**Communication Opportunities:** Most of the EU funded projects relating to Natura 2000 also provide good opportunities to demonstrate that Natura 2000 sites do not only protect biodiversity but they can also bring several socio-economic benefits to the local communities (e.g. how Natura 2000 sites help to maintain several important ecosystem services, such as recreation & tourism, cultural heritage, pollination of crops and regulation of water cycles). It is recommended that these opportunities for communicating positive socio-economic messages would also be identified and proactively used during the elaboration and development of projects and funding initiatives.

**Using different funds in a strategic manner:** A strategic approach to the use of different EU funds can be a very positive way forward. The example of the Slovenian “Natura 2000 Site Management Programme 2007-2013” shows how channelling financing for Natura 2000 from different EU funds can work in practice at a national level. Some key characteristics of this management programme that are worth considering are:

- Key content of the management programme was prepared in cooperation with relevant public services and ministries and others involved in EU funding related to the EU Financial Perspectives 2007-2013, and was presented to experts before being approved.

- The programme includes conservation objectives, measures to achieve these objectives, and proposed monitoring and research activities.
- The programme is harmonised with national operational programmes for different EU funds which was crucial to the final adoption of the management programme.
- The programme describes in detail the use of both EU funds (structural, rural development and LIFE+; 64.3%) and national funds (35.7%) with an overall budget of €147 million.

**Follow up in relation to EU financial cycles:** It is advisable to ensure that Natura 2000 funding successes are identified during each EU financial period (7 years), in order to ensure a positive use of lessons learned nationally. In particular, this can allow for successful long term plans or projects to be followed up.

Finally, the following **general suggestions** for the European Commission and the Member States have been identified to improve the funding of Natura 2000 in future: they could be helpful to ensure a smoother development of projects and initiatives for financing Natura 2000 in the future.

- There is a need to simplify administrative procedures for accessing EU funds relevant to Natura 2000 financing, so as to encourage take up among different beneficiaries.
- It is important to ensure that clear guidance for the implementation and reporting conditions for EU financed projects and financial support is available.
- It has been noted that one major disadvantage of the multi-year agri-environmental agreements is the difficulty in adjusting management activities when the agreement is running: a higher level of flexibility in the application of the agri-environmental measures, to benefit the environment, could therefore be recommended.
- The capacity and resources of some stakeholders and organisations interested in applying for EU funding to manage Natura 2000 sites is limited. It would be, therefore, advisable to try to look for possible solutions -like offering some kind of pre-financing grant- in order to ease the preparation of applications which can be quite time and resource consuming (e.g. because of the need to seek agreements from different required co-financers).

### **Some concluding remarks on the EU co-financing for Natura 2000**

The current EU financing model for biodiversity (i.e. the integration of biodiversity into several existing Community funds) means that the majority of the EU funds now available for Natura 2000 are managed at the national level. This, in principle, allows for a better reflection of the national specificities and conservation priorities in the financial allocations. Therefore, while the current financing model provides many funding possibilities for Natura 2000 the concrete level of funding available is to a large extent decided at the national level. This can significantly affect the actual amount of financing available for Natura 2000 in practise.

According to the present knowledge, even though the existing EU funding regulations are broad and flexible enough to cover most of the management measures for Natura 2000 the EU

Member States have used these opportunities only to a varying extent<sup>1</sup>. The experience obtained in the context of this project supports these views. In order to identify successful case study a wider range of stakeholders was contacted, including several Member States, the WWF and BirdLife European networks, other NGOs and individual Natura 2000 experts. The total response amounted to no more than 27 proposed examples of good practise. This indicates that on a larger scale financing Natura 2000 from a range of available Community sources, e.g. other than the LIFE fund, is still more of an exception than the rule.

In the context of the integrated financing model, funding for biodiversity and Natura 2000 is competing with the needs of other policy sectors and activities. The existing experience and examples indicate that clear political support for financing biodiversity at the national level is needed to ensure that the integrated funding model for Natura 2000 works in practise. It seems that the existing Community level obligations and guidance (e.g. the fund-specific Regulations) to integrate Natura 2000 into the different EU funding streams are not always sufficient to secure the allocation of resources for Natura 2000 at the national level. Therefore, to adequately cover the financial needs of Natura 2000 and to ensure that the integrated financing model truly benefits biodiversity conservation it is recommended to further enforce the integration of Natura 2000 in all relevant EU funds, particularly at the Member State level.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Torkler, P., Arroyo, A., Kettunen, M. 2008. Linking Management and Financing of Natura 2000. Final report. 51 pp. and Kettunen, M., Adelle, C., Baldock, D., Cooper, T., Farmer, M., Hart, K., Torkler, P. 2009. Biodiversity and the EU Budget – an IEEP briefing paper. Institute for European Environmental Policy, London / Brussels. 28 pp. (to be published)

## 1 RIVER VARDE VALLEY AND THE MEADOWS OF HO BAY

### Syddanmark, Denmark

Name of the financed project / measure	Funding sources	Amount EUR	Amount %	Beneficiary	Main benefits / innovative characteristic of the project
Restoration of the River Varde Valley and the Meadows of Ho Bay (DE)	EU financing: LIFE	0.7 million	3%	Danish Forest and Nature Agency (LIFE)	A combination of EU LIFE and agri-environmental funding measures in the context of this project was very successful.  The project also demonstrates good stakeholder engagement as it was to a large extent initiated and carried out by local farmers.
	EU financing: EAGGF (agri-environment)	20 million	87%		
	Danish Forestry and Nature Agency; Danish Food Industry Agency	2.3 million	10%	Local farmers (agri-environment)	
	<b>Total budget</b>	<b>23 million</b>			

### SUMMARY

The River Varde area in Denmark is the only major river system area not regulated by dikes and locks in the Wadden Sea. Because of its relevant natural values, including estuarine habitats, the houting (priority species) and birds, the area has several protection categories, including: designation as a Ramsar site; protection under national categories; and as Natura 2000 sites (2 SPAs and 1 SCI). Intensive farming based on grass pellets' production during the second half of the 20th Century seriously impaired the area's natural qualities, including through fertilisation and drainage.

In order to improve this situation, a restoration project was developed in the late 1990's. The total budget was approximately €23 million with €0.7 million provided by the EU LIFE programme and €20 million from agri-environmental subsidies. The LIFE funding (1996-2002) mainly contributed to the non-recurrent part of the project. The subsidies formed the main basis of financing for recurring environmentally-friendly management activities over 20 years (1999-2019). The remaining parts of the budget, especially pre-project costs and land redistribution costs, were covered by funding from the Danish Forestry and Nature Agency and the Danish Food Industry Agency.

It is noticeable that the project was initiated by local farmers, and negotiations about the 20 year agreements were carried out within the farmers' own system. Thanks to this project, the water level has been raised, the flora and fauna has been enhanced, and nutrient and pesticide

pollution has been reduced. Land redistribution enabled “willing” owners to own land into the target project area and “un-willing” owners to move to land outside of the area instead, ensuring a high take-up of 20 year agreements.

A combination of EU LIFE and agri-environmental funding measures has turned out to be very successful. The project has continued for 10 years without any major problems related to keeping the 20 year agreements among the local farmers. The fact that agri-environmental measures keep the land ownership in the hands of local farmers contributed to a high degree of support from amongst the local community. An important outstanding challenge is to secure sufficient grazed areas in accordance with agri-environmental measures (in 90% of the project target area the farmers still base their practises on grass cutting). Future measures should make it more favourable for farmers to choose grazing as a part of their nature friendly farming, at least in areas with similar habitat types.

## THE NATURA 2000 SITES

The River Varde Valley and the Meadows of Ho Bay are situated in the northernmost part of the Wadden Sea area, near the West Coast of Jutland, Denmark.

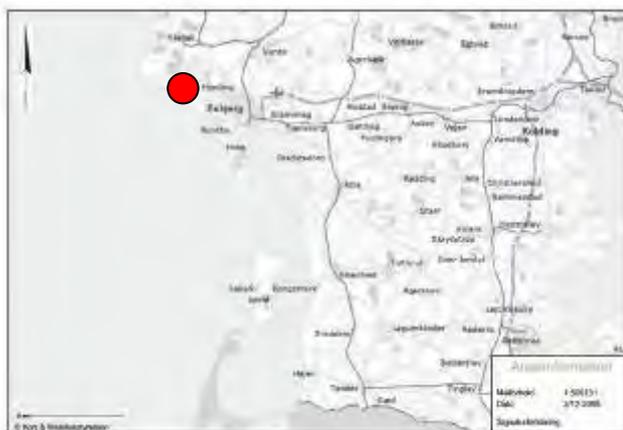
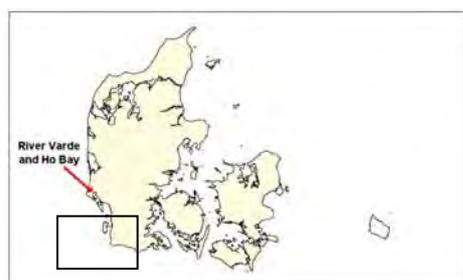
The area represents a valuable and unique landscape consisting of river valley, estuary, Atlantic salt marshes and freshwater meadows surrounded by agricultural land. It is an important potential breeding area for water birds and is situated on the Western Palaearctic Flyway for migratory birds.

The Varde River is the only major river which has not been regulated with dikes and locks at its outfall into the Wadden Sea. This, together with its situation close to the Wadden Sea, ensured that, up to the 1950's, the varied fresh water and salt marshes of the river valley were an excellent area for birds, animals and plants. Many water birds breed or rest during migration in the area. It was one of the last permanent areas for the Corncrake (*Crex crex*) in Denmark. The Corncrake thrives particularly well where traditional hay harvesting and grazing methods are used.

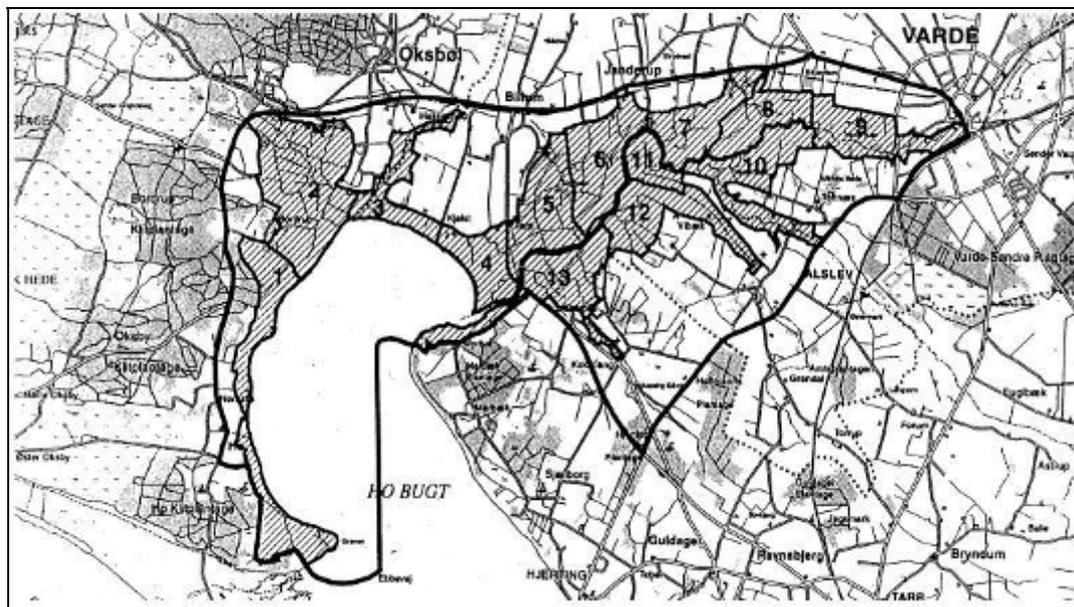
The valley and the meadows are part of the SPA No. 57: Wadden Sea (DK00AY057) (see table). The area is also partly (around 75%) designated as SPA No. 49: The Meadows of Ho Bay (DK00AX049) because of a substantial resting population of migrating Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*).

In addition, it is relevant to mention a number of breeding bird species listed on Annex I of the Birds Directive i.e. the Montagu's Harrier (*Circus pygargus*), the Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), the Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*), the Corncrake (*Crex crex*) and the Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*). One of these is a priority species.

*Location of the project area in the northernmost part of the Wadden Sea.*

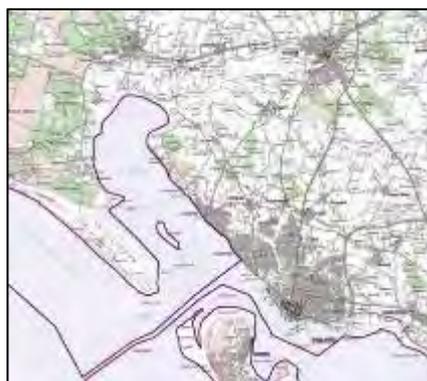


The project area. Dark parts indicate the target areas with compartments 1-13. The project in each compartment was implemented individually. The smallest compartment comprises 80 hectares and the largest 460 hectares.



**Table: List of designated areas which the project area forms part of**

Natura 2000	ID Number	Total area in hectares	Year of designation
SPA 57 Wadden Sea	DK00AY057	115,671	1994
SPA 49 Ho Bay Meadows	DK00AX049	2,711	1994
SCI / SAC 78 Wadden Sea	DK00AY176	134,730	1988/2003
Ramsar R 27 Wadden Sea	–	150,492	1987



SPA 57



SPA 49



SCI 78



Ramsar 27

The area is also part of Site of Community Interest SCI No. 78: The Wadden Sea (DK00AY176), due to the occurrence of the following habitats and species:

- Estuary
- Sea Lamprey (*Petromyzon marinu*)
- River Lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*)
- Houting (*Coregonus oxyrhynchus*)
- Otter (*Lutra lutra*)

Furthermore, the area is part of the designated Ramsar Site No. R 27.

A major part of the area is also protected under the Danish Nature Protection Act. All salt marshes and freshwater meadows in the area are generally protected nature types according to §3 in the act. In 1996, the River Varde Valley was designated as a special area of national interest for the Otter, and in 1998 hunting was banned in Ho Bay as a part of the Danish Wadden Sea Reserve.

Towards the end of the 1950's, local farmers started using artificial fertilisers on the region's marshes and meadows which at that time were mainly used for grazing and hay mowing. In 1969, intensive production of grass pellets and ensilage started, resulting in the drainage of the area. Over 1,700 ditches were dug to drain the wet fields and large quantities of chemical fertilisers were used to achieve maximum growth.

The region became an important Danish centre for the production of grass pellets for feeding livestock. However, this intensive farming seriously impaired the area's natural qualities. Fertilisation as well as drainage impoverished the natural vegetation and dependent fauna. Almost no wading birds bred in the area during the 1980's and 1990's and only few migratory birds used the area for resting and foraging. Furthermore, leaching of nutrients and ochre reduced the water quality of the River Varde and the Wadden Sea.

However, the region's marshes and meadows were not extensively ploughed up. This meant that it would be relatively easy to restore the valuable natural characteristics that previously existed if farmers were given the means to change their farming methods. The main challenges would be to end drainage, re-establish wet meadows and flooded areas, and to stop fertilising the marshes and meadows.

## **INFORMATION ON EU FUNDS USED**

In 1996 the local farmer's union initiated a new agri-environmental project in the River Varde Valley and on the salt marshes of Ho Bay, in cooperation with the local and national authorities. Ceasing EU support for grass pellet production paved the way for support for environmentally friendly farming by local farmers.

Another important reason to carry out the project was an international agreement in 1997 between the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark on a joint management plan for the Wadden Sea. The basis of the plan is that the Wadden Sea must be protected against pollution and the intensive use of natural resources. The agri-environmental project in the River Varde Valley would be an important national Danish contribution towards fulfilling this agreement. Other reasons included the intention to improve the conservation status of the Natura 2000 sites.

The project was prepared in co-operation with the Danish Forestry and Nature Agency, the Directorate for Food, Fisheries and Agri Business under the Danish Ministry of Food,

Agriculture and Fisheries, the Land Owner Committee, Varde Farmer Union, Smallholders of Varde and Neighbourhood and Ribe County.

The project was carried out with funding from the EU LIFE programme and from 20 year management subsidies under EEC Reg. 2078/92. It was accepted under the EU LIFE funding that the farmers' 20 year agreements would form the long term management part of the total project. No specific management plan was developed.

The total budget was approximately €23 million with €0.7 million provided by the EU LIFE programme and €20 million from subsidies. EU LIFE funding contributed to the non-recurring biotope management (mainly infrastructure) and information. Subsidies formed the main funding basis for recurring management activities through environmentally friendly farming. The remaining parts of the budget, especially pre-project costs and land redistribution costs, were covered by funds from the Danish Forestry and Nature Agency and the Danish Food Industry Agency.

Furthermore, the Danish Forestry and Nature Agency spends approximately 200 hours a year regulating the water level.

**Table: Breakdown of project costs**

<b>SUB-PROJECT</b>	<b>M€</b>	<b>FUNDER</b>
Pilot Project	0,53	Danish Ministry of the Environment
Demonstration project	0,13	Agri-environmental measures, RFO 2078/92
Infrastructure	1,47	LIFE99 NAT/DK/006456
Ocre	0,13	Danish Ministry of the Environment
Redistribution of land	0,53	Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries
Agri-environment measures	20,00	Agri-environmental measures, RFO 2078/92
Monitoring-information	0,40	Agri-environmental measures, RFO 2078/92, Danish Forest and Nature Agency, LIFE99 NAT/DK/006456
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23,20</b>	

## **INFORMATION ON THE EU FUNDED PROJECT**

<p><b>Name of the project</b> LIFE99 NAT/DK/006456 Agri-environmental measures for 20 years under the EEC Reg. 2078/92 and Council Regulation No. 1257/1999</p> <p><b>Beneficiaries</b> Danish Forest and Nature Agency (EU LIFE) More than 250 individual farmers in the area (20 year management subsidies under EEC Reg. 2078/92)</p> <p><b>Contact person</b> Henrik Lykke Sørensen Ministry of the Environment, Danish Forestry and Nature Agency Aalholtvej 1, DK-6840 Oksboel Tel: +45 76 54 10 43 e-mail: HLS@SNS.DK</p>
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### **What has been done?**

The main goal of the project was to restore natural hydrological conditions in the project area in order to secure a favourable conservation status for habitats and species in the River Varde Valley and the meadows of Ho Bay. This is done by raising the water level, stopping the use of fertilisers and pesticides and by adjusting other agricultural practices, such as production periods and grazing regimes, to more extensive and environmentally beneficial practices.

The initiatives aimed to fulfil the restoration obligations in the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. The duration of the EU LIFE funded part of the project was 3 years from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1999 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2002.

In public communications, the project was named “Mission Corncrake”.

The project target area covered 2,770 hectares. It involved 436 private owners, who together own 75% of the target area or 2,100 hectares. The Ministry of Defence owns the rest. 222 hectares was land where there was no possibility of changing the water levels (already natural wetlands).

There was a great need for land redistribution in the project area, as farmland was situated around the buildings as well as in the meadows and marshes. Redistribution provided a more rational approach to land planning as the farmland of each farm became situated nearer to farm buildings and in as few and large plots as possible. Redistribution also made it possible to group willing owners within the target project area, to ensure a high degree of nature-friendly management by use of the 20 year agri-environmental measures.

In relation to this, the Danish Food Industry Agency (formerly called the Directorate of Agricultural Business) was buying appropriate arable and natural areas in the project area. These supplementary land areas served as bargaining counters during the redistribution. The organisations, landowners and their counterparts agreed to implement the project through a series of steps which brought the 13 divisions of the target project area into the project one by one.

With finance from the EU LIFE fund, 600 of the 2,700 ditches in the project target area were filled in and 296 sluice gates and 12 riffles were constructed. The EU LIFE fund also covered the costs of 9km of nature trails, a bird observation tower, a central information platform, 10 information boards and a pamphlet about the project and nature site.

The change in farming practices has been achieved through the use of agri-environmental measures for a commitment period of 20 years under the EEC Reg. 2078/92 and Council Regulation No. 1257/1999. The agri-environmental measures are financed by the Danish Food Industry Agency, with co-financing from the EU.

The subsidies cover losses caused by the change in water levels and by a change in the general farming practices in the area. The ground water level in targeted areas should be no lower than an average of 10cm below the surface in winter and 30cm below the surface in summer. Other restrictions include:

- Areas to be used for extensive grazing and/or mowing
- Grazing with a maximum of 1.4 Livestock Units per hectare as an average for the grazing period.
- Mowing is forbidden before 25<sup>th</sup> June each year.
- The use of fertilisers, pesticides and irrigation is forbidden.
- Areas can not be passed on during the 20 year agreement.

Changes in farming practices were undertaken on a voluntary basis by farmers. A majority, (more than 250 of the farmers with fields in the project area after the land redistribution), took part in the 20 year agreements. A total of 2,488 hectares was included in the project, i.e. the project covered more than 90% of the initial project target area.



*Distribution of 20 year agreements in the River Varde Valley and along Ho Bay.*

The 20 year agreements for subsidised management practices began at different times in the 13 compartments. They will all end between 2017 and 2022. Subsidies are in the range of approximately €300 to €25 per hectare and are not indexed. It is foreseen that the total cost after 20 years will be around €20 million.

### **Impact on the site**

The main result is that the water level is now raised within most of the compartments. The raised water level, combined with restrictions on the use of fertilisers and pesticides in the project area and changed management practices, reduces the leaching of nutrients, ochre and pesticide pollution into the surrounding environment. Furthermore, conditions have been enhanced for flora and fauna, not only within the project area, but also in Ho Bay and the rest of the Wadden Sea.

The animal and plant populations including fish, mammals, amphibians, birds and invertebrates have increased and obtained a more beneficial conservation status. The same is also true for habitats including the estuary, Atlantic salt marshes, freshwater meadows, and the River Varde Å itself. The Corncrake (*Crex crex*) has improved its conservation status. Grazing by cows in the meadows favours a larger biodiversity of plant species. Furthermore, the raised water level reduced the salinity of the area due to the diluting effect it has when periodic flooding with saline seawater occurs. It is therefore expected that less saline tolerant plant species will return to frequently flooded areas.

However, changes in the conservation status of the area have not been as effective and fast as might have been expected. This is mainly caused by the farmer's choice of management by traditional grass cutting and mowing instead of cattle grazing.

The most favourable structural changes to the fields have developed in grazed areas that only cover about 10% of the target area. In 90% of the area farmers still base their practices on grass cutting and the grass pellets' production. Despite wetter conditions and an end to the use of fertilisers and pesticides in the grass cutting areas, there is still less variation than in the grazed areas.

To increase the total amount of grazed areas the project administration is considering, in addition to the existing agreements, applications for establishing grazing associations through the Danish Rural Development Programme (RDP) (articles 36 (a) (vi) and 41 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005). The establishment of larger, common grazing fields may encourage the farmers to introduce grazing in larger parts of the target area.

### **Secondary effects**

An important secondary effect of the project is an increase in the number of visitors to the area to experience the new nature trails and increased biodiversity. Since 2002, about 25,000 pamphlets have been distributed in the area.

The nearby nature school at Myrthuegård also uses the project area. Every year about 500 school children visit the estuary and the meadows along River Varde and are told about the restoration project.

Myrthuegård also houses an exhibition about the landscape of Ho Bay and the River Varde Valley.

## **GENERAL PROJECT BENEFITS**

### **Conservation benefits**

- Improved conditions for habitats and species in the Natura 2000 site
- Improved water quality of the River Varde and the Wadden Sea

### **Economic benefits**

- Farming can still continue in the area. Funds and subsidies cover losses caused by changes to the water level and the introduction of nature-friendly farming practices.
- Increased biodiversity will benefit tourism in the area.

### **Social benefits**

- Local farmers have taken common ownership of the restoration project.
- Several hundred individual owners work together on the same project.
- The project area is used by the local nature school for teaching in nature and landscape restoration.

### **Ecosystem services**

- Restoration and maintenance of the natural hydrological conditions of the only estuary without dikes and locks in the Wadden Sea area.

## **EVALUATION AND LESSONS LEARNT**

### **Highlight actions**

Some positive actions should be mentioned as examples of innovative or best practice for similar projects:

- The project was initiated by local farmers and their organisations. This generated long-term support for the project from local people who are landowners and important future site managers.
- The project was based on land redistribution. This made it possible for “willing” owners to move into the target area and “un-willing” owners to move out of the area.
- In the context of nature restoration the use of agri-environmental subsidies has proven to be a favourable alternative to subsidies that instead support industrialised farming practices.
- The project set-up with a short time-lag between decisions and actions proved to be very successful. Major decisions are made at regular steering meetings, but project managers have been able to act promptly to problems arising, mainly due to cooperation with the local community via farmer organisations.
- The resulting “ownership” of the project by local farmers has contributed to the long-term stability and success of the project.

Local support and strong engagement from farmers has been an exceptional driving force behind the implementation of the project. Local support has been critical to the project’s success in attracting EU LIFE funding and support from agri-environmental schemes.

### **Evaluation and lessons learnt**

The combination of funding from EU LIFE and agri-environmental measures turned out to be very successful in this project. The project has now continued for about 10 years without any major problems related to keeping the 20 year agreements by the local farmers.

The major advantage of using agri-environmental measures is that the land is still owned by local farmers. This has contributed to a high degree of support from the local community. A close and well-run collaboration between the authorities and local stakeholders, based on confidence and a high level of shared information, was also essential to the project’s success.

In other wetland projects in Denmark where the land has been taken over by the state through purchase or expropriation, support from local communities has not been as strong, at least not in the initial project stages.

The major disadvantage of the 20 year agreements used in this project is the difficulty in adjusting management activities. Most farmers have chosen grass cutting as their preferred farming practice instead of grazing. That has not proven to be enough to get sufficient structural variations on the marshes and the meadows in this area. If the land was fully owned by the state, it would have been easier to change to more effective management methods and obtain better conditions for habitats and species.

Unfortunately, it is currently not possible to get new subsidies for 20 year agreements and to cover losses by changes in water levels through agri-environmental schemes in Denmark. The timescale of 5 year agreements, which are still run under the Danish Rural Development Plan (RDP), is too short to achieve successful results as has been tried in similar projects. Additionally, the 5 year agreements do not include subsidies for raised water levels.

Future projects involving changes to water levels may only be possible through the part of the RDP that relates to the establishment of wetlands. The criteria is that future project areas must

be situated within designated Special Sensitive Agricultural areas and that they will provide a minimum reduction of 100 kg N/ha through denitrification processes, as well as improve conditions for plants and animals. Support for wetland projects under the RDP can be combined with 5 year agri-environmental measures.

**Final remarks for future measures**

Future agri-environmental schemes should make it more favourable for farmers to choose grazing as part of their nature-friendly farming, at least in areas with wet meadows and marshes.

It is also recommended that consideration is given to creating more flexible conditions than is currently the case. Some farmers in the River Varde Valley had severe problems with meeting the strict demand to cut all parts of the subsidised areas in some years because of seasonal floods. Accepting a limit of 5-10 % of areas without farming in subsidised areas would solve this problem. Small unfarmed areas would also create more variation and benefit plants and animals, especially water birds that depend on a degree of overgrowing.

## 2 INTEGRATED RIVER MANAGEMENT OF THE WESER ESTUARY: RE-NATURALIZATION AND RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT

### Free Hanseatic City of Bremen, Germany

Name of the financed project / measure	Funding sources	Amount EUR	Amount %	Beneficiary	Main benefits / innovative characteristic of the project
Restoration of the river shore and developing river basin management at the Weser river estuary (DE)	EU financing: ERDF	2.5 million	50%	Free Hanseatic City of Bremen	The project is one of the pioneering examples of using ERDF funds to set up integrated management plans for Natura 2000 sites in Germany. Therefore, it can set an important examples for other national and international initiatives. However, it is still too early to evaluate the results of the project.
	National financing	2.5 million	50%		
	<b>Total budget</b>	<b>5 million</b>			

### SUMMARY

The project area comprises the complete Weser river estuary containing 5,000 ha of wetlands (3 SCI's & 3 SPA's). The main conservation objectives of the project are to maintain: 1) The ecological dynamics typical for estuary habitats; 2) The function of the Weser as a migrating corridor for Sea and Freshwater Lamprey and a spawning area of Twaite Shad; and 3) The important breeding and feeding areas for protected birds in the Wadden areas as well as in the coastal zones. Achievement of these three conservation objectives is threatened by different types of human impact, which over time have decreased the natural estuary dynamics. Additionally, intensive use of the Weser River is putting extra pressure on the ecosystem.

To find a better balance between the natural processes and the various human activities, the Bremen Senator for the Environment issued the development of an integrated management plan for the Weser. The goals of this management plan are: 1) Amelioration of the unfavourable conservation status of the habitat type "estuaries"; 2) Create legal certainty for the use of the estuaries; 3) Interdisciplinary planning through active participation of all user groups; 4) Cross boarder collaboration with the Land Lower Saxony (common plan) and the federal waterway administration; and 5) Increase the competitiveness of "Bremen" and "Bremerhaven" through better working conditions, living conditions and university study conditions. The project is being implemented between 2007 and 2013 and is 50% funded with €2.5 million from the European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) and 50% funded by the Bremen State.

At this moment, the planning process to establish an Integrated Weser Management Plan is ongoing, and will be presented at the end of 2009. The plan will meet the concerns of different economic stakeholders within the estuary. It is also being drawn up to fit with the implementation of the European Water Framework Directive. Contributions from different user groups are made in a joint planning group in coordination with government agencies in a

working group, to avoid later conflicts and to increase efficiency. There is little experience in Germany of using ERDF funds to set up integrated management plans, so this process could be of interest to other national and international initiatives. Since the process only started very recently, it is too early for an evaluation.

## **THE NATURA 2000 SITES**

The project area in Bremen covers 3 complete SCI's and 3 SPA's areas in part:

### **SCI**

2417-370 Weser bei Bremerhaven

2817-370 Weser zwischen Ochtummündung und Rekum

2818-304 Lesum

**SPA** (only concerns the Weser floodplains outside the dyke area)

2918-401 Niedervieland

2817-401 Werderland

2818-401 Blockland

### **Sites Description**

The project area constitutes the complete estuary of the Weser River. The Bremish part includes large sections of the lower Weser and the Lesum tributary. In the lower part, around 5,000 ha of wetland constitute the key SPA situated along the Weser and Lesum within the territory of Bremen. The whole area comprises 6 SCIs and SPAs in the territory of Bremen as well as 8 other sites in the neighbouring Federal State of Lower Saxony which partly overlap.

The main conservation objective is to maintain the existing ecological dynamics typical for estuary habitats, the functioning of the Weser as a migrating corridor for Sea and Freshwater Lamprey as well as the spawning areas of Twaité Shad. Important breeding and feeding areas for protected bird species are found in parts of the Wadden areas as well as in the coastal zones.

A typical feature of estuaries is a transition between marine saltwater and freshwater areas (brackish waters) combined with tidal dynamics. This transition area ends at around 40 km in the lower Weser near the harbour of Brake (Lower Saxony) whereas the sea level changes (tide) continue up to Bremen and further into the Lesum tributary.

### **Current management status**

The changing impact of saltwater and highly dynamic sea level changes have resulted in highly specialised flora and fauna communities with a high diversity of invertebrates.

The habitats of the Weser estuary have been influenced by man for over 100 years by regulatory works and capital dredging as well as coastal protection measures, changes to the shoreline and impacts from settlements and harbour developments.

The wetlands are under agricultural use and several projects have attempted to keep the wetlands intact as valuable breeding and nesting areas for birds.

### **Management Challenges**

Besides important improvements in water quality, the estuary remains in an ecologically unfavourable condition. The intensive use of the Weser for transport, fisheries and energy

supply, the loss of floodplains to the harbour and industrial settlements and the growing demand for coastal protection, led to a potentially high number of conflicts with the conservation objectives as set out under Natura 2000.

## **INFORMATION ON EU FUNDS USED**

To address the complexity of management measures for the Natura 2000 sites combined with an integrated approach to the Weser Estuary water management, the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen will use European Regional Development support for Bremen 2007-2013.

The relevant ERDF Operational Programme for the Bremen 2007-2013 (CCI 2007DE162PO006), allows for this type of engagement under Priority 2: “To activate the urban economy and quality of life” and measure 2.3 “Raising the profile of the Cities of Bremen and Bremerhaven”

The approximate amount of EU funds to be used under this measure is up to €2.5 million of ERDF co-financing (50%), which means a total investment of around €5 million.

The project consists of two objectives:

1. Re-naturalization of the river shore and recreation: €1.8 million
2. River basin management: €0.7 million

The second objective includes the development of an Integrated Management Plan for the Weser with a value of €250,000. This is the first activity in this newly started project and will take place between March 2008 and June 2011.

The main goals of the Integrated Management Plan for the Weser are:

- Amelioration of the favourable conservation status of the habitat type “estuaries”
- Create legal certainty for the use of the estuaries
- Integrate all relevant user interests which are important for the management (interdisciplinary planning) by active participation from all user groups (especially: harbour related economic activities, navigation, environment, agriculture, fishery and tourism)
- Collaborate with Lower Saxony (common plan) and the federal waterway administration
- Increase the competitiveness of “Bremen” and “Bremerhaven” through better working conditions, living conditions and university (study) conditions (a programme goal of EFRD).

The Department for Nature Conservation and Water of the Senate for Environment is responsible for the project.

## **INFORMATION ON THE EU FUNDED PROJECT**

The European Commission recommends that Member States establish management plans for estuaries (see “Interpretation note on estuaries”) although they are not obligatory in the Habitats Directive. However, they are helpful in preventing conflicts and in clarifying the legalities of potential impacts.

The integrated management plan for the Weser aims to meet the concerns of different economic stakeholders (especially the maintenance of the federal water way and harbour access) whilst trying to preserve it.

Management activities will be developed which will not only help the navigation, but also the competitiveness of the harbour economy, the biodiversity of the river landscape and benefit citizens. At the same time it needs to fit with the implementation of the Water Framework Directive to simplify administration and create synergies.

Contributions from different user groups are important to the development of an integrated management plan (including nature protection/Natura 2000 and water pollution control (Water Framework Directive). Harmonization of different uses, integrated objectives and activity concepts will be established in an interdisciplinary manner with the members of the so-called “planning group” as well as with Lower Saxony and the federal waterway administration in a regular “working group”.

The suggested management measures should help to stabilise the ecosystem of the Weser whilst guaranteeing its sustainable use.

#### **Contact person**

Hans-Werner Blank, Dirk Hürter  
The Senator for Environment, City Development and Europe  
Ansgaritorstraße 2, 28195 Bremen  
Tel: (0)421 361 4510 / -15981  
E-mail: [hans-werner.blank@bau.bremen.de](mailto:hans-werner.blank@bau.bremen.de), [dirk.huerter@umwelt.bremen.de](mailto:dirk.huerter@umwelt.bremen.de)

More information about the ERDF Programme and the project is available online:

[www.efre-bremen.de](http://www.efre-bremen.de) (for the Operational Programme)  
[www.umwelt.bremen.de](http://www.umwelt.bremen.de) (for the project)

## **GENERAL PROJECT BENEFITS**

### **Conservation benefits**

By addressing estuaries, the project is addressing one of the most threatened habitats under the directive (1130). The project will improve the status of species listed in the Habitats Directive Annexes like 1103 Twaite Shad (*Alosa fallax*), 1095 and 1099 Sea and Freshwater Lampreys as well as bird species listed in the Birds Directive (i.e. Avocet, Corncrake, Marsh Harrier and Bluethroat). The plan will define functions, structures and habitats relevant to the conservation status of the Weser estuary, as a basis for monitoring and assessment and will establish conservation goals and measures to restore ecological functions.

### **Economic benefits**

These include the creation of legal certainty for the utilisation of the estuaries, a reduction in the administrative burden for authorisation processes through integrated management, encouragement of tourism activities in “Bremen” and “Bremerhaven” as “cities alongside the river”.

### **Social benefits**

Preservation, improvement and development of the Weser as a public recreation area and better communication and cooperation between the different user groups.

**Ecosystem services**

Ecosystem services include: conservation of biodiversity, improving access to the harbours, protection of the coast line, and water purification.

**EVALUATION AND LESSONS LEARNT**

To date, there has been limited experience of using ERDF to develop integrated management plans in Germany. The plan combined with the possibility of further investments for its implementation under the Bremen Operational Programme is an excellent opportunity to properly integrate environmental concerns and economic development.

The integrated management plan will be developed in collaboration with the administration of Niedersachsen. It will include the “Außenweser (Outer Weser estuary)” and the “Unterweser (lower parts of the river Weser)” (according to the SCI and SPA).

As this activity has just started under the new funding regime of the Programming 2007-2013, no lessons learnt can be given at this stage.

### 3 HEVES LOWLAND (HEVESI SÍKSÁG)

#### Northern Hungary

Name of the financed project / measure	Funding sources	Amount EUR	Amount %	Beneficiary	Main benefits / innovative characteristic of the project
Developing and implementing habitat / species management schemes in Hevesi Sik area (HU)	EU financing: EAGGF (agri-environment)	487,815.80	80%	Local farmers	The project demonstrates how a successful design and implementation of agri-environment schemes (High Nature Value Areas) can bring benefits both to biodiversity and local communities.
	National financing	121,953.95	20%		
	<b>Total budget</b>	<b>609,769.75</b>			

#### SUMMARY

Hevesi Sik is a 44,000 ha area in the North of Hungary of importance for nature conservation supporting bird species such as the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) and Imperial Eagle (*Aquila heliaca*). Due to its importance for nature, it was included in the NRDP agricultural scheme system for High Nature Value Areas in 2004, and it includes some Natura 2000 sites, specifically 4 SCI's and 1 SPA. Most of the area is under intensive agricultural use.

As a High Nature Value Area, several agri-environmental schemes are available to local farmers. The technical requirements of the funding programme for these actions have changed since 2004, but the original goals are still relevant, including specific goals on preserving and protecting biodiversity, sensitive habitat types and specific rare species and the provision of effective tools for implementation of the Natura 2000 network.

The project involves local people (as beneficiaries), nature conservation authorities and local agricultural and rural development agencies. In the Hevesi Sik area, the number of farmers involved in and benefiting from the funding is over 100. Farming on 25% of the total area is financed from the previously mentioned funding schemes and covers approximately 10,000ha. The overall budget, including all management schemes in the area is: €609,769.75, 80% of which comes from EU co-financing. Applicable schemes in the area include:

- Arable farming for Great Bustard habitat development, 6,805 ha
- Grassland management for Great Bustard habitat development, 2,614 ha
- Alfalfa farming with Bustard (*Otis tarda*) habitat development regulations, 297 ha
- Grassland development, 375 ha

Additionally there are several LIFE projects underway in the area which influence the management of the territory by providing scientific background and demonstrating innovative actions.

During the ongoing High Nature Value (HNV) Areas Programme, populations of targeted bird species have changed, in some cases they have unfortunately decreased but in most cases populations have been growing.

Thanks to these funding schemes, farmers in the targeted area are concerned about achieving common nature conservation goals. Acceptance of nature conservation goals and activities in the area has increased, also because of other projects. Successful cooperation between local people and the authorities is a long term benefit of the project.

This case demonstrates how adequate use of agri-environmental schemes can bring benefits both in relation to EU nature conservation goals (Birds and Habitats Directives species and habitats) and to local communities (socio-economic benefits, improved cooperation between authorities, farmers and other stakeholders).

## **THE NATURA 2000 SITES**

The Hevesi sík High Nature Value Area is situated in the Southern part of the Hungarian Great Plain in the Hevesi-sík region and Hevesi floodplain region in the territory of the Bükk National Park Directorate. It has a total surface of 44,000 hectares.

High Nature Value (HNV) farmland areas are characterised by traditional agricultural practices that maintain countryside features and support high levels of biodiversity. Andersen (2003) distinguished three types of HNV farmland in Europe. They are:

- Farmland with a high proportion of semi-natural vegetation.
- Farmland dominated by low intensity agriculture or a mosaic of semi-natural and cultivated land and small-scale features
- Farmland supporting rare species or a high proportion of European or world populations.

Low intensity farming in HNV farmland is important for wildlife, especially birds, because it creates a mosaic of different habitats consisting of small fields of different permanent and non-permanent crops, together with non-crop and crop edge habitats such as hedges, ponds, ditches, dry-stone walls and remnant patches of natural vegetation. Use of pesticides, herbicides and artificial fertilisers is low and land is regularly left fallow.

The vegetation of the area is influenced by its meteorology and geology as well as by human activity. The area is very poor in surface and ground waters. The soil is a salty, typically alkaline soil in the main territory (53%). 75% of the area is arable land and the rest is meadow or grassland. Today, the area is mostly agricultural although it supports rich marsh, aquatic and loess land vegetation. The flora of the area is mosaic grassland and lowland forests settled on steppes and loesses with their characteristic species.

The agricultural landscape is mosaic in its form and the area of forests is very small (less than 5%), mainly covered with non-endemic species. Natural areas are mainly arable and grassland farms or surface waters and marshes.

The area belongs to the Pannonian Biogeographical Region. It supports a high density of fauna that is protected by law and included in Annex I and Annex II of the Habitats Directive and Annex 1 of the Birds Directive. The area currently includes 4 SAC's (designated in November 2008) and 1 SPA (Table 2).

**Table: Species and habitats of designated Natura 2000 sites in the project area**

HD ANNEX I:	HD ANNEX II	BD ANNEX I:
1530* Pannonic salt steppes and salt marshes, 6250* Pannonic loess steppic grasslands	<i>Cirsium brachycephalum</i> , <i>Thlaspi jankae</i> , <i>Gortyna borelii</i> , <i>Lycaena dispar</i> , <i>Bombina bombina</i> , <i>Mustela eversmannii</i>	<i>Aquila heliaca</i> , <i>Falco cherrug</i> , <i>Lanius minor</i> , <i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i> , <i>Otis tarda</i> , <i>Coracias garrulous</i> , <i>Falco vespertinus</i> , <i>Circus aeruginosus</i> , <i>Circus pygargus</i> , <i>Lanius collurio</i> , <i>Anthus campestris</i> , <i>Anthus campestris</i> , <i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i> , <i>Acrocephalus melanopogon</i> , <i>Alcedo atthis</i> , <i>Anser erythropus</i> , <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> , <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> , <i>Aythya nyroca</i> , <i>Botaurus stellaris</i> , <i>Buteo rufinus</i> , <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i> , <i>Ciconia ciconia</i> , <i>Ciconia nigra</i> , <i>Circaetus gallicus</i> , <i>Circus cyaneus</i> , <i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i> , <i>Egretta alba</i> , <i>Egretta garzetta</i> , <i>Falco peregrines</i> , <i>Ixobrychus minutes</i> , <i>Luscinia svecica</i> , <i>Milvus migrans</i> , <i>Milvus milvus</i> , <i>Pandion haliaetus</i> , <i>Pernis apivorus</i> , <i>Philomachus pugnax</i> , <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> , <i>Porzana parva</i> , <i>Sylvia nisoria</i> , <i>Tringa glareola</i> , <i>Merops apiaster</i> , <i>Motacilla flava</i> , <i>Alauda arvensis</i> , <i>Miliaria calandra</i> , <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i> , <i>Perdix perdix</i> , <i>Riparia riparia</i> , <i>Saxicola rubetra</i> , <i>Saxicola torquata</i> , <i>Streptopelia turtur</i> , <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> , <i>Tringa erythropus</i> , <i>Tyto alba</i> , <i>Upupa epops</i> , <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> , <i>Athene noctua</i> , <i>Buteo buteo</i> , <i>Columba palumbus</i> , <i>Coturnix coturnix</i> , <i>Cuculus canorus</i> , <i>Falco tinnunculus</i> , <i>Limosa limosa</i> , <i>Passer montanus</i> .

**Table: Designated Natura 2000 sites in the project area**

Site code	Name	Territory
<b>SAC</b>		
HUBN20035	Poroszlói szikések	930 ha
HUBN20036	Kétütközi legelő	190 ha
HUBN20037	Nagyhanyi legelő	148 ha
HUBN20040	Nagyfertői gulyagyep	1,828 ha
<b>SPA</b>		
HUBN10004	Hevesi sík	

Hevesi-sík High Nature Value Area includes 10 settlements with all of their administrative territory in the southern part of Heves County - Erdőtelek, Dormánd, Besenyőtelek, Poroszló, Újlőrincfalva, Sarud, Tizanána, Kömlő, Átány and Tenk, and part of the administrative area of 21 other settlements - Tizabábolna, Egerfarmos, Füzesabony, Tizadorogma, Hevesvezekény, Egerlövő, Borsodivánka, Tizavalk, Abádszalók, Heves, Egyek, Tarnaszentmiklós, Tizaderzs, Kisköre, Boconád, Tizabura, Négyes, Tizafüred, Mezőtárkány, Kál and Tarnabod.

The territory of the programme site (Hevesi sík HNVA) is managed by local farmers in cooperation with the competent authorities. Land use is mainly grassland and arable farming with consideration of nature conservation goals to enhance the area's natural and traditional values, described within the region's nature conservation action plans. There is no integrated management plan for the area although it is of high natural value and importance. Due to these values, it was included within the NRDP Agricultural scheme system for High Nature Value Areas in 2004. The management schemes are recognised for funding within Hungarian legislation.

## **INFORMATION ON EU FUNDS USED**

The most important target programme within the National Rural Development Programme's agri-environmental scheme, from a nature conservation perspective, is the programme for High Nature Value Areas. Site designation under this programme is set by the Common Decree of the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Rural Development and Agriculture No. 2/2002. 11 pilot projects were started in 2002 on model areas, currently involving 15 sites. In the early years (2002-2003) the "new" financing structure was funded by the National Agri-environmental Programme, from 2004 by the 2004-2009 National Rural Development Plan, and from 2009 onwards, from the new Hungarian Rural Development Plan.

The funding programme changed technically but the goals set at the beginning remained:

### **General objectives**

- To maintain and improve the quality of the environment, to reduce environmental pressures of agricultural origin;
- To enhance agricultural practices based on the sustainable use of natural resources (biodiversity, landscape, soils and water resources and genetic diversity);
- To change land use to correspond to agri-ecological conditions and move towards environmentally friendly farming and sustainable landscape management.

### **Specific objectives**

- To protect and improve physical, chemical and biological soil conditions
- To preserve low input farming systems and traditional landscapes
- To provide alternative uses for areas with low potential and preserve valuable grassland habitats and arable land through extensive cultivation methods or landscape management
- To preserve and protect biodiversity, sensitive habitat types and specific rare species within High Nature Value Areas.
- To provide effective tools to implement the Natura 2000 network.

### **Operational objectives**

1. *Entry Level Schemes*  
To encourage farmers to introduce environmentally friendly farm management and maintain environmentally and culturally important low input farming systems for each agricultural land use.
2. *Integrated Crop Management Schemes*  
To encourage farmers to use integrated farming methods particularly by reducing and optimising the use of chemicals and applying all available means of sound farming.
3. *Organic Farming Schemes*  
To encourage farmers to convert their production systems to organic production.
4. *High Nature Value Area Schemes and environmental set-aside*

To encourage farmers to apply specific farming methods directly aiming to conserve important bird species and habitat development in designated areas. Additionally, to encourage farmers in designated zones of vulnerable freshwater aquifers, to protect long term drinking water supplies and prevent environmental pressure from pesticides and fertilisers.

5. *Supplementary Agri-environmental Schemes*

Encourage farmers to apply farming methods that help to combat soil erosion and preserve biodiversity and landscapes.

With regard to the various levels of associated commitments, the schemes are divided into the following categories:

- a) Entry level schemes (ELS) (arable stewardship, grassland stewardship, endangered breeds of livestock) and other habitat schemes (wetland habitat schemes);
- b) Integrated crop management schemes (ICM) (arable crops and vegetables, permanent crops);
- c) Organic farming schemes (OFS) (arable crops, vegetables, grassland, permanent crops, livestock);
- d) High Nature Value area (HNV) schemes (mainly arable land and grassland) to support special low input farming methods that favour the protection and improvement of biodiversity; and,
- e) Supplementary agri-environmental measures (SAES) which can be combined with an arable stewardship scheme and all integrated, organic or HNVA agri environmental measures, (combination options are detailed in the table below).

Farmers in HNV areas can also apply to schemes other than HNVA, if they meet the eligibility criteria, but HNVA schemes can only be applied for within designated areas. A farmer can enter into several schemes with his/her farmland provided that the eligibility criteria are met.

**Arable schemes in High Nature Value Areas**

- Arable farming for Great Bustard habitat development
- Arable farming for bird protection
- Alfalfa production for Great Bustard habitat development. Arable farming for habitat development

**Grassland management schemes in High Nature Value Areas**

- Grassland management for Great Bustard habitat development
- Grassland management for Corncrake habitat development
- Grassland management for bird habitat development
- Grassland development in HNVA

The Decree of the Agricultural and Rural Development Ministry No. 150/2004 sets the regulations of the agri-environmental scheme that is financed by EAGGF.

**INFORMATION ON THE EU FUNDED PROJECT**

As previously mentioned, the territory of the programme site (Hevesi sík) is a High Nature Value Area (HNVA), so farmers can apply to the agri-environmental schemes described above.

The National Park Directorates (NPD) have a coordinating role in the programme but are not beneficiaries of the funding. Experts from the National Park Directorate support local farmers

by providing them with information on nature conservation goals and data, informing and helping them with the available funding. Colleagues from the NPD are also involved in the controlling mechanism of the Local Agricultural and Rural Development Agency which is the authority responsible for financing.

Local people are directly involved in the project as the contracted beneficiaries of the funding system. Also the territorially competent authorities, National Park Directorates and local agricultural and rural development agencies are cooperating in the programme. Experts from the competent authorities advise farmers on the land use methods and application procedures for compensation measures and funding opportunities. The number of farmers involved in and benefiting from funding is over 100 in the area.

Farming on 25% of the total area (44,000 ha) is financed from the funding already described and covers approximately 10,000 ha. The overall budget, including all management schemes in the area is: €609,769.75 per year. The financing scheme is 20-80 % (Member State –EU funding). The EU contribution is €48,7815.80.

**Table: Breakdown of project costs per different management measures**

Management measure	EUR
<b>Arable farming for Great Bustard habitat development</b> (250.98 €hectare over 6,805 ha)	165,772.90
<b>Grassland management for Great Bustard habitat development</b> (125.49 €hectare over 2,614 ha)	32,8030.86
<b>Alfalfa farming with Great Bustard habitat development regulations</b> (266.67 €hectare over 297 ha)	79,200.99
<b>Grassland development</b> (98.04 €hectare over 375 ha)	36,765
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>609, 769.75</b>

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON OTHER RELATED PROJECTS IN THE AREA**

Additionally there are several LIFE projects underway in the area which are influencing the management of the territory by providing scientific background and demonstrating innovative actions:

### **LIFE04NAT/HU/000109: Conservation of Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) in Hungary**

Beneficiary: Kiskunság National Park Directorate (partners: Bükk National Park Directorate, ÉMÁSZ Net Ltd., Fertő-Hanság and Őrségi National Park Directorate, Hortobágy National Park Directorate, Körös-Maros National Park Directorate, Birdlife Hungary, University of West Hungary, and Tiszatáj Public Fund).

As a result of this project, a management plan has been developed for the Hevesi sík SPA. This management plan provides a set of recommendations for the management of sites but has no legal power, although it was accepted by the Ministry of Environment and Water. The

management plan could be used in the future to provide scientific background for a Natura 2000 management plan.

**LIFE05NAT/H/000122: Conservation of Red-footed Falcon (*Falco vespertinus*) in the Pannonian Region**

Beneficiary: Körös Maros National Park Directorate (partners: Bükk National Park Directorate, Duna-Ipoly National Park Directorate, Hortobágy National Park Directorate, Kiskunság National Park Directorate, MME / BirdLife Hungary, Environment Protection Agency of Bihar County and the Association for Bird and Nature Protection "Milvus Group").

**LIFE06NAT/H/000096: Conservation of Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) in the Carpathian basin**

Beneficiary: Bükki National Park Directorate (partners: Aggteleki National Park Directorate, Balaton-felvidéki National Park Directorate, Duna-Dráva National Park Directorate, Duna-Ipoly National Park Directorate, E-misszió, Fertő-Hanság National Park Directorate, Hortobágyi National Park Directorate, Kiskunsági National Park Directorate, Körös-Maros National Park Directorate, MME / BirdLife Hungary, Pro Vértes Foundation for Nature Conservation, Raptor Protection of Slovakia, SOS/BirdLife Slovensko and the West-Slovak Electric Company).

**LIFE02NAT/H/008627: Conservation of Imperial Eagle (*Aquila heliaca*) in the Carpathian basin**

Beneficiary: MME / BirdLife Hungary

Further information is available at:

[www.termeszetvedelem.hu](http://www.termeszetvedelem.hu)

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.home>

[www.bnpi.hu](http://www.bnpi.hu)

[www.bnpi.hu](http://www.bnpi.hu)

[www.mme.hu](http://www.mme.hu)

There are other relevant projects in the site under the **Environmental and Energy Operational Programme** but they are still in the planning phase. In particular, several projects directly or indirectly target the area (KEOP-7.1.3.0-2008-0010, KEOP-7.2.1.1/1F-2008-0023, KEOP-7.2.3.0-2008-0013 and KEOP-7.2.3.0-2008-0020). Some of them are only in the contracting or evaluating phase and the circle of the applicants is wide (further information is available at: [www.bnpi.hu](http://www.bnpi.hu), [www.fi.kvvm.hu](http://www.fi.kvvm.hu)). One of these projects directly targets a designated Natura 2000 site (Hevesi sík SPA) with habitat restoration and rehabilitation issues connected to the replacement of electrical power lines (KEOP – 3.1.1). There is also a Cohesion Fund project (2000/HU/16/P/PE/006) which relates to the Integrated Management of the Tizsa River.

**Contact person**

Kavrány Viktoria

Tel: +36 20 34 63 955

Email: [kavranv@gmail.com](mailto:kavranv@gmail.com)

## GENERAL PROJECT BENEFITS

### Conservation benefits

The main conservation benefit of the project (HNVA) is favourable land-use appropriate to the area's features and Pannonian habitat types, due to support for traditional farming and the propagation of endemic species. Over the long term the ecosystems will become more natural communities, representing a higher nature conservation value.

Important results can also be measured using 5 years of biotic data for the whole area of the programme site (HNVA monitoring programme in the specific areas). This data could be used to ensure that good farming methods in the area continue to enhance the natural environment.

Since the onset (in 2004) of the High Nature Value Areas Programme, populations of targeted bird species have been changing, in some cases they are unfortunately decreasing but the majority of the populations are increasing:

- Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*): the status of the species is critical, the population is decreasing
- Stone Curlew (*Burhinus oedicnemus*): stable population
- European Roller (*Coracias garrulous*): favourable, increasing population
- Imperial Eagle (*Aquila heliaca*): stable, started to increase
- Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*): stable population
- Red-footed Falcon (*Falco vespertinus*): critical
- Montagu's Harrier (*Circus pygargus*): difficult to determine, the population is changing

Other important indicator species to evaluate of the results of the programme (growing populations) include:

*Falco tinnunculus*, *Perdix perdix*, *Vanellus vanellus*, *Tringa totanus*, *Limosa limosa*, *Asio otus*, *Asio flammeus*, *Upupa epops*, *Alauda arvensis*, *Anthus campestris*, *Saxicola torquata*, *Saxicola rubetra*, *Oenanthe oenanthe*, *Sylvia communis*, *Lanius collurio*, *Lanius minor* and *Miliaria calandra*.

### Economic benefits

- Decrease in abandoned agricultural land
- Economic compensation for farmers
- Cost effective habitat development under agri-environmental programmes

### Social benefits

- Environmental education
- Rural development through maintenance and support of local communities
- Strengthening of cooperation between local stakeholders (farmers, authorities)

### Ecosystem services

- Maintenance of soil nutrition
- Decrease of chemical inputs
- Ecotourism e.g. construction of bird-watching towers, and tourist routes
- Production of healthy food
- Decrease of abandoned lea areas, leading to improved public health because of a decrease in the highly allergenic invasive species, *Ambrosia artemisifolia*.

## EVALUATION AND LESSONS LEARNT

Some conclusions can be drawn based on this case study:

- The programme targets a High Nature Value (HVN) farming area which was in an unfavourable condition due to the land use practices of previous decades. A high amount of intensive farming exists without any regard for nature conservation. Furthermore, local farmers are directly involved into the project through financed agri-environmental activities, in cooperation with the responsible authorities.
- Farmers in the targeted area are concerned about achieving common nature conservation goals. This also means a change in landlordism and leads to a higher acceptance of nature conservation goals and activities in the area. This is also connected to other programmes and projects, including, for example: funding for habitat restoration and rehabilitation issues water management programmes or other environmental projects (under the Environmental and Energy Operational Programme).
- Successful cooperation between local people and the authorities is a long term project benefit.
- The use of agri-environmental schemes has become a favourable alternative in farming.
- It is necessary that extensive and intensive farming is harmonised with future nature conservation goals.
- Integrated management of the area is needed where there is a mosaic of habitats including arable lands, grasslands and wetlands.
- Acceptance of the agri-environmental land-use should be increased by informing farmers, the local population and a wider audience, with a view to possibly using lessons learnt from this project in other similar areas in Hungary.

#### 4 SPECIES RELATED ACTIONS IN THE ISLAND OF TENERIFE

##### Canary Islands, Spain

Name of the financed project / measure	Funding sources	Amount EUR	Amount %	Beneficiary	Main benefits / innovative characteristic of the project
Developing species specific action plans / conservation measures in the Canary Islands (ES)	EU financing: EAGGF (agri-environment)	78,000	8.5%	Regional Vice-Ministry of Environment ; different Island Councils	The Canary Islands have a long tradition of using different EU funds for financing the management of Natura 2000 sites.
	EU financing: INTERREG	672,350	74%		The two projects presented here demonstrate how EU funding for agriculture (EAGGF) and regional development (INTERREG) can be used to implement management measures on Natura 200 sites, e.g. on marine protected areas.
	Regional financing	160,650	17,5%		
	<b>Total budget</b>	<b>911,000</b>			

#### SUMMARY

The Spanish Canary Islands are located within the Macaronesian biogeographic region and are characterised by their insularity, which has led to a high number of endemic species populations. The islands are rich in Annex I habitats (25 habitats) and Annex II species (73 species) of the Habitats Directive, as well as Birds Directive species (30 bird species). For this reason the Canary Islands harbour many Natura 2000 sites, 177 SCI's and 43 SPA's.

The Canary Islands have a long tradition of using the integration option for financing Natura 2000 sites, even before the concept was formulated. Projects like "Funding Opportunities for Natura 2000 in the Macaronesian Region" (Sub 99/68029) provided interesting results in terms of the possible use of different EU funds for Natura 2000, before the EC Article 8 Working Group under the Habitats directive (i.e. working group on Natura 2000 financing) was created. The most commonly used funds for Natura 2000 sites in the Canary Islands in recent years have been: European Agricultural Fund for rural Development (EAFRD) as several agri-environmental measures can be used within Natura 2000 sites, including compensation for loss of farmland income; European Regional development Fund (ERDF) (overall INTERREG) for financing species and habitat monitoring and inventories in Natura 2000 sites, as well as the development of site management plans; and the well-known LIFE + funding.

This document describes two recent examples in which EU funds were used creatively to finance the implementation of actions related to the Birds and Habitats Directives in the Canary Islands.

One of these examples describes how the Council of Tenerife used the following measure in the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee (EAGGF) Regional Programme: “restoration of habitats for wild species”, to undertake 4 actions in Natura 2000 sites in Tenerife related to the control of invasive animals and plants. These actions are very important in the Canary Islands, where the presence of invasive and naturalised species can cause considerable damage to protected species or habitats.

The other example is of a project funded by INTERREG OGAMP (Ordenación y Gestión de Áreas Marinas Protegidas). The project partners in this case were the governments of the Canary Islands, Madeira and Azores. Its objective was to develop models for managing and monitoring marine protected areas, in particular Natura 2000 sites. In the Canary Islands the project aimed to promote marine conservation throughout the archipelago and to participate in a network of Macaronesian marine protected areas, through the designation and subsequent management and monitoring of an emblematic and complex marine site.

## **THE NATURA 2000 SITES**

The Spanish Canary Islands fall within the Macaronesian biogeographic region. This archipelago is formed of 7 large islands and 7 smaller islands. The Canaries are situated only 115 km from the African Coast.

The Canaries, in the same way as the rest of the Macaronesian region, are characterised by their insularity which has given rise to a great number of endemic species. Currently, the Canaries support 17,893 species and 999 subspecies, of which 3,736 and 584 are endemic. 12,661 species live on land and 5,232 in the marine environment<sup>2</sup>.

These islands are, therefore, rich in Annex I habitats (25 habitats) and Annex II species (73 species) of the Habitats Directive, as well as bird species listed in the Birds Directive (30 bird species).

For this reason the Canary Islands harbour many Natura 2000 sites: 177 SCI's and 43 SPA's. The European Commission Decision of 2001<sup>3</sup> approved 174 SCI's in the Canary Islands, but 3 more sites were added later as compensation measures related to the Gran Canaria's Harbour project, which affected 2 sites. Therefore, the current number of SCI's in the Canary Islands is currently 177. 43 SPAs were also declared under the framework of the Birds Directive.

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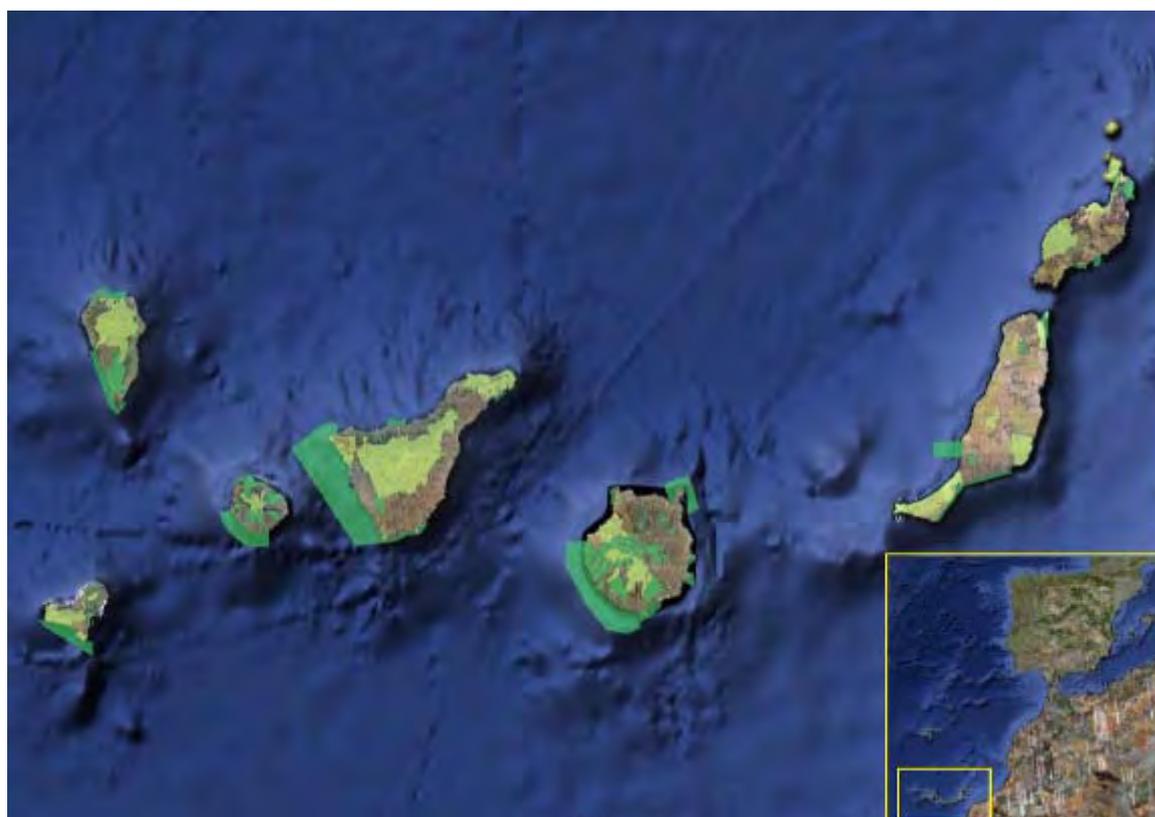
<sup>2</sup> More information at:

<http://www.gobiernodecanarias.org/cm/contenidocm/medioambiente/medionatural/biodiversidad/vidasilvestre/especies/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> 2002/11/EC: Commission Decision of 28 December 2001 adopting the list of sites of Community importance for the Macaronesian biogeographical region, pursuant to Council Directive 92/43/EEC

**Table: Distribution of Natura 2000 sites in the Canary Islands**

Name of the area	SCI	SPA	SCI ha. (Terrestrial)	SPA ha. (Terrestrial)	SCI ha. (Marine)	SPA ha. (Marine)	% of terrestrial surface declared as a SCI/SPA
Hierro	9	3	12,345.24	14,127.56	9,898.43	---	57.75%
La Palma	32	5	36,259.16	19,530.60	10,530.60	----	51.60%
La Gomera	27	5	17,833.64	5,388.85	14,300.45	----	50%
Tenerife	47	9	90,789.84	92,149.40	74,641.27	---	47.67%
Gran Canaria	38	5	65,301	23,205.16	51,991.3	---	42.09%
Fuerteventura	13	9	33,943.32	68,601.49	14,435.36	111,87	43.37%
Lanzarote	11	7	26,858.46	49,673.22	3,304.71	5,945.82	51.33%
TOTAL CANARIAS	177	43	283,323.11	271,251.71	178,291.84	6,057.71	46.81%



*SCIs (green) and SPAs (yellow) in the Canary Islands.*

The management of Natura 2000 sites in the Canaries is complex. The Regional Environmental Vice-Ministry (of the Regional Government of the Canary Islands Region) is responsible for identifying and designating the sites and developing their management plans. But the actual management is the responsibility of the Island Councils, which also have other competences that relate to Natura 2000, such as the farming advisory system, urban planning, hunting, tourism and forestry service agencies.

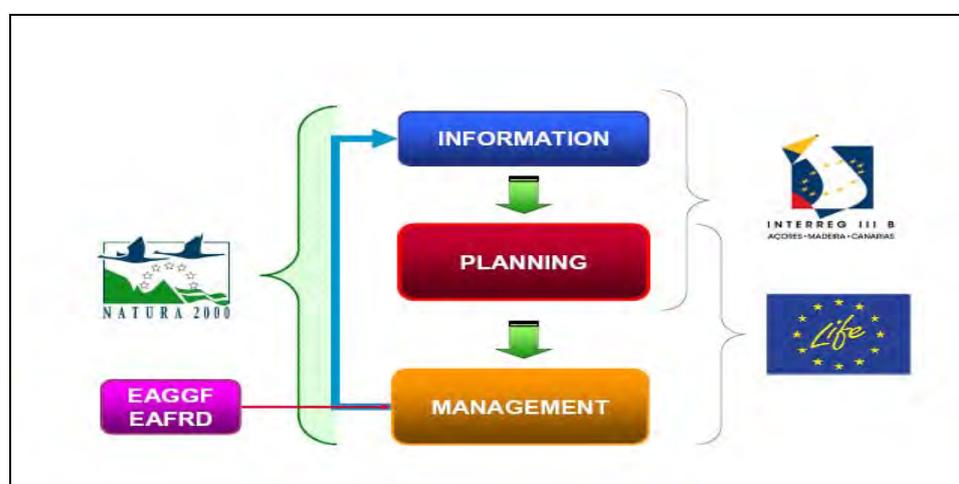
## INFORMATION ON EU FUNDS USED

In 2005, the Canaries government estimated the cost of Natura 2000 in this Spanish region (Biosfera XXI, 2005). At that time, there were no specific management plans for Natura 2000 sites in the Canaries and other types of management plans for protected areas were used as a basis for the estimation. This estimation was very comprehensive as 80% of the Natura 2000 sites in the Canaries receive some other level of national or regional protection<sup>4</sup>. However, it was only done for the terrestrial sites, as no data is available for the marine Natura 2000 sites.

**Table: Estimation of the cost of Natura 2000 in the Canaries (Biosfera XXI, 2005)**

PROGRAMME	€/ha/ year	€/ year
Conservation	41.88	10,221,971.73
Restoration	7.90	1,928,068.28
Research and monitoring	9.94	2,426,414.07
Socioeconomic development	19.82	4,839,087.87
Public use	33.81	8,253,076.15
Management and administration	8.85	2,159,613.55
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>122.20</b>	<b>29,828,231.65</b>

In accordance with the so-called integration option, different European funds can be used for the management of the Natura 2000 network in the Canary Islands. Each European Fund can finance different Natura 2000 activities, as the following figure shows.



*Use of the different European Funds in Natura 2000 in the Canaries according to the Regional Vice-Ministry of Environment*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Biosfera XXI (2005) *Estimación de los Costes de Gestión generados por los Espacios de la red Natura 2000 de Canarias*. Non-Published document of the Regional Environment Vice-Ministry

<sup>5</sup> Molina, F. 2008. Conference about “Financing Natura 2000 in Canaries” included in the Workshop “Financing Natura 2000”. 2008.

In the Canary Islands, the most commonly used funds for Natura 2000 financing, according to the Regional Vice-Ministry of Environment have been:

- EAFRD: several agri-environmental measures can be used within Natura 2000 sites, including compensation measures related to the loss of agricultural income. This fund, similarly to the previous EAGGF fund, has been used in the Canary Islands for financing Natura 2000. As the administration that manages the EAFRD is not the same than the administration that manages Natura 2000, it is sometimes not easy to fund Natura 2000 activities using this European fund. An example of how the Council of Tenerife used EAGGF to finance Natura 2000 is included in this document.
  - ERDF: especially the INTERREG IV programme. In the Canaries, INTERREG has been used for financing the monitoring and census of species and habitats in Natura 2000 sites as well as for the development of site management plans. As the INTERREG objectives are very general (e.g. “promotion of biodiversity and nature protection”) it is very complicated to use this fund for the management of just one site or species. Projects undertaken through this fund have to be applied for together with other regions or countries.
  - Regarding the use of INTERREG IIIb funding in the area of Azores, Madeira and the Canary Islands, 1 project is ongoing related to Natura 2000 in the Canary Islands in the period 2007-2013 (BIONATURA, Government of the Canary Islands in collaboration with the Governments of Madeira y Azores, which main goal is to improve the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources and biodiversity). Another 3 were carried out during 2000-2006: ATLANTICO (Database of Biodiversity), CENTINELA (Monitoring of Species) and OGAMP (Planning and Management of Marine areas)
  - LIFE: As this fund includes the objective of financing Natura 2000 (for anything that is not covered by financing from other EU funds), it is sometimes the most appropriate fund if a management plan already exists for a site or a specific species, because Life finances “best practice” or “projects of the application of the Birds and Habitats Directives”, and this objective can be applied to some measures related to the management plans or to the conservation or protection of species. In the Canary Islands, 12 LIFE projects were approved for Natura 2000 sites or Birds or Habitats Directive species, during the period 1993-2006:
    - Conservation of the Blue Chaffinch (*Fringilla teydea*) (2 projects)
    - Conservation of the Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*) in Tenerife
    - Conservation of bats and invertebrates in caves
    - Conservation of Macaronesian Laurel Forest Pigeons. (2 projects)
    - Reintroduction of the Hierro Giant Lizard (*Gallotia simonyi*)
    - Conservation of the Loggerhead Sea Turtle (*Caretta Caretta*) and the Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*)
    - Conservation of the habitat of the Houbara Bustard, (*Chlamydotis undulata*,)
    - Restoration of the population of the Mediterranean Monk Seal (*Monachus monachus*) (2 projects)
    - Conservation of the La Gomera Giant Lizard (*Gallotia bravoana*)
-

## INFORMATION ON THE EU FUNDED PROJECTS

### USE OF EAGGF FOR NATURE 2000 IN TENERIFE

Tenerife is one of the biggest islands in the Canaries and has a large surface area of coverage of Natura 2000 sites (47.67% - 47 SCI's and 9 SPA's). The Island Council has used some interesting innovative measures for financing Natura 2000 with EAGGF funding.

The main sites where this measure was applied were the "ANAGA"<sup>6</sup>SCI and SPA, the "TEN0"<sup>7</sup>SCI and SPA and the "Las Lagunetas"<sup>8</sup>SCI.

In the Canary Islands, the presence of invasive and naturalised species can cause a lot of damage to protected species or habitats. For this reason the Council of Tenerife used the measure included in the EAGGF Regional Programme of "restoration of habitats for wild species" for 4 actions in Natura 2000 sites in Tenerife related to the control of invasive animals and plants. This measure was included in the 2006 modification to the EAGGF Regional Operational Programme. Each of the 4 actions was carried out during 1 year in 2006-2007, with a cost of €30,000 per action (65% from EU funds and 45% from the Council of Tenerife's funds).

#### **Action 1: Control of conflict-causing birds in Protected Areas in Tenerife**

In the "Anaga" SCI and SPA, the "Teno" SCI and SPA, and the "Rasca y Guaza" SPA, complaints were received from farmers because of damage caused by seagulls in winter houses. At the same time, tourism facility owners also asked for help in dealing with seagulls and pigeons.

The following actions were carried out:

1: To evaluate the impact of certain birds on the island's economy:

- Check possible agricultural damage.
- Check any damage to tourism infrastructure.

2: Control activities with populations causing the most conflict:

- Develop techniques for capturing and persuading birds.
- Capture and elimination of birds.

The conservation benefits were improved knowledge of the movements and activities of the birds causing conflict, via ringing and monitoring.

#### **Action 2: Control of animals that have become wild**

Domestic animals that have left the domestic environment for the natural one can cause health, security and environmental problems. For example, cats can be a big problem for an endemic and threatened Lizard subspecies (*Gallotia Intermedia*) that lives in the Teno SCI and SPA. The number of cats and dogs in the island of Tenerife is quite high, so some actions are being prepared to control them in the "Anaga" SCI and SPA, the "Teno" SCI and SPA and the SCI "Las Lagunetas", including:

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<sup>6</sup> More information at:

<http://www.gobiernodecanarias.org/cmayerot/espaciosnaturales/espaciosnaturales/tenerife/t12.html>

<sup>7</sup> More information at:

<http://www.gobiernodecanarias.org/cmayerot/espaciosnaturales/espaciosnaturales/tenerife/t13.html>

<sup>8</sup> More information at:

<http://www.gobiernodecanarias.org/cmayerot/espaciosnaturales/espaciosnaturales/tenerife/t29.html>

- Selection of institutions for keeping animals.
- Live capture of the animals with traps.
- Monitoring effectiveness and risk prevention.
- Development and distribution of brochures to the local population.

At the end of this project 30 dogs and 23 cats were captured. All of them were given to institutions suited to keeping animals.

### **Action 3: Control of exotic birds in the Island of Tenerife**

As part of the activities included in the Island's Biodiversity Plan, it was decided to deal with certain invasive bird species. Normally these birds enter the island through ports and airports, making it necessary to inform the population. The activities carried out within Natura 2000 sites but also across the wider Tenerife landscape were:

- Control of exotic birds (Common Waxbill and Parrots) escaped from captivity (early detection, evaluation of locations especially close to urban areas and zoos, live capture and elimination if needed of the most dangerous species, and monitoring)
- Development of brochures and posters about species and the danger they could represent, including the obligations for owners and possible infractions.

The conservation benefits obtained were:

- Location and evaluation of exotic bird species populations in the island.
- Creation and maintenance of the Exotic Birds Database of Tenerife.
- Capture and elimination of some exotic birds.

### **Action 4: Control of invasive species in the coastal protected areas of Tenerife**

It is critical to detect and stop invasive species at the very beginning of their expansion. It is therefore very important to have the capacity to detect and act on these species quickly. If prevention fails, elimination, control or confinement of the species should be considered. The following activities were carried out in all of the coastal protected areas in the island:

- Compilation of information (bibliography, consultation to scientists, field trips).
- Selective elimination of animal species (traps and nets).
- Elimination of exotic flora.
- Creation of a database, also useful for monitoring

## **USE OF INTERREG FOR FINANCING NATURA 2000 IN THE CANARY ISLANDS: THE OGAMP INTERREG IIIB PROJECT (ORDENACIÓN Y GESTIÓN DE ÁREAS MARINAS PROTEGIDAS)**

The partners in this project were the government of the Canary Islands, Madeira and Azores (Direcção Regional das Pescas, Governo dos Açores; Direcção Regional do Ambiente, Governo dos Açores; Direcção Regional do Ambiente, Governo da Madeira; Consejería de Medio Ambiente y Ordenación Territorial, Gobierno de Canarias). The overall budget of the project was €791,000 (co-financing rate of 85% and 15% provided by the abovementioned authorities). The activities in the Canaries had a total cost of €235,294 and the project was undertaken between 2003 and 2005.

Partners in the Azores coordinated the project with participation from partners in Madeira and the Canaries. Its objective was to develop models for managing and monitoring marine protected areas, in particular Natura 2000 sites. In the Canary Islands, the project aimed to promote the conservation of the marine environment throughout the archipelago and to

participate in a network of macaronesian marine protected areas, through the designation and subsequent management and monitoring of an emblematic and complex marine site.



Image of the SCI “ Franja marina Teno-Rasca”

The activities of this project in the Canaries were carried out in the SCI ES7020017 “Franja Marina Teno rasca” where coastal bays with sandy beaches alternate with cliffs of medium and high altitudes.

The special warm and calm water conditions during most of the year and the great depths that are reached near the coast, offer unique conditions for attracting many cetacean species. Because of this, this is one of the best areas for the distribution of Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) in the Canaries and this is also a vital area for the Loggerhead Turtle *Caretta caretta*. It is also of interest for the seaweed populations (*Cymodocea nodosa*)

This site is one of the most important tourism areas of the archipelago, with several marinas and fishing ports. The rapid development of tourism in the area and the occupation of the coast have resulted in the degradation of several coastal areas. The uses of this site and maritime shipping are intense. Its fishery resources are heavily exploited throughout the year

The objectives of this project are to develop a management and ecological plan of the Teno – Rasca<sup>9</sup> SCI and to promote the values of the Natural Protected Areas.

The population and coastal activities have increased in recent years in the SCI. In this way, pressure on natural resources has increased, including from whale watching, sea traffic, pollution from water discharges, beach construction, new port developments, and aquaculture. For these reasons, a Management Plan was needed for this SCI.

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<sup>9</sup> More information at:

<http://www.canariasconservacion.org/Documentos/PGMA%20LIC%20TENO-RASCA.pdf>

To determine adequate management measures for this plan, the project also included 3 specific studies of the SCI:

1. **Eradication of Urchins:** In the Canary Islands it has been observed the presence of bleaching in the sea bottom, which has increased especially in recent decades, as a result of increasing populations of long-spined sea urchin (*Diadema antillarum*). Sea urchins have a key role to play in the organisation and functioning of coastal benthic communities. However, the growth of their populations has had a negative effect on certain sections of the Canary Islands' coastline.
2. **To Study the Interaction between Aquaculture and Dolphins:** In mid-2001 the interaction between humans and Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) was detected in the vicinity of aquaculture cages in the SCI. This interaction can have serious consequences on both dolphins and people.
3. **Monitoring whale-watching tourism activities:** A study of whale watching activities was developed in the marine zone of the SCI to provide information necessary to develop guidelines for the SCI management. The general objective of the project is to achieve quantitative monitoring directly related to the activities of whale watching, as well as commercial, economic, educational, recreational, scientific and environmental conservation aspects, to identify those activities and analyse possible seasonal and inter-annual variations

The result of the project was to develop a SCI Management Plan, taking into account the uses and activities in the SCI, the conservation of the natural resources and promotion of the educational, recreational and scientific activities. This is the first management plan for a Marine Natura 2000 site in the Canaries, so it will act as a reference point for other plans.

- To design and implement a plan to control and eradicate Long-spined Sea Urchin (*Diadema antillarum*), based on collaboration between the Administration and diving clubs in areas of the SCI ES7020017 "Teno-Rasca Marine Band."
- A report to stop interaction between humans and the Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) in the vicinity of aquaculture cages in the SCI.
- A report developed of whale watching activities in the marine zone of the SCI that provides information for the development of guidelines for the SCI management.

Another result of the project was to share best practise and information about the coast through a handbook. This study promotes enjoyment on the Canary Islands coastline in keeping with the conservation of its habitats and natural resources.

## **EVALUATION AND LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE EU FUNDED PROJECTS**

During the last EU financial period (1999-2006) different European funds were used in the Canary Islands to finance Natura 2000, mainly the EAGGF, LIFE and INTERREG. These projects financed with EU funding were carried out by the Regional Vice-Ministry of Environment and the different Island Councils, as in this example from Tenerife.

Mainly the Islands' Councils, like the one of Tenerife are using EAFRD, (similarly to the previous EAGGF), to undertake several activities within Natura 2000 sites. The main problem of using EAFRD funds in Natura 2000 sites is that it does not cover activities outside of forest and agricultural landscapes. However, in Tenerife it is a very useful fund which can finance important activities for Natura 2000 as, for example the ones described in this document (such as the control of exotic and invasive species in the island).

In the Canary Islands 12 LIFE projects were undertaken for Natura 2000 sites or Birds or Habitats Directive species during the period 1993-2006. Life financing is supporting some interesting measures related to site management plans and species conservation.

Something innovative in the Canaries case is that INTERREG has been used to finance monitoring and the inventory of species and habitats in Natura 2000 sites, as well as the design of site management plans. However, the use of this funding is not always easy, because it has to be applied for in conjunction with other regions or countries, which also makes project implementation less straightforward. However, some interesting INTERREG projects have been carried out in the Canary Islands which have financed activities in Natura 2000 sites, such as the OGAMP described in this document or the BIONATURA project.

The new EU financial framework period 2007-2013 provides continuity with the previous 1999-2006 period, without substantial changes to the funding available for Natura 2000. The only significant difference is that during this period, the Spanish regions have become richer compared to the European average, and therefore their access to EU funds has decreased. So, in terms of EU funding, the Canary's rich biodiversity unfortunately does not match with the scarce availability of funding.

## 5 THE ARRAN ACCESS PROJECT

### Highlands and Islands of Scotland, United Kingdom

Name of the financed project / measure	Funding sources	Amount £	Amount %	Beneficiary	Main benefits / innovative characteristic of the project
Supporting the conservation and sustainable recreational use of habitats and landscapes at the Isle of Arran (UK)	EU financing: ERDF	£ 115,000 / ~ EUR 166,000	23%	Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) in partnership with the Arran Access Trust	The project demonstrates a successful use of several different sources of funding in a holistic and coordinated manner.
	Heritage Lottery Fund	216,400	46%		
	Scottish Natural Heritage	95,049	21%		
	North Ayrshire Council	20,000	4%		
	Argyll and Islands Enterprise	25,000	5%		
	Forest Enterprise	5,000	1%		
	Historic Scotland	1,175			
<b>Total budget</b>		£ 477,624 / ~ EUR 600,000			

### SUMMARY

The Arran Moors special protection area on the Scottish island of Arran has relatively high levels of outdoor touristic activity. On the one hand, the island relies on the income this tourism generates. On the other hand, the outdoor recreation can cause damage to the islands pathways, which in turn can cause erosion on the hillsides by the removal of vegetation. This vegetation plays a key role in the island's ecology, and therefore tourism can indirectly threaten the conservation status of Arran Moors.

The main aim of the Arran Access Project was to "...secure the conservation of Arran's sensitive habitats and landscapes whilst encouraging responsible and sustainable public access to these areas of outstanding scenic and natural heritage interest." In practice this meant that the negative effects of touristic activity had to be mitigated by restoring the damaged pathways.. Public awareness was then increased by offering different sources of information about the area, its conservation issues and management. The project, which took place during 2003-2006, was financed at 24%, £115,000 (equal to ~€166,000 in March 2006) from ERDF funds, matching a total of £477,624 (~€691,000).The funding was part of the Single Programme of the Highlands and Islands Special Transitional Programme 2000-2006.

The project has generated several benefits. Firstly, the improved paths offer the possibility for the Arran ecosystem to be conserved and in some cases restored. It also created awareness

among its visitors on the need to conserve this ecosystem, increasing its long-term security. The existence of valuable nature on the island will in turn secure and potentially increase the number of visitors and tourism income. Another benefit of the project was the participation of local residents in its implementation, which increased social coherence and care for the island's natural resources. The main positive points during the project were the use of many different sources of funding, which increased the need for a more holistic approach; an enthusiastic, communicative and pro-active project manager played a key role in the success of the project; and the smart use of publicity increased support among local residents, kept funders informed and created awareness among visitors. Lessons for future projects are the need to start early when applying for EU funding; the necessity of keeping clear records of expenditures linked with specific project elements; and the difficulty but importance of wrapping up the project before staff contracts finish.

## **THE NATURA 2000 SITES**

Arran is an island measuring 30km by 17km off the west coast of Scotland to the south west of Glasgow and is often described as 'Scotland in miniature' with a landscape that quickly changes from narrow coastal plain to highland mountains and lochs to rolling hills and meadows. In fact it is almost cut in half by the Highland Boundary Fault which splits the northern mountains from the more low lying southern part of the island. Its outstanding natural characteristics and wide variety of habitats and species have been recognised by the extensive range of national designations that cover many parts of the island.

Arran Moors SPA is a large upland site extending to 10,743 ha in size and takes in the Arran Moors Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Ard Bheinn SSSI and Benlister Glen SSSI, and parts of Arran Northern Mountains SSSI and Glen Dubh SSSI. It is recognised for its extensive upland and moorland habitats which include mosaics of oceanic wet and dry heaths, with large areas of blanket bog and upland grasslands, which at lower altitudes become mosaics of acid grassland with rush communities. The range of upland habitats, including the water bodies, also provides a diverse range of breeding and foraging habitats for a nationally important breeding moorbird assemblage. In addition, this site is internationally recognised for its population of breeding Hen Harrier. The majestic Golden Eagles, Red-throated Divers, Peregrines and Short-eared Owls, all listed Annex 1 species, can also be found at this site. The other SSSI are designated for a combination of rare birds, insects, diverse mountain flora and geological features.

The island's diverse geology reflects a long and complex history, tracing the movement of ancient continents, the formation of two oceans, the development of a major mountain belt, and several episodes of volcanic activity. One most notable feature is one of James Hutton's 'classic unconformities' which occurs between Lochranza and the Cock of Arran. The Highland Boundary Fault runs through Arran splitting the rugged, hilly northern half, from the gentle, lower lying southern part.

The trees and woodlands, including remnants of the island's ancient forest, contribute greatly to the valued landscape of the island. Providing a glimpse of a time long, long ago, the fossil remains of Lower Carboniferous trees occur in life position at Laggan. Engulfed by volcanic ashes, these trees represent a unique fossil forest.

The northern half of Arran is designated as a National Scenic Area and the relatively southern location of the island heightens the dramatic scenic impact of the mountains in this area. Here the massive granite dome which makes up the northern half of the island has been dissected to give deep glens with boulder strewn slopes sweeping upwards to sharply serrated peaks such as Goatfell and Cir Mhor. In contrast the mild climate permits the growth of lush vegetation on the raised beaches along the coast.

The relevant sites include:

- Arran Moors SPA UK9003341
- Arran Moors SSSI
- Ard Bheinn SSSI
- Benlister Glen SSSI
- Gleann Dubh SSSI
- Arran Northern Mountains SSSI
- Clauchlands to Corrygills SSSI
- Laggan SSSI
- North Newton Shore SSSI

### **Current Management Status**

The current management within the SPA is generally low intensity, whether that be agricultural stock management, predominantly sheep, or game (grouse and deer) management. Some heather management occurs in the form of muir burning. These management activities are consistent, at current levels, with maintaining the habitats which support the Hen Harriers within the SPA in a good condition, according to the results of Scottish Natural Heritage's Site Condition Monitoring (SCM) assessments.

The Northern Mountains on Arran are a very popular destination for mountain recreation with an excess of 33,000 people annually using the National Trust for Scotland main paths. This places pressure on the fragile upland footpaths and erosion has become a major concern. Such erosion can strip away vegetation, thereby removing cover for Hen Harrier prey species. High levels of recreation have the potential to affect the birds through disturbance. The results of the Hen Harrier SCM for Arran show that the population is in a favourable condition and that recreational pressure appears not to be adversely affecting the population at present. Recreational pressure could become a factor if paths fall into disrepair and large numbers of people take different routes.

### **Management Challenges**

The island's historically high population density coupled with over 300,000 visitors per annum and rugged terrain has resulted in the development of a considerable network of paths and tracks. Pressure on these routes has increased as demand for access opportunities, from both visitors and residents, continues to grow. When combined with the wet climate and shallow soils this pressure of use has resulted in erosion particularly along established path lines where ground vegetation is sparse. The main challenges for maintaining the footpath network on Arran are the remote areas which the paths cross and the hostile environmental conditions which are experienced. The fragile nature of the habitats which are adjacent to many of the paths mean that it is not always possible to use local stone to make any path repairs without causing unacceptable damage to the habitats and increasing the risk of further erosion. This means that materials have to be brought in by helicopter, which is expensive and can be prone to disruption due to inclement weather.

## **INFORMATION ON EU FUNDS USED**

The project utilised EAGGF funds as part of the Single Programme of the Highlands and Islands Special Transitional Programme 2000-2006 (Reference: [http://www.hipp.org.uk/default\\_old.asp](http://www.hipp.org.uk/default_old.asp)). It came under Priority 4: Assisting Rural

Communities; Measure 4(a) 3ii Enhancement and Maintenance of the Environment and Rural Heritage (EAGGF)

The Project (Project Number: HI/AGF/03/4a3ii/0002) was led and managed by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) in partnership with the Arran Access Trust. The overall project budget was £477,624 (approx €600,000). The breakdown of funding partners is shown in the table below:

**Table: Breakdown of the project financing per different sources**

<b>CONTRIBUTOR</b>	<b>AMOUNT (£)</b>
EU Special Transition Programme (EAGGF)	115,000
Heritage Lottery Fund	216,400
Scottish Natural Heritage	95,049
North Ayrshire Council	20,000
Argyll and Islands Enterprise	25,000
Forest Enterprise	5,000
Historic Scotland	1,175
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>477,624</b>

**Table: Breakdown of Project Costs**

<b>FUNDED MEASURES</b>	<b>TOTAL PROJECT COSTS (£)</b>
<b>EXPEND</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Project Officer Costs	87552
<b>Main Environmental Contract Works</b>	
<b>Footpaths</b>	
North Newton to Fairy Del	30790
Goatfell	36340
Glen Sannox All Abilities	7920
Clauchlands	33300
Lochranza to Sannox	27951
Corein Lochlan	30610
Glen Sannox	59754
Glen Cloy	31460
Machrie	11288
<b>Tourism and Cultural Infrastructure</b>	
Access Map Design	5000
Access Map Printing	6000
Interpretive Plan	1000
Legal Cost for Access	5100
Interpretation & Footpath Signage	25000
<b>VAT</b>	<b>54559</b>
<b>Contingency</b>	<b>24000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>477624</b>

## INFORMATION ON THE EU FUNDED PROJECT

The principle objective of the project was “to secure the conservation of Arran's sensitive habitats and landscapes whilst encouraging responsible and sustainable public access to these areas of outstanding scenic and natural heritage interest”.

In order to fulfil this objective the project undertook work on key footpaths, identified in the Paths and Tracks Strategy, in a manner to provide a safe and secure route, reinstate damaged areas and reduce the risk of further erosion in the future.

In the short term the objectives are to:

- Mitigate the impact of access on sensitive habitats and landscape through a programme of footpath restoration works.
- Heighten public awareness and understanding of the heritage interest and associated land management and conservation issues.

Along with a programme of works to restore footpaths and surrounding habitats and landscapes, the project provided visitors with information about the heritage interest of the area and how it is managed.

### **The Project**

This phase of the Arran Access Initiative followed on from two previous smaller phases also part funded by the EU through its Objective 1 programmes.

This phase involved a 3 year programme (2003-2006) of work to restore damaged areas and reduce further disturbance to the natural heritage whilst improving public access opportunities. Improvements to paths and interpretation provides a sustainable resource for use by visitors and locals alike, allowing people to enjoy the natural heritage of the area without causing disturbance or damage. This was achieved by carrying out works on a number of sections of footpaths on the island all of which had been identified as high priority in the Arran Access Trust Strategy.

The project comprised of work on 9 paths as detailed below:

**Clauchlands** - there are two designations of importance on this route, the Dun Fionn Fort and cultivation terraces Scheduled Ancient Monument and the Clauchlands to Corrygills SSSI. The path links with many other regularly used paths and there are several steep gradients along the length of this route. The path work project addressed several problems relating to erosion, waterlogging, drainage and damage to surrounding habitats.

**Machrie Moor** – this path provides access to two Scheduled Ancient Monuments, the Moss Farm Cairn and the Machrie Moor stone circles, hut circles and fields. The path crosses the Arran Moors SPA and leads to Moss Farm which is located on a low plateau at the centre of the Machrie basin. There are spectacular views over the ancient landscape features of the moor to the surrounding mountains where the Hen Harriers are regularly seen hunting over the moorland habitats. Work on this route created a footpath that is suitable for all abilities enabling as wide a range as possible to experience this very special place. Prior to the project the track surface was broken, badly rutted and waterlogged with extensive areas of lying water. The project improved the track by patching and drainage to provide a firm dry surface suitable for wheelchair use as far as Moss Farm. The short length between Moss Farm and the stone circles was improved by light touch methods.

**Glen Cloy** - this includes two SSSI's and an SPA, one at Glen Dubh which is designated for its rare birds and diverse mountain flora and Arran Moors. The path forms part of a circular walk out from Brodick. The project improved the path surface and as most of the lower sections of the path are on gentle gradients it is accessible by a range of user groups including the less able.

**Goatfell** - this path takes in a number of designated sites including Arran Northern Mountains SSSI which is designated for rare birds, insects and fragile mountain plant communities and Arran Moors SPA which supports an internationally important Hen Harrier population. The works aimed to improve drainage, erosion control and the establishment of a more consistent path surface.

**Laggan** – the route includes Laggan SSSI which is designated for its geological exposures, two Scheduled Ancient Monuments at Laggan Saltpans and Coal pits and the Laggantuin deserted settlement and a national monument at Cuithe Farm Stead. The route follows the line of the ancient access track to the long abandoned settlement of Laggan. It is a long route with steep gradients which rise over 200m and there is a problem of erosion on the steeper slopes and waterlogging over peaty ground. The project aimed to control drainage to stem erosion and construct floating sections of path over the most fragile and damaged sections of the route.

**North Newton** – the North Newton Shore is designated as a SSSI and is internationally important for its geological features having contributed to the development of earth sciences. The path forms part of an important circular walk from Lochranza and is also a key link to the coastal path. The path crosses a long stretch of boggy ground where the surface has broken open due to the volume of traffic, exposing soft peat and leading to erosion. The path works alleviate this problem through improved surfacing, drainage and the construction of sections of 'floating' path.

**Glen Sannox** – the path crosses Arran Moors SPA and the Arran Northern Mountains SSSI forming one of the key access routes to the high tops of the Arran Mountains. The path crosses an extensive area of peatland where the surface vegetation was broken open and the path had been reduced to open mire. Through the project a floating path was constructed and appropriate drainage to prevent further erosion, boost habitat restoration and provide a firm walking surface.

**Lower Sannox** – this path also crosses the Arran Moors SPA and the Arran Northern Mountains SSSI and the Chapel Stone at the ancient cemetery, Sannox is registered in the National Monuments Records. The path forms the entrance to Glen Sannox and the mountain routes beyond and also connects with the coastal walk between Sannox and North Sannox. The project upgraded the existing rough track to enable a wide range of abilities to gain access to and enjoy views of the spectacular Glen Sannox. The ancient track line of the route was very badly eroded and rutted and therefore required resurfacing.

**Corien Lochan** - this path takes in the Arran Northern Mountains SSSI and forms part of a very popular route. The path runs parallel to a burn and crosses the burn twice. Erosion caused by water moving over the path in storm conditions is severe and has created several gullies and scars. The project used a combination of light touch methods, stone pitching and revetments to rebuild and define the path-line.

Overall these path works ensures that landscape scars and vegetation damage caused by erosion are significantly reduced over time and that there are clearly identifiable safe routes for walkers, thus reducing the temptation to wander from the paths and potentially cause damage.

In order to achieve this, the works included rebuilding sections of path using local material, the creation of appropriate drainage to reduce the scouring effect of running water and revegetating damaged areas using local vegetation. Whilst the use of quicker acting commercial grass seed mixes would encourage more rapid revegetation this was avoided as it can create unnatural and visible 'green stripes' as well as potentially introducing species not normally found in this location.

Due to the sensitive nature of the area, best practice and innovative techniques were used in order to minimise disturbance to the existing habitats, which included:

- Utilising helicopters to carry stone up to the higher, more difficult to reach locations rather than using heavy machinery on the ground.
- Use of floating paths in many locations meant that disturbance to the peatlands was kept to a minimum.
- Use of locally sourced stone and vegetation made sure that the finished product was in keeping as much as possible with the existing landscape.
- Utilising local volunteers for future monitoring and maintenance ensures issues are spotted and any damage repaired before it becomes serious.
- The project was funded by utilising a combination of National Lottery Funds to match that of the EU as well as the statutory agencies and councils. This was done by focussing on the wide ranging benefits to the environment, the local economy, tourism and local community that this scheme produced.

On the whole the entire local community on the Island have been behind and supportive of the project with many being actively involved or making use of the final product. Some of the routes are on land in private ownership where the owners have a long tradition of welcoming responsible public access. Rights of access along these routes have been secured through 25 year access agreements.

Interpretation and signage was installed to improve visitor understanding of the area, why it is important and how it is managed. A leaflet giving basic interpretation and a map of access on the island was also produced and is updated yearly as work on different routes progresses. This is freely available from tourist information centres, B&B's and tourist retail outlets.

Following on from the project, the ongoing management and maintenance of the paths is co-ordinated by the Arran Access Trust who have ensured that a systematic approach to maintenance has been put in place across the entire footpath network on the island. Regular maintenance and monitoring will prevent serious damage from re-occurring. The majority of works are carried out by volunteers, but should any required maintenance be beyond that which can be achieved through the use of volunteers, the trust will act as co-ordinators for grant applications and fundraising activities.

The project was successful in obtaining EU funds because it focused on the fact that the designated sites are part of a broader landscape and their use isn't just for specific habitats or species. Showing that the benefits of conservation, economy and community involvement are all interlinked enabled the project to clearly fulfil the various programme objectives.

This approach can also be used to show the added value of the project at the EU level. It clearly demonstrates the need to consider the broader interactions between man and his environment and how there is a need and a willingness to work with nature rather than assuming that to protect an area man must be excluded.

#### **Contact person**

Jason Watts [Jason.watts@snh.gov.uk](mailto:Jason.watts@snh.gov.uk)

Scottish Natural Heritage

Great Glen House  
Leachkin Road  
Inverness  
IV3 8NW

## **GENERAL PROJECT BENEFITS**

### **Conservation benefits**

Mitigation of the access impacts through a programme of footpath restoration, works and interpretation will help to protect and restore sensitive habitats and landscapes and will also raise awareness of the need to protect these habitats and the species within them.

### **Economic benefits**

It has been estimated that tourism brings £29 million to the Island economy each year and the majority of the 300,000+ visitors each year visit for the natural heritage of the island. Improving access and protecting habitats and species will safeguard the existing heritage and will potentially greatly improve this input to the local economy.

### **Social benefits**

Interpretation and signage was also installed to improve visitor understanding of the area, why it is important and how it is managed. A leaflet giving basic interpretation and a map of access on the island was also produced. Local people can also get involved and help to protect their environment.

### **Ecosystem services**

The pathways are a major public recreation asset for both local people and the many thousands of visitors. They will also prevent further damage to the moors, which is a vital part of carbon capture and the local water-cycle.

## **EVALUATION AND LESSONS LEARNT**

There were some very positive lessons learnt from this particular project, a summary of which are found below.

### **Utilisation of Different Funding Sources**

Obtaining funding from a few larger sources that have slightly different priorities enables a more holistic approach to be considered.

### **Timing of Funding**

Aligning the various funding sources however can take some effort especially as some EU sources can take over a year between application and approval.

### **Profiling**

It is important in any project of this size to ensure that clear records of expenditure are kept and to which element of the project they relate to. Otherwise it is very difficult to successfully fill out claim forms and ensure that everything would pass the scrutiny of an audit.

### **Enthusiastic Project Manager**

Having a project manager that is enthusiastic about the project, communicates with the partners, understands funders needs whilst liaising with the local community, can make the

difference between a successful or unsuccessful project. If they can see problems or potential under/overspends early on then these can be easily rectified.

### **Continuity**

One of the big problems with large projects, particularly EU funded ones, is that many project staff are employed on a temporary contract, usually for the length of the project. However there is always a need to wind down a project after the official finish date, such as submitting final claims and reports and overseeing audits. It is often the case however that some project staff will leave before the end. It is vital therefore that there are at least some staff who have a clear understanding of the whole life of the project and can help see it through to a successful conclusion.

### **Positive Publicity**

Utilising publicity materials supplied by funders and generating the projects own publicity gives a very professional feel to a project. It can help obtain local support as well as raising awareness of the issues being addressed. It also demonstrates to the funders that the project is well managed and the funds are well spent.

### **Future potential of this source of EU funding**

Since this project was completed there has been the introduction of a new programming period for the EU structural funds. This has seen EAGGF become part of the Rural Development Programmes rather than part of the Structural Funds. Both of these vary dramatically depending on the region and state due to the devolved decisions on programme priorities. However there is still scope in some areas to utilise either the RDP or ERDF to carry out similar projects as long as there are clearly defined outcomes that meet the necessary programme objectives.

This in turn has led to some confusion as to the most appropriate funding mechanism to pursue in support of this type of project. This is particularly important given the tighter focus on complementarity between EU funding streams (particularly in the context of access to LIFE+ funding). There has been a clear steer from LIFE+ that they will not fund anything that could potentially be funded by other EU programmes but with such variations in the other programmes this becomes a very difficult task.

Improving and encouraging access to the countryside (for health and wellbeing reasons) is seen as an important emerging indicator for the value attributed to our natural heritage. Footpath networks are a key element of ensuring that this happens.

## 6 “COSY PLACES” – AN EXHIBITION OF TYROLEAN FARMERS’ FAVOURITE NATURAL PLACES

### Tyrol Region, Austria

Name of the financed project / measure	Funding sources	Amount EUR	Amount %	Beneficiary	Main benefits / innovative characteristic of the project
“Cosy Places” project: awareness raising and supporting positive attitudes towards conservation (AU)	EU financing: EAFRD	16,394.62	40%	Office of the Tyrolean Provincial Government, Department of Nature Conservation	As a consequence of the project, the local acceptance of the Natura 2000 site was significantly increased. Thus, the project demonstrates how successful activities can be implemented even with a rather limited budget.
	Federal financing	10,420.18	26%		
	Provincial financing	13,699.10	34%		
	<b>Total budget</b>	<b>40,513.90</b>			

### SUMMARY

The “Cosy Places” project, which started in September 2007, has two primary objectives: firstly, to increase awareness of the landscape and its diverse features, and secondly to increase farmers’ emotional connection with the landscapes they cultivate. Besides that, a further objective was to increase public support for landscape-related agricultural funding. This objective arose from the assumption that protected species are threatened because of a decline in mountain agriculture and increasing infrastructure and tourism, and that saving species and the habitats they rely on begins with raising awareness among those people that (could) maintain these habitats. This means farmers, directly, through their management activities, and the general public, indirectly, through policy and funding support. The project has been funded from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) with a co-financing rate of 40%.

In 6 different Natura 2000 areas, farmers were interviewed about different aspects of their relationship to their area. The outcomes of interviews are being presented in a travelling exhibition from the end of 2008 onwards. The exhibition aims to demonstrate the emotional connection of farmers to their landscape and surroundings and to generate discussion around this subject. The target group consists of three different parts: firstly, the interviewed farmers are expected to reconsider their relationship with the landscape and become more aware of their emotional reactions to it compared to their prevailing rational economic ones. Secondly, it is anticipated that other farmers will be influenced by the exhibition by receiving affirmation and taking pride in the distinctive and positive way in which their job is presented. Thirdly, visitors to the exhibition will gain a different perspective of the views of farmers, which is not usually represented in the media. The most important perspective is that farmers’ ideal landscapes are sometimes different from those that they actually maintain, and that many of the landscape functions which they value are not properly financed.

The approach chosen is universally applicable and could be similarly applied in any European region. The basic idea is to communicate important features of a particular region in an authentic way, which is appropriate to the local culture.

## **THE NATURA 2000 SITES**

### **Hohe Tauern (Upper Tauern), AT3301000**

The Natura 2000 site “Hohe Tauern” covers a total area of 1,710 km<sup>2</sup> spread over the Tyrol, Salzburg and Carinthia provinces. The Tyrolean portion amounts to 610 km<sup>2</sup>.

The area is situated within the still relatively pristine Central Alpine zone and is mainly made up of alpine terrain. The area is characterised by closely interlocking cultural landscapes used by farmers over centuries, as well as the largely pristine natural landscape. Especially important habitat types are Alpine larch decidua and/or Pinus cembra forests, Mountain hay meadows and Species-rich Nardus grasslands on silicious substrates in mountain areas\*.

According to the Birds and Habitats Directives important species for the area include: Lammergeier (*Gypaetus barbatus*), Capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*), Ptarmigan (*Lagopus mutus*) and Three-toed Woodpecker (*Picoides tridactylus*).

The entire site is protected as the “Hohe Tauern” National Park under the nature conservation legislation of the respective provinces which have an interest in the site. Site management is undertaken independently by the national park administrations of the three provinces. A management plan is currently being developed.

The main reason why some of the protected species found in such cultural landscapes are endangered is the vulnerable situation facing mountain farming. If mountain farming collapses, as has already occurred in the Western and Southern Alps, habitats dependent on farming will be lost. Wilderness-related protected species are typically not endangered, due to the extreme conditions and the exposure of the terrain.

The biggest challenge facing the future management of the area is sustaining existing agricultural activities. To achieve this, public awareness raising activities are needed, in addition to an effective financing system.

### **Karwendel, AT3304000**

The “Karwendel” Natura 2000 site extends over 730 km<sup>2</sup> and includes the area of the Northern Limestone Alps from the Inn Valley to the German border and from the Achen valley in the east to the Seefeldler dip in the west. The Karwendel is subdivided by four big east-west oriented mountain ranges. Geologically the area is mostly characterised by limestone cliffs. Coniferous and mixed forests only occur in the valleys and eastern areas. Due to its partial inaccessibility, sections of pristine natural areas have been preserved.

In addition to several important wilderness-related habitat types, the following habitats are especially important: Bog woodland\*, Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines\*, Alkaline fens, Petrifying springs with tufa formation\* and Rupicolous calcareous or basophilic grasslands of the Alyso-Sedion albi\*.

Amongst the animal and plant species, the following are of note: Rosalia Longicorn (*Rosalia alpina*), Capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*), Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), Eurasian Eagle Owl (*Bubo bubo*), Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) and Creeping Marshwort (*Apium repens*). Additionally, the site is an important resting place for migratory birds.

The Natura 2000 site has been designated as a nationally protected area under the category of Nature Park. It is also connected to the Bavarian “Karwendel with Isar” Natura 2000 site.

To date, a management plan has only been prepared for the “Ahornboden” (maple floor) area of the site, a very popular mountain pasture with an old stock of maple trees. Management measures proposed in the plan (tree replanting and restricting the use of fertiliser in specific areas), are currently being implemented. The main areas of the site facing problems are the forests and marshes. The age composition of the different forest habitats is mainly natural, but younger forests are strongly influenced by cultivation in some areas. One of the main actions that need to be undertaken in the next few years is therefore to limit forest pastures, but such a measure depends on cooperation with land owners. The current, often unfavourable conservation status of the marshes must be improved through restoration and grazing restrictions.

### **Ötztaler Alpen (Ötztal Alps), AT3305000**

The “Ötztaler Alpen” Natura 2000 site is 394.7 km<sup>2</sup> and forms a section of the crystalline main alpine ridge at the end of the Ötz valley. It mainly comprises high alpine terrain. Due to its size and relative inaccessibility, the site is of great importance. Typical habitats found in the area are Species-rich Nardus grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas\*, Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels and Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation. Especially important are also Alpine pioneer formations of the Caricion bicoloris-atrofuscae\*, Alpine and Boreal heaths and Alpine Larix decidua and/or Pinus cembra forests.

Important species for the area are Tengmalm's Owl (*Aegolius funereus*), Hazel Grouse (*Bonasa bonasia*), Ptarmigan (*Lagopus mutus*), *Trifolium saxatile* and *Riccia breidleri*.

The site is protected nationally as “Ruhegebiet Ötztaler Alpen”.

A major challenge for the site is its close connection to popular winter sports centres. This often results in infrastructure development and the building of technical structures (such as storage lakes) which could affect protected species. The planned extension of a hydropower station (Kauner valley power station) also raises problems.

### **Lechtal (Lech Valley), AT3309000**

The “Lechtal” Natura 2000 site is a limestone alpine river valley, which is strongly influenced by the main River Lech and its tributaries. This river system and its natural features have been well conserved and its large size is unique for the Northern Alpine area. The protected site covers an area of 41.4 km<sup>2</sup> and is characterised by broad gravel banks and adjacent riparian forest comprising Willows, Speckled Alder and Pine. The montane and subalpine areas along the Lech Valley slopes are partially very rugged and inaccessible resulting in a pristine nature area. Even areas that have been cultivated for centuries by extensive agricultural methods, have maintained their rich flora and fauna.

Important habitat types are Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior*\*, Alpine rivers and their ligneous vegetation with *Myricaria germanica* and Lowland hay meadows.

The following species depend on the area's important habitats: *Coenagrion hylas*, European Bullhead (*Cottus gobio*), Wood Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*), Red-backed Shrike (*Lanius collurio*) and Lady's Slipper Orchid (*Cypripedium calceolus*).

The Tyrolean Lech Valley is designated as a nature park and a nature conservation site. A draft version of the management plan has been presented and will be finalised in the coming months.

A big challenge to nature conservation in the Lech valley is the need to prevent the construction of power stations and river training structures. In addition, measures to maintain the natural dynamics of the detrital and water transport of the Lech need to be implemented (river enlargements, possible opening of detrital barriers, construction of new detrital barriers and the definition of minimum water levels, in the case of a power station).

### **Fließer Sonnenhänge (Fließer Sunny Slopes), AT3313000**

The “Fließer Sonnenhänge” is a typical dry / semi-dry grassland complex on the southern and south-western slopes of the Upper Inn Valley in the Fließ municipality (district Landeck). The site is situated 800 to 1,100m above sea level and covers a total area of 88.84 ha. Relevant habitats according to the Habitats Directive are Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates, (important orchid sites\*) and Siliceous rock with pioneer vegetation of the Sedo-Scleranthion or of the Sedo albi-Veronicion dillenii. The site is important from a zoological point of view because of the high diversity of invertebrate species (especially butterflies and locusts). According to Tyrolean nature conservation legislation, the entire area has been designated as a nature conservation site.

A management plan and financing proposal for the management measures was completed in 2002. Measures such as the construction and renovation of pasture grids, dry-stone walls and pasture fences as well as one-off clearance of shrubs in certain areas, have been implemented. Goats have been introduced to the pastures and goat cheese is now marketed as a “nature conservation product”. Major challenges to future management include securing regular use of the pastures to avoid shrubs covering the area and clearing additional areas for pasture, whilst at the same time avoiding intensive cultivation methods which have negative impacts on the protected species.

### **Ortolanvorkommen Silz-Haiming-Stams (*Emberiza hortulana* occurrence Silz-Haiming-Stams), AT3312000**

This Natura 2000 site is the only known regular nesting area of the Ortolan (*Emberiza hortulana*) in Austria. This summer bird, described at the end of the 19th Century as being frequent in Tyrol, requires corn and root crop dominated cultivation and its associated landscape structures. In addition it needs vertical landscape elements as song-posts. All of these types of features are still found in the Upper Inn Valley between Silz, Haiming and Stams.

In addition to the Ortolan, the following endangered ground breeders can also be found at the site: Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*), Common Quail (*Coturnix coturnix*) and Whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*).

A “ground breeding programme” was established several years ago by the Department of Nature Conservation in the Tyrolean Provincial Government. Primarily this is a European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development financed programme to encourage “Ortolan-friendly” cultivation methods (mainly not using heavy machinery in corn fields during the breeding season). Unfortunately only a small number of areas have so far been incorporated into the programme.

In 2007, a management plan was completed which identifies the main risk factors to the bird population as being changes to the habitat as well as cultivation methods. Additionally, the plan shows that the current funding programme is inefficient. The following measures are therefore recommended: maintain and increase the number of song-posts, avoid disturbance in areas containing breeding sites and provide an adequate food supply.

The main management challenge in the near future is how to conserve the bird population and increase it from its currently very low number. A proposal for implementing this measure is outlined in the management plan.

**Summary and analysis of the challenges for managing protected areas in Tyrol:**

For sites directly covered by the project “A Cosy Place” two main problem areas were identified. One was the threat to protected species from infrastructure projects and/or tourism and the other was the decrease in mountain farming. In order to counteract these problems, different responses are required that are adapted to the respective sites. It is equally important for the conservation of protected species in the Natura 2000 sites, to run an information and education campaign that brings home the value and importance of these protected species to the general population. “Saving nature” begins with awareness.

**INFORMATION ON EU FUNDS USED**

**EU fund used:** European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), 1 project

**Budget:** Total amount (Gross) €40,513.90

EU financing	€16,394.62 – 40%
Federal financing	€10,420.18 – 26%
Provincial financing	€13,699.10- 34 %

**Contractor:** Office of the Tyrolean Provincial Government, Department of Nature Conservation;  
A-6020 Innsbruck, Eduard-Wallnöfer-Platz 3 (Landhaus 1)  
Responsible official: Mag Michael Reischer  
+43 (0) 512/508-3475  
[michael.reischer@tirol.gv.at](mailto:michael.reischer@tirol.gv.at)

**Agent:** Suske Consulting, [www.suske.at](http://www.suske.at)  
A-1180 Wien, Gymnasiumstraße 27/14  
Project leader: DI Wolfgang Suske  
+43 (0)1 957 63 06  
[wolfgang.suske@chello.at](mailto:wolfgang.suske@chello.at)

**Costs:** Next to the initial investment of €40k, operational cost are approximately €300,- per exhibition venue. These costs are comprised of the exhibition transport and assemblage, and are financed by the Federal Department of Nature Conservation.

## **INFORMATION ON THE EU FUNDED PROJECT**

### **Main objective**

Increase awareness of the landscape and its diverse features and increase farmers' emotional connection with the landscapes they are cultivating. Additionally increase public support for landscape-related agricultural funding.

### **Project duration**

Conceptual phase of the exhibition and exhibition guide: September 2007 to June 2008.  
The exhibition will be inaugurated at the end of 2008 after which the travelling exhibition will tour throughout Tyrol. There is no time limit for the use of the exhibition.

### **Project description**

The form of rural areas is strongly influenced by traditional cultivation methods which result from the experiences of previous generations and the need to work with and not against, the sometimes difficult landscape conditions. With the launch of an exhibition and exhibition guide to 16 favourite places of farmers in Tyrolean protected areas, the project aims to demonstrate the emotional connection of farmers to their landscape and surroundings, and generate discussion around this subject.

### **Description of the activities and measures including their impact on protected areas**

In autumn 2007, 16 farming families living in or close to a protected area were visited by the project team. During 1 hour interviews the following subjects were discussed: a typical workday; experiences out in the fields; observed changes to the landscape; the importance of nature and the natural environment for production; knowledge transfer across generations; and favourite places in the landscape. Photos were subsequently taken of the farmers in their favourite locations. In addition to selecting their favourite natural area, the interviewed farmers were also asked to think of a special object that represented their cultivation methods, as well as their connection with nature.

The exhibition shows photos from the protected area as well as animals found there which are benefiting from the farmer's cultivation activities. This connection was highlighted in the exhibition guide with the help of catchy slogans (e.g. "Otto Falch maintains hedges, the Red-backed Shrike lives in them").

The project is expected to have a long-term impact on the protected areas and is mainly based on creating and improving awareness. The most immediate impact will be on the local farmers featured in the exhibition. As a result of their involvement, they have had to consider their relationship with their landscape and thereby became more aware of their emotions towards it. The interview process already showed that such awareness cannot be taken for granted, rather it is often the case that the landscape is taken for granted and slow changes to it are hardly noticed. As this new awareness was created through a cognitive process, it is also expected to have a lasting impact. The interviewed farmers are now more likely to commit themselves to conserving a diverse landscape within their local protected area and may also take a stronger stance in discussions with other local people.

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*"As long as I have a say about this farm, we won't have a ski slope here!"*  
Karl Höger

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Visitors to the exhibition, who are farmers themselves, are also expected to be strongly influenced. For them the most important result will be affirmation and pride based on the distinctive and positive way in which their job is presented. It can be assumed that most farmers would describe themselves as being “close to nature”. The exhibition may inspire them to consider their own favourite natural place and think more about their connections to it. Instinctively, they might also compare the statements of the farmers presented in the exhibition with their own convictions. This process, together with a consideration of their own favourite place, is likely to also result in an in-depth cognitive process concerning their own cultivated landscape. It is envisaged that they will no longer perceive the landscape in a purely functional sense, in terms of a production input, but will also consider non-economic elements as they become more aware of their emotional connection to it. Natural landscapes within and outside of protected areas will benefit from such a changed attitude.

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***“People always say that with a road the work would be easier. But how can you build a road through this beautiful meadow?”***

*Manfred Kneringer*

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Finally, visitors to the exhibition without an agricultural background will gain a different perspective on the views of farmers, which is not usually represented in the media. Whilst browsing through the exhibition, visitors will realise that farmers are very aware of natural life cycles because they spend most of their time outside on the meadows and fields and have a lot of contact with their animals. Even if farmers are personally unknown to the consumer they will seem more accessible if they are understood as people who are deeply rooted in their landscape through their family histories (fields as the “historical memory of the family”).

At the same time, people will gain an understanding that many of the activities undertaken to maintain the landscape are not performed solely for economic reasons, but as a result of the farmers’ appreciation of their landscape and in order to ensure a high quality of life for their families.

The exhibition points out the economic problems that farmers are facing when struggling in unfavourable conditions. This may lead many visitors to the conclusion that farmers should be supported in their efforts to cultivate the land. Overall this should lead the general public to look more favourably on funding being provided to farmers who are maintaining the landscape, which in turn will motivate politicians to actually provide such funding. In the medium term the project could contribute to increasing the availability of funding for landscape conservation, especially for Natura 2000 sites.

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***“I am not a farmer only because I want to maintain the landscape. I am mainly farming for myself and for my family.”***

*Otto Falch*

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It can be expected that also this target group will think about their favourite place as well as their connection to nature. An additional, subconscious message of the exhibition and the accompanying media reports is that emotional reactions to our landscape are legitimate and

that loving nature is an important aspect of our culture. This might increase public scepticism of landscape-changing, large-scale infrastructure projects and could contribute to changing public opinion to the point where, for example, the natural river landscape of the Lech is seen to be more important than additional electric power.

**Contact person**

DI Wolfgang Suske  
+43 (0)1 957 63 06  
[wolfgang.suske@chello.at](mailto:wolfgang.suske@chello.at)

## **GENERAL PROJECT BENEFITS**

### **Conservation benefits**

- Increased understanding by farmers of how and why to restrict cultivation activities to benefit nature conservation
- Increased motivation to implement measures that maintain the landscape
- Conservation of protected species that are dependant on cultural landscapes by contributing to securing mountain farming in the long-term
- Improved awareness of “landscape destruction”
- Increased acceptance of landscape-related funding for farmers
- Rationale strengthened for enforcing nature conservation legislation

### **Economic benefits**

- Secured long-term future for regional agriculture and thereby the economy, through the preservation of small-scale farming
- Strengthened farmer income by securing contractual nature conservation funding
- Improved direct marketing by farmers through increased understanding of nature-friendly production
- Contribution to summer tourism through an increased motivation to maintain mountain meadows

### **Social benefits**

- Improved consumer understanding of farmers’ needs
- Settlements sustained in rural areas
- Maintain traditional village structures that are influenced by farming

### **Ecosystem services**

- Secure regional food supply
- Preserve the biodiversity of the cultural landscape
- Maintain the recreational value of the landscape

## **EVALUATION AND LESSONS LEARNT**

Some approaches used in this project might be exemplary for other projects, including:

### **Questions asked**

Questioning farmers about their favourite natural places led them to think about their own emotions towards the landscape around them. This led individuals to evaluate the various landscape elements and to think more deeply about the landscape. Besides that, it increased their awareness of its gradual deterioration.

### **Neutral approach**

During both the interviews and the exhibition, care was taken to present the statements and developments in a non-judgemental, neutral manner, and unless stated otherwise, in the original words of the interviewed farmers. The exhibition aimed to present a different life-story and alternative philosophy to life.

### **Story telling**

The brochure reproduces many stories as told by farmers and most interview sections have been kept in the original version. This has resulted in a very lively text which captures the reader's imagination. By using stories, the text is more likely to be remembered and make a lasting impression.

### **Involvement of representatives of the agricultural sector (Chamber of Agriculture)**

The agricultural sector in Austria is strongly represented by the "Chamber of Agriculture". The influence on farmers of such a representative body should not be underestimated; neither should their strong influence on the political system. In this project it was important to inform and involve such representatives from the start, for example, they were asked to select suitable farmers for the interviews. This approach also helped to provide the farmers with positive, up-front information about the project from trusted contact persons which contributed to a smooth interview process. At the same time it also guaranteed support for the exhibition from agricultural representatives.

### **Subtle display of the necessity of landscape-related funding**

The exhibition aims to correct the consumer's perception of the farmer as a "profit maximiser" to one of a farmer who loves the landscape he is cultivating and who carries out activities that are not always profitable. Clarifying problems and threats to farming at the same time, helps to increase public understanding as to why farmers receive public funding for maintaining landscapes. Such acceptance helps to maintain the current activities of farmers and thereby guarantees the long-term survival of protected species and habitats linked to cultural landscapes.

### **Contribution of the project to fulfilling sites' conservation objectives**

Many of the protected species and habitats affected by the project are highly influenced by and dependent on agricultural activities. Sustaining traditional mountain farming is therefore a central requirement for species and habitat protection. The project "A Cosy Place" will support the achievement of this objective on a long-term basis. As explained above, the project will strengthen the identity of farmers and positively affirm their work in the eyes of the general public. If this view can become more widespread in society, it will also encourage future generations to become more engaged in ecologically-beneficial farming. The selected means of communicating this message, a travelling exhibition to be shown nationwide, seems especially appropriate as it will ensure that its awareness-raising impacts are not limited to the protected areas featured, but will be relevant for all habitats within and outside of Natura 2000 sites, that depend on agricultural activities.

### **Impact of the project on future funding**

The project is envisaged to increase the acceptance of agricultural funding. Furthermore, it aims to create an expectation within the general public that policies providing such funding will continue.

**Factors that secured the funding of this project**

- Openness of the Nature Conservation Department to new ideas in relation to public awareness-raising activities
- Cooperation with the Chamber of Agriculture

**Benefits of the project on a European level**

The approach taken in this project is universally applicable and could be applied more or less as it is to any European region. There is already interest in some other countries, for example, Germany, Romania and Croatia. The basic idea (that farmers talk about their favourite natural areas) provides an opportunity to communicate important topics for a particular region in an authentic way which is adapted to the respective local culture.

## 7 TARN VALLEY, CAUSSE NOIR & DOUBIE GORGE

### Midi-Pyrénées, France

Name of the financed project / measure	Funding sources	Amount EUR	Amount %	Beneficiary	Main benefits / innovative characteristic of the project
Enhancement and restoration of farmland biodiversity in the Aveyon, Midi-Pyrénées areas (FR)	EU financing: ERDF	18,620	35%	NGO Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO), Aveyron  Local farmers and their networks APABA, FRCIVAM, ADASEA and FARRE	A successful partnership between an NGO and local farmers led to a pooling of important ecological and agricultural knowledge that was crucial for identifying appropriate management measures for the site. The cooperation also facilitated an access to various different funds.
	Conseil Régional Midi-Pyrénées	10.640	20%		
	Conseil Général Aveyron	10.640	20%		
	Crédit Agricole (Bank)	2,500	5%		
	LPO Aveyron	5,400	10%		
	APABA, FRCIVAM, FARRE	5,400	10%		
	<b>Total budget</b>	<b>53,200</b>			

### SUMMARY

The 2000–2006 EU Structural Funds Objective 2 programme for the Midi-Pyrénées describes a region of rich landscapes and biodiversity, affected by residual pollution in its air and water. This region has been less intensively farmed (except the extensive plain around Toulouse) than the lowland areas of France, but its habitats are under threat.

Measure 13 (sub-measure 13.5: to conserve and evaluate the natural and landscape heritage of the Midi-Pyrénées) of the programme, identified the need for heightened awareness of the necessity of species and habitat protection alongside the economic exploitation of resources. This measure enabled LPO Aveyron, member of the LPO/BirdLife France network, to undertake a range of projects using the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding. Examples included studying bird migration near potential wind farm locations and

the surveillance of habitats used by Montagu's Harriers (Annex I Birds Directive) to provide information for the successful management of this species.

The benefits were shared. In 2005, LPO Aveyron began to work in collaboration with four national farmers' networks (ADASEA, APABA, CIVAM and FARRE) to develop an experimental scheme to restore biodiversity and improve the agricultural landscape in Aveyron. Twelve farmers (mostly involved in meat and milk stock breeding, polyculture and honey production) participated in a variety of activities aimed to enhance habitats for rare species such as Scop's Owl, Hoopoe, Red-backed Shrike, Salamander and Natterjack Toads. Other common species that are in decline, also benefited from this work.

The farmers were asked, for example, to avoid spraying field margins with herbicide to allow wild flowers to grow alongside arable crops and were encouraged not to drain bog habitats. Grazing these areas during the dry season reduces the need to buy hay which is advantageous, particularly as droughts become more frequent and prolonged as the climate changes. In 2005, this delivered an estimated benefit of 150 €/ha.

The interesting feature of this project was the opportunity it provided for farmers and environmentalists to work together, exchanging knowledge in order to find simple, inexpensive but effective solutions. These were then publicised in a leaflet informing farmers what they can do and where they can get more information. The leaflet was distributed by farmers' networks and via a farmers' magazine (La Volonté Paysanne) to more than 10,000 farmers in Aveyron. This project took place over 17 months with a total budget of €50,000, of which €18,620 was co-financed by ERDF.

Survey work on the farms provided an opportunity to meet the farmers, discuss the project objectives and come to an agreement as to which measures they would be prepared to put into practice. Another important aspect of the project was to look for further funds to implement the proposed management measures selected by each farmer.

The partnership between a nature protection NGO and farmers from the networks mentioned above, led to a pooling of ecological and agricultural knowledge, but also enabled various funding sources to be accessed to implement the proposed management measures.

## **THE NATURA 2000 SITES**

In 2005, LPO France in association with 3 professional national farmer networks developed an experimental programme that aimed to restore biodiversity to contribute to the EU's objective to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010. Field projects were established in 18 administrative departments of rural France and the programme will run until the end of 2009 (see map). Cooperation with farmer's networks nationally and through local branches helped to locate people who were interested in participating in the project.

Participation by farmers in the project was voluntary and LPO Aveyron had to find local funding for the various conservation measures that would be proposed to the farmers. LPO Aveyron was able to identify 12 different farmers in and around 3 Natura 2000 sites in the region Midi-Pyrénées who wished to take part.

*Carte des 18 départements français engagés dans le programme*



### **SIC FR7300847 – Tarn Valley (from Brousse to Saint-Rome-de-Tarn).**

The Tarn valley is deep with a high diversity of aquatic habitats and a variety of geological bases (calcareous and acid) which has led to the development of unique vegetation. Many of the areas are inaccessible on very steep slopes above the River Tarn. Habitats include pollarded forests of Oak and Sweet Chestnut, acid heathland, and riverine forest; these constitute three quarters of the area. Dry grasslands and meadows are located in the upper part of the valley and are essentially maintained by extensive sheep grazing.

Caves inhabited by bats are found in the gorge. Maintaining a diverse landscape with hedges, forests and meadows, whilst limiting pesticide use are the main requirements for a healthy bat population. There is also a population of rare dragonflies, in particular *Macromia splendens*. The Beaver (*Castor fiber*) was reintroduced about 30km upstream in the rivers Tarn and Dourbie in the 1980's and is currently re-colonising the area. This is the south-western limit of its distribution in France.

The long term survival of the Beaver and *Macromia splendens* depends on successful river conservation, which is under pressure from tourism development which needs to be controlled.

### **SIC FR7300855 – Causse Noir and the gorge edges;**

A causse is the local name for the calcareous and dolomitic plateau which is covered in dry grassland, Pine forests (*Pinus sylvestris*), and pollarded Oak, with cliff edge habitats and steep-sided gorges. Very localised species are found in the alkaline marshes. There are a number of Black Pine plantations from Austria, and many examples of karst landscape features.

The large grassland areas were created by traditional farming and their maintenance depends on the presence of extensive sheep grazing. Several thousand sheep are raised in this region to provide milk for the Roquefort cheese industry.

### **SPA FR 7312007 – Dourbie Gorge and the neighbouring limestone plateaux.**

This site includes a large part of the Causse Noir, the Larzac Causse, the Bégon Causse and the gorges which separate these limestone plateaux. These two habitats, the causse and the gorge, provide ideal nesting sites for a number of bird species, 17 of which are found on Annex 1 of the Birds Directive, including 8 raptor species. There are significant numbers of breeding pairs of Short-toed Eagle, Montague's Harrier, and Hen Harrier. The site is also an important feeding area for 5 other raptor species which nest locally (Black Kite, Egyptian Vulture, Griffon Vulture, Black Vulture and Booted Eagle). The site also holds important numbers of Stone Curlew and Nightjar, and 5 breeding passerine species.

Similarly to the Causse Noir (which is partly included in this SPA), sheep grazing plays an essential role in maintaining the open or semi-open habitats, providing feeding and breeding sites for the majority of the bird species. It has been encouraged by the same agri-environmental measures. Griffon and Black Vultures were reintroduced during the 1980's, and feeding sites were created where farmers can leave dead sheep. This allows farmers to dispose of dead animals in a simple, and carbon neutral way. The forested and bushy slopes and cliffs are well represented. These habitats are much less affected by agricultural activity. Cliffs are essential for the reproduction of many raptors and need to be preserved from an excessive development of outdoor activities such as climbing and hand-gliding. Small forest areas also need to be protected from forestry activities during the breeding season of the Black Vulture.

### ***Management status***

In France, the management of a Natura 2000 site is governed by a management plan (Document d'objectifs) which is prepared through extensive consultation with different

stakeholder groups, to reach consensus on what actions to include in the plan. The first management plan in the department was for the Causse Noir and was approved in 2003. A management plan for the Dourbie Gorge was approved in 2006, however, work has not yet started on the plan for the Tarn Valley.

In this department, the principal problem is the closing up of open habitat by bushes particularly Juniper and Box, which causes a loss of dry calcareous grassland, which is important at the European level. The economic climate of the 1980's, drove farmers to keep sheep inside the sheepfold and feed them with purchased fodder rather than from extensive grazing. Maintaining extensive grazing is therefore a major challenge to ensuring biodiversity conservation in this area.

Several measures have encouraged, or are encouraging farmers to use these grasslands for their animals (LIFE project entitled "Restoration of dry calcareous grasslands on the Aveyron « cause »" has helped open up the habitat), different agri-environmental measures (Contrat Territorial d'Exploitation, Contrat d'Agriculture Durable), and the management plans for the Natura 2000 sites include these types of measures.

Even actions such as restoring an old "*lavogne*" (local term for a pond on the cause), by renewing the impermeable layer of clay to provide a drinking place for the sheep, is useful for biodiversity. Technical and financial support was provided by the Regional Park of Grands Causses.

## **INFORMATION ON EU FUNDS USED**

Finding funding for the different local field projects in the 18 administrative departments was not always an easy task and came from a variety of sources, including regional and local administrations: Conseil Régional, Conseil Général, regional representative of the Ministry of Environment (DIREN), agricultural bank (Caisse régionale du Crédit Agricole), ERDF structural funds, and FNADT (a national fund for regional development - Fonds national pour l'aménagement et le développement du territoire). In Aveyron, the project combined 6 different sources of funding, of which structural funds formed the highest percentage.

### **European Union Funds used**

ERDF program 2000-2006.

### **Amount of the EU funds used**

€18,620 as part of a total budget of €53,200.

### **Relevant Operational Programme**

Objective 2, Measure 13: to conserve and evaluate the natural and landscape heritage of the Midi-Pyrénées.

### **Beneficiary**

Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux, section Aveyron

The duration of the currently funded programme was 17 months (started in 2006). LPO Aveyron submitted an application for further ERDF funds to extend the work but is still waiting for a response (January 2009).

The national LPO programme for biodiversity restoration in rural France, identified the following professional networks of farming organisations, which have their own branches in each region:

- Conventional agricultural network: Forum de l'Agriculture raisonnée (FARRE Aveyron)
- Sustainable agriculture: Fédération régional des CIVAM
- Organic agriculture: Association pour la Promotion de l'Agriculture Biologique en Aveyron (APABA)
- Association de soutien au développement des exploitations agricoles (ADASEA de l'Aveyron).

These organisations were project partners, in that they helped to locate farmers who were willing to participate in the project and communicated the results to their networks.

In Aveyron, LPO Aveyron was the project manager and provided €5,400 and the 3 farmers' networks provided an extra €5,400. The remaining funding came from the local and regional administration, the agricultural bank and structural funds:

**Table: Breakdown of the financing for the project**

<b>Financial plan</b>	<b>Total (€)</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>European Union (ERDF)</b>	<b>18,620</b>	<b>35</b>
Conseil Régional Midi-Pyrénées	10,640	20
Conseil Général Aveyron	10,640	20
Crédit Agricole (Bank)	2,500	5
LPO Aveyron	5,400	10
APABA, FRCIVAM, FARRE	5,400	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>53,200</b>	<b>100%</b>

## **INFORMATION ON THE EU FUNDED PROJECT**

The main objective of the project was to improve biodiversity on the farms involved, in order to support the EU's objective to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010. LPO Aveyron and the agricultural networks ensured that the project results were transmitted to a large number of farmers via publications and a farming magazine.

The Aveyron project ran for 17 months, beginning in 2006.

The aims of this programme were to:

- Establish baseline information on the habitats and species in the area and on the farms
- Propose different agri-environmental measures to improve biodiversity on the farms
- Propose such measures to farmers so that they could choose which ones they wished to put in place
- Prepare a programme and calendar of actions
- Find local funding for the actions
- Start working on the ground with the farmers

Further information and a leaflet with a project summary can be found at this weblink: [http://aveyron.lpo.fr/rubrique.php?id\\_rubrique=48](http://aveyron.lpo.fr/rubrique.php?id_rubrique=48)

The main activity to be funded was an analysis of the current ecological situation on the 12 participating farms and the preparation of a management plan with proposals for agri-environmental measures to improve farmland biodiversity. Decisions concerning which

measures to apply were made in discussion with the farmers and within the constraints of his farming activities.

Some of the proposed measures could be applied without any extra funding (conservation of dead hollow trees, changing the method of cutting hay and natural regeneration of hedges etc).

Other activities were undertaken using additional funding, for example, hedges were planted thanks to a partnership with an NGO specialised in hedge planting. Bat nesting boxes were put in place by « the Bat group of Midi-Pyrénées » who were running a programme to place bat boxes in orchards. Ponds were restored either with funding from the farmer himself and a LPO sponsor, with help from LPO volunteers and the Parc Naturel Régional des Grands Causses.

Certain innovative or best practice / demonstration actions can be highlighted:

1. The approach used in this programme demonstrates a radical change in relationships with the farmers. Instead of criticizing farmers and their cultivation methods, the aim was to have an open and positive dialogue to discuss the issues involved using commonly understood vocabulary. Each was recognised to be an expert in his own area (naturalist and farmer) and by discussing the issues it was possible to recognise and understand the constraints of each job, from which solutions were able to emerge. For example, through this programme we learnt that the centrifugal method of cutting hay, starting from the middle and working outwards is not acceptable to farmers with small fields. Whereas, when a farmer with a large field tried out the method, he was able to justify mowing hay in this way because of the value to wildlife. One farmer actually saw that several animals were able to escape as he cut the last band of hay, and so he slowed down his cutting rate. He discussed this method with at least one of his farming neighbours, and so the message began to spread. Another farmer doing this type of mowing saw 20 quails dispersing from the last section of grass before it was cut.
2. The preparation of a management plan proposing different actions in agreement with the farmer is innovative for two reasons. Firstly the farmer chooses the measures he wishes to undertake and therefore feels more involved in the conservation action. Secondly it provides an opportunity to maintain heterogeneity in farming practices at the farm level which enhances biodiversity.
3. Providing nest-boxes for birds and bats and protecting hollow trees is a simple way to conserve them.
4. Natural hedge regeneration enabled the reconstitution of a « *bocage* » hedgerow landscape at no extra cost. The impact of this method, which relies on the natural development capacity of the vegetation, is slower than planting of bushes or trees.
5. Closing off the ends of the spray arms in order not to treat the field margins with herbicides or pesticides, and working the soil without seeding the edges, benefits field weeds.

By reaching agreement with farmers through discussions, the farmers felt more involved in the activities and shared their experiences with other farmers. By maintaining or recreating elements of the landscape e.g. ponds and hedges, and by changing mowing methods, this project obtained the best conditions for biodiversity and reduced species' mortality.

The farmers involved in the project volunteered to be part of it and were willing to apply the measures on their land, thus they invested considerable time and energy in the project.

LPO members volunteered to work on a number of the actions, and local partners (Midi-Pyrénées Bat Group, Association trees, hedges and landscapes, Parc Naturel Régional des Grands Causses, etc.) participated by supporting the various measures proposed to farmers either by direct funding or through in kind support (e.g. provision of hedge plants, bat boxes, etc).

As this is an experimental programme, the future is not entirely secure. However a further 3 year project was submitted for further funding in 2008 to the ERDF and local government agencies. LPO plans to invest more core funding and volunteer work in this project than in the first one (see budget below). In the long term, effective communication is needed regarding the results of the different measures, and also to continue working with the farmers involved. The submitted funding application is currently awaiting a decision from the region.

**Table: Breakdown of the financing for the planned follow-up project (funding decision still pending)**

<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Funding source</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>%</b>
Equipment	€20,216	<b>EU + local government support:</b>		
Actions	€10,200	EU ERDF	€7,731	50
Communication	€5,046	Région Midi-Pyrénées	€3,866	25
		Département de l'Aveyron	€13,546	10
		<b>Sub-total :</b>	€15,143	85
		LPO core funding and volunteer work	€20,319	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>€35,462</b>		<b>€35,462</b>	<b>100</b>

Some key factors contributed to the success of the project in receiving ERDF funding:

- Collaborative work with professional farming networks – taking account of biodiversity in agricultural practices (which made it possible to contribute to the EU's objective to halt the loss of biodiversity).
- Positive discussion between environmentalists and farmers.
- The choice of partners, particularly by working with farming networks from the outset.

This project is being carried in other parts of France in a total of 18 departments (e.g. Charente-Maritime and Haute Marne, see map) under the coordination of LPO France. Its added value is likely to be in respect to the possibility of evaluating what measures farmers are prepared to implement in order to protect biodiversity and the reasons why they choose one measure and not another. This will result in useful practical information to guide agricultural policies at a national or even European level with the twofold objective of maintaining economically viable farms and restoring biodiversity.

**Contact person**

Name : Rodolphe Liozon

Organisation : Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux, section Aveyron

Address : LPO Aveyron, 10 rue des Coquelicots, 12850 Onet-le-Château, France

Tel : +33.565.42.94.48

E-mail : [aveyron.direction@lpo.fr](mailto:aveyron.direction@lpo.fr)

## **GENERAL PROJECT BENEFITS**

### **Conservation benefits**

The protection and enhancement of populations of Scop's Owls, Hoopoes, Red-backed Shrikes, Salamanders and Natterjack Toads. Other common species in decline also benefited. No pesticides were used on field margins which benefited bats, birds and plants. Moreover, the project prevented the drainage of a bog habitat.

### **Economic benefits**

By not draining a bog habitat, this vegetation remained available for the animals during a dry period, thus saving the farmer an estimated 150 €/Ha for hay. Otherwise, there were no other immediately measurable economic benefits but it is too early in the project to judge. However in the long term the hedges must provide advantages for livestock, for example, protection from bad weather, soil conservation and restoration of water points etc. An important element is also to ensure no economic loss to the farmer from carrying out these conservation measures.

### **Social benefits**

The successful exchange of knowledge between two social groups, environmentalists and farmers, resulted in communication on the success of the different actions and their environmental benefits by the farmers themselves, rather than by environmentalists. This should give more credibility to the ideas and activities.

### **Ecosystem services**

- Carbon sink provided by bog habitat.
- Hedge planting and conservation which improves soil conservation.

## **EVALUATION AND LESSONS LEARNT**

The overall idea proved to provide a positive way forward, and a second phase of the project is therefore foreseen. This second phase was submitted for ERDF funding in 2008, for 3 years to monitor biodiversity and to help farmers apply the agri-environmental measures. This application has still not been officially accepted (January 2009).

Survey work on the farms provided an opportunity to meet the farmers, discuss the project objectives and reach agreement as to which measures they would be prepared to put into practice. Another important aspect of the project is searching for funds to undertake the proposed management measures selected by each farmer.

The partnership between a nature protection NGO and a group of farmers from the different networks mentioned above, led to a pooling of ecological and agricultural knowledge and also to more funding opportunities, so funds could be accessed to undertake certain management measures.

However, some challenges and opportunities have been identified in relation to the funding of this project. The main difficulty in using ERDF funds is the harmonisation and coordination of EU funding with regional sources of co-financing in France. It is difficult for a small NGO to prepare a very time-consuming application and to seek the agreement of different co-financers (e.g. the Conseil Régional and Conseil Général). For this reason, it is best to try to find major funding for a 2 or 3 year programme. Often co-financers (of the region or department) have different rules for using their funds on different projects (e.g. for not more than 1 year). Their reporting rules also vary considerably. This means that although the co-

financing application is accepted on scientific grounds, the administration of the funding is such that it could actually either cause the project to fail, or require that the applicant starts working on the project with their own funding in the hope that the application is finally successful. For a small NGO this is extremely unsatisfactory and can be financially dangerous. Additionally, the calculations for daily costs make no allowances for increases in wages or other costs over a 3 year period.

Some key lessons learned from this project include:

- Successful actions require the involvement of people from different sectors.
- Working with other professional networks facilitates the identification of interested actors on the ground.
- Listening to the farmers is necessary in order to get your message across.
- Involving other relevant organisations and volunteers helps to reduce costs but also to spread the message.

The success of the programme was due to the promotion of a positive message. Farmers in this region of France are not generally considered to be people who are destroying the landscape and species. They are viewed as people who know their job but are not biodiversity experts. On the other hand, environmentalists do not give lessons to farmers. They are specialists in biodiversity but not experts in farming. They can explain to farmers the importance of wildlife and what management is necessary to conserve important species. So each sector listened to the other and learnt from each other.

As each participant is viewed as an expert in their field of work, working with other professional networks was important. It facilitated the identification of interested actors on the ground and dialogue with farmers.

Success of the agri-environmental measures required the involvement of people from different sectors.

By involving other relevant organisations in the region they were able to participate financially or in kind to the project, or act as volunteers which helped to reduce costs but also helped to spread the message. LPO members volunteered to work on a number of the actions, and local partners (Midi-Pyrénées Bat Group, Association Trees, Hedges and Landscapes, Parc Naturel Régional des Grands Causses, etc.) participated by supporting the various measures proposed to farmers either through funding or in kind support, such as the provision of hedge plants and bat boxes, etc.

## 8 ACTION PLAN FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THE EGYPTIAN VULTURE AND CONSERVATION MEASURES FOR LESSER KESTREL, BLACK KITE, AND RED KITE

Puglia, Italy

Name of the financed project / measure	Funding sources	Amount EUR	Amount %	Beneficiary	Main benefits / innovative characteristic of the project
Developing species specific action plans / conservation measures in Area delle Gravine (IT)	EU financing: ERDF	345,127.48	98%	Municipality of Laterza	This project shows how collaboration between different stakeholders can lead to a successful implementation of Natura 2000 management activities.  Furthermore, the project is a pioneering example of using the Structural Funds to support the implementation of the Birds Directive.
	Regional financing	7,043.42	2%		
	<b>Total budget</b>	<b>352,170</b>			

### SUMMARY

The “Area delle Gravine” (26,740 ha, Puglia Region – Italy) is characterised by a few parallel canyons separated by agricultural land and steppe habitats. Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*) and the Macedonian Oak (*Quercus trojana*) forests are important habitats. A Management Plan is for the area currently being approved. Major management challenges include: 1) Favouring the reproductive success of species of community interest and reducing / eliminating disturbance factors; 2) Implementing and managing a system of raptor feeding stations; 3) Fire prevention and forest conservation activities; and 4) Conservation of the pseudo-steppe habitat. The main conservation objectives are: to return the Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*) as a breeding species; contribute to the future conservation of the Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*), and to influence the drafting of the Management Plan for the SCI/SPA “Area delle Gravine. The project, which took place in 2003-2008, was 100% funded by ERDF funds, with a total of €352,170.

The actual effort that was made to meet the above-mentioned objectives were: 1) Restocking of Egyptian Vultures through a “hacking” technique; 2) Radio-satellite tracking and a raptor feeding station; 3) Monitoring of the bird species; 4) Analysis of landscape spatial structure with regards to the distribution of species of conservation interest (Stone Curlews and Larks); 5) Wildlife surveillance; and 6) Awareness raising activities among the local population.

Major benefits of the project were the restocking of the Egyptian Vulture population, and the acquisition of detailed knowledge on the conservation status of several raptor and passerine species. Besides that, the amount of visitors to the local reserve has increased by 30%.

Another important benefit was increased awareness of the site's importance by the local population and schoolchildren.

The most successful features of this project are: firstly, the collaboration and willingness to cooperate with other agencies, institutions, private individuals and environmental associations. A good example of this is the cooperation between Birdlife Italy and the Municipality of Laterza. Secondly, the use of Structural Funds to meet some of the obligations of the Birds Directive is relatively uncommon but has been very useful and has increased the potential for future integration between Regional Operational Programme funds and the goals of Natura 2000.

#### 4.1 THE NATURA 2000 SITES

##### **Site Description** (*Area delle Gravine*” SPA and SCI (IT9130007)

The so-called “gravine” are the most typical geo-morphological features of the Murge plateau, and are considered to be the most important manifestation of the morphological evolution of the Ionian arch in Taranto province. They originate from erosion by watercourses, over pre-existing fractures in the calcareous rocks.

The project area, about 27,000 hectares, includes the entire SCI (Site of Community Importance) and SPA (Special Protection Area) “*Area delle Gravine*” (IT9130007), which encompasses 8 municipalities in Taranto province (Laterza, Ginosa, Castellaneta, Palagianello, Crispiano, Massafra, Mottola, and Statte), with a combined population of 150,000 people, most of whom live in urban centres. Apart from being a SPA and SCI, the area has also been identified by *BirdLife International* as an IBA (*Important Bird Area: Gravine*, n° 139).

Livestock raising is the main agricultural activity in the area. Forage productivity is high, both in meadows/pastures and in Macedonian Oak groves, leading in many cases to problems of overgrazing and prevention of woodland regeneration. The gravine appear to be distributed along two semi-arches overlooking the gulf of Taranto. The first semi-arch lies between 100 and 300m above sea level, whilst the second lies between 300 and 500m above sea level.

The natural vegetation is rich, with extensive woodlands dominated by Macedonian Oaks (*Quercus trojana*) and Downy Oaks (*Quercus pubescens*), and large, nearly pure stands of Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*) and Aleppo Pine (*Pinus halepensis*).

The gravine harbour many important animal species: for example, together with the Gargano National Park, they are the only breeding site in Apulia for Eagle Owl (*Bubo bubo*). Other important breeding birds include Lanner (*Falco biarmicus feldeggi*), Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*), Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*), Short-toed Eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*), and most importantly Lesser Kestrel (*Falco naumanni*). Rocky areas in the gravine are important for species such as European Roller (*Coracias garrulus*), Blue Rock Thrush (*Monticola solitarius*), Eastern Black-eared Wheatear (*Oenanthe hispanica melanoleuca*), Alpine Swift (*Apus melba*) and Common Raven (*Corvus corax*).

Small pools of water at the bottom of the gravine provide habitat for rare species such as Apennine Yellow-bellied Toad (*Bombina pachypus*). Xerophilous habitats host several important reptile species, including Leopard Snake (*Elaphe situla*), Kotschy's Gecko (*Cyrtopodion kotschy*), and Four-lined Snake (*Elaphe quatuorlineata*).

As a SCI and a SAC, the GRAVINE AREA includes important priority habitats of community interest (listed on Annex I of the Habitats Directive), along with priority animal species of community interest (listed on Annex II of the Habitats Directive and Annex I of the Birds Directive,).

Table 1 summarises the main characteristics of the SCI/SPA “Area delle Gravine”, particularly the general data on the site described in the Natura 2000 standard data form, environmental characteristics, percentages of habitats included in Annex I of the Habitats Directive (updated in light of the most recent studies undertaken to contribute to the Management Plan), bird species and other species included in Annex I of the Birds Directive and Annex II of the Habitats Directive.

### **Priority Habitats**

In particular, priority habitats (according to the Habitats Directive) include pseudo-steppes with grasses and annuals (*Thero-Brachypodietea*), which currently account for just under 5% of the study area, with limited surfaces of pseudo-steppe with grasses and annuals, including *Stipa austroitalica*, and meadows of *Brachypodium ramosum* bordered by Mediterranean scrub. Habitats of community interest include: i) Calcareous slopes with chasmophytic vegetation, in particular *Aurinio-Centauretum apulae* associations; ii) Mediterranean pine forests with endemic mesogenous pines, in particular *Pistacio-Pinetum halepensis* associations; iii) Macedonian Oak (*Quercus trojana*) woodlands; iv) Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*) woodlands; v) *Euphorbia dendroides* vegetation.

### **Priority Species**

Priority plant species according to Annex II of the Habitats Directive include *Stipa austroitalica*.

Amphibian and reptile species of community interest according to Annex II of the Habitats Directive include Italian Crested Newt (*Triturus carnifex*), Apennine Yellow-bellied Toad, European Pond Terrapin (*Emys orbicularis*), Hermann’s Tortoise (*Testudo hermanni*), Four-lined Snake, and Leopard Snake.

Finally, there are numerous amphibians and reptiles listed on the national red data list, including Italian Tree Frog (*Hyla intermedia*), Italian Newt (*Triturus italicus*), Green Toad (*Bufo viridis*), Kotschy’s Gecko (*Cyrtopodion kotschy*), and Southern Smooth Snake (*Coronella austriaca*),

Additionally, there are 15 endemic species and 22 species of great phytogeographic value.

Breeding bird species of community interest according to Annex I of the Birds Directive include Lesser Kestrel and Lanner, while bird species of community interest according to Annex I of the Birds Directive include: Short-toed Eagle, Egyptian Vulture, Black Kite, Red Kite, Stone Curlew (*Burhinus oedicnemus*), European Roller (*Coracias garrulus*), Eagle Owl, European Nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*), Tawny Pipit (*Anthus campestris*), Woodlark (*Lullula arborea*), Calandra Lark (*Melanocorypha calandra*), Greater Short-toed Lark (*Calandrella brachydactyla*), Lesser Grey Shrike (*Lanius minor*).

### **Current management status**

Currently, the Province of Taranto is responsible for managing the SCI/SPA. The managing body submitted the Management Plan in September 2008, which is currently undergoing approval procedures. The Management Plan includes a set of regulations to facilitate the application of the defined management rules.

The main management goals defined by the Management Plan are listed below:

- 1) Conservation and recovery of steppe habitats
- 2) Conservation of forest habitats
- 3) Creation and protection of ecological corridors
- 4) Protection of nesting sites and increase of trophic resources for species of community interest.
- 5) Achieve the sustainable use of natural resources in the habitats of community interest, and conservation of biological diversity.
- 6) Control the entire territory of the SCI/SPA, in order to protect its flora and fauna, prevent environmental damage, and fight environmental crime
- 7) Monitoring and research
- 8) Raise awareness of the local population with regards to species and habitats of community interest, in order to strengthen a sense of belonging and encourage the sustainable use of protected areas.

### **Major challenges for management**

The seven main necessary management activities that have been identified are:

- 1) Actions that favour the reproductive success of species of community interest, and to reduce and/or eliminate disturbance factors.
- 2) Implement and manage a system of raptor feeding stations
- 3) Fire prevention and forest conservation activities
- 4) Conservation of pseudo-steppe habitat
- 5) Preservation of agricultural biodiversity and promotion of more sustainable forms of agriculture
- 6) Monitoring and study of fauna of community interest
- 7) Planning and implementation of specialised training activities for the staff of interested local public agencies and environmental groups, focusing on regional, national, European Community, and international environmental legislation, with an emphasis on legal and institutional conservation tools for Natura 2000 sites.

## Key information on the SIC-ZPS “Area delle Gravine”

Code:	<b>IT9130007</b>
Date in which the forms were compiled:	<b>01/1995</b>
Date on which the SCI was proposed:	<b>06/1995</b> (Decree of the Min. of the Environment 3/4/2000 G.U.95 of 22/04/2000)
Date on which the SPA was designated:	<b>12/1998</b>
Size:	<b>26,740 ha</b>
Minimum altitude above sea level:	<b>32 m</b>
Maximum altitude above sea level.:	<b>519 m</b>
Biogeographic region:	<b>Mediterranean</b>
Province:	<b>Taranto</b>
Municipalities:	<b>Ginosa, Laterza, Castellaneta, Palagianello, Mottola, Massafra, Crispiano, Statte.</b>

### ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

The gravine are canyons formed by watercourse erosion superimposed on fractures on surface rock formations. They are rocky habitats of great botanical value. The site includes some well-preserved Macedonian Oak (*Quercus trojana*) forests and native Aleppo Pine woodlots growing on calcarenite. Additionally, there is some garrigue vegetation dominated by *Euphorbia spinosa* and Italian Pubescent Oak (*Quercus virgiliana*) stands.

Cod. 9250 <i>Quercus trojana</i> wood	<b>10%</b>
Cod. 6220 * Pseudo-steppe with grasses and annuals of the <i>Thero-Brachypodietea</i>	<b>4.5%</b>
Cod. 8210 Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation	<b>&lt;1%</b>
Cod. 9540 Mediterranean pine forests with endemic Mesogean pines	<b>5,4%</b>
Cod. 8310 Caves not open to the public	<b>&lt;1%</b>
Cod. 9340 <i>Quercus ilex</i> and <i>Quercus rotundifolia</i> forests	<b>2.2%</b>
Cod. 5330 Thermo-Mediterranean and pre-desert scrub	<b>&lt;1%</b>

### ANIMAL SPECIES DIRECTIVES 79/409/CEE AND 92/43/CEE all. II

Birds: *Anthus campestris*, *Bubo bubo*, *Burhinus oedicnemus*, *Calandrella brachydactyla*, *Caprimulgus europaeus*, *Circaetus galicus*, *Circus aeruginosus*, *Circus pygargus*, *Coacias garrulus*, *Falco biarmicus*, *Falco naumanni*, *Falco eleonora*, *Pluvialis apricaria*, *Lanius minor*, *Lullula arborea*, *Melanocorypha calandra*, *Milvus migrans*, *Milvus milvus*, *Neophron percnopterus*, *Pernis apivorus*, *Ficedula albicollis*.

Reptiles and amphibians: *Testudo hermanni*, *Bombina variegata*, *Elaphe quatuorlineata*, *Elaphe situla*.

## INFORMATION ON EU FUNDS USED

### Fund

ERDF (P.O.R. PUGLIA 2000-2006 measure 1.6 line of intervention n. 2)

### Project number

106B020004

### Contractor

Organization: COMUNE DI LATERZA

Address: Piazza Plebiscito n. 2

Name of the project leader: Dott. Arcangelo LAPOMARDA (Single Project Leader)

Telephone: +39 099 8297931

E-mail: [lapomarda@comune.laterza.ta.it](mailto:lapomarda@comune.laterza.ta.it)

### Project partner

Organisation: LIPU - BirdLife Italy

Address: Via Trento 49, I-43100 Parma Italy

Tel: +39 0521 273043

e-mail: [claudio.celada@lipu.it](mailto:claudio.celada@lipu.it) [info@lipu.it](mailto:info@lipu.it)

### Overall budget

€352,170.00

### Funding sources

98% of the budget, equivalent to €345,127.48, came from European Funds. The remaining 2% of the budget, (€7,043.42) was co-financed by the implementing agency, the municipality of Laterza.

## INFORMATION ON THE EU FUNDED PROJECT

Raptors are highly sensitive to changes in their natural environment and therefore make ideal indicators of ecosystem health. Knowledge of their status is extremely useful for the management and conservation of natural resources. The study contributed to the Action Plan for Europe's smallest vulture, the Egyptian Vulture, which suffered a 50% decline throughout its range between 1990 and 2000. Other species of community interest that benefited from conservation actions include the Lesser Kestrel, Lanner Falcon, Red Kite, Black Kite, Short-toed Eagle and the Eagle Owl. The project, which took place between 2003 and 2008, aimed to conserve the regional natural heritage, through the development of a local action plan for the Egyptian Vulture and through the implementation of specific conservation activities for Black Kite, Red Kite, and Lesser Kestrel in the SCI/SPA "Area delle Gravine". The project website can be found at: [www.rapacigravine.it](http://www.rapacigravine.it).

The project comprised the following specific activities:

- 1) Creation of a raptor feeding station as a resource for Egyptian Vultures and other carrion-eating raptors.
- 2) Restocking of Egyptian Vultures through the "Hacking" technique, and the fine-tuning of a release protocol that can be exported to other areas.
- 3) Scientific monitoring of the bird species present in the area included in Annexes I and II of the Birds Directive.

- 4) Wildlife surveillance and control activities in the SPA and SCI in order to reduce poaching and other human disturbance in sensitive areas;
- 5) Awareness raising activities amongst the local population on conservation issues, including a locally-filmed documentary on the conservation activities implemented so far.
- 6) Publication of scientific and information material on the results of monitoring and conservation efforts.

The return of the Red Kite as a breeding species in the Area delle Gravine, which took place between 2006 and 2008, seems to be tied to conservation efforts implemented during the project, such as the creation of a feeding station mainly used by Red Kites. The increase in the breeding population of Black Kites could also be due to the increase in trophic resources. Furthermore, surveillance of raptor resting sites during the breeding season has, on several occasions, prevented voluntary and involuntary human disturbance. The release of 6 juvenile Egyptian Vultures is an important contribution to the future conservation of this species in the SPA. These operations, which were carried out between 2004 and 2007 with the help of radio-satellite tracking technology, have made it possible to acquire new information on the migratory routes and African wintering areas of the Italian population of Egyptian Vultures.

The following three actions are considered to be best-practice examples from this case:

1. Creation of a raptor feeding station as a trophic resource for Egyptian Vultures and other carrion-eating raptors.
2. Restocking of Egyptian Vultures through the “Hacking” technique<sup>10</sup>, and the fine-tuning of a release protocol that can be exported to other areas.
3. Analysis of landscape spatial structure with regards to the distribution of species of conservation interest (Stone Curlews and different species of larks)

All local schools have been informed about the project activities through meetings and presentations on school grounds. They have also been involved through guided visits to the sites in which conservation actions have been implemented. The local community participated in one intermediate and one final meeting during which the results of on-site monitoring and conservation efforts were presented.

Finally, the studies and monitoring efforts that have been carried out were very useful in the drafting of the Management Plan for the SIC ZPS.

#### **Contact person**

Claudio Celada

Organisation: LIPU - BirdLife Italy

Address: Via Trento 49, I-43100 Parma Italy

Tel: +39 0521 273043

e-mail: [claudio.celada@lipu.it](mailto:claudio.celada@lipu.it) [info@lipu.it](mailto:info@lipu.it)

## **GENERAL PROJECT BENEFITS**

Several structures, such as the feeding station, were created during the project and continue to be used and managed by LIPU and have become part of the conservation activities of the

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<sup>10</sup> The “hacking” technique involved placing captive-reared birds in the wild in an enclosure, avoiding direct contact with humans. The birds were gradually released into the wild. This technique proved successful in re-introducing various raptor species.

Gravina di Laterza LIPU reserve. Overall, the project can be considered to be a success. The competence and professionalism of the project's partners and collaborators, and the collaboration and willingness to cooperate with other agencies, institutions, private subjects and environmental associations by the main beneficiary (Municipality of Laterza) were important contributory factors to its success. In conclusion, the different benefits of this project can be outlined as follows:

#### **Conservation benefits**

Start of Egyptian Vulture restocking efforts and acquisition of detailed knowledge on the conservation status of several raptor and passerine species.

#### **Economic benefits**

Visitors to the local reserve (managed by LIPU) increased by 30% thanks to the project activities.

#### **Social benefits**

The local population is now aware of the site's importance, as an awareness raising and education programme has been carried out in local schools.

#### **Ecosystem services**

Through the conservation status of several species, information was gathered on the conservation status of the ecosystem as a whole, in order to highlight the importance of conserving ecosystem health.

At the European level, the added value of this project can be summarized in 3 major points:

- 1) Given the significant decline of the Egyptian Vulture in Europe, restocking activities, along with the techniques adopted (hacking) are a major contribution of this project
- 2) Structural Funds were used to carry out in-depth studies and monitoring of birds of community interest in a very large SPA.
- 3) The results of these studies were useful in drafting the SPA Management Plan.

## **EVALUATION AND LESSONS LEARNT**

We have shown that it is possible to use the EU Structural Funds in order to meet some of the obligations of the Birds Directive. In light of the positive results achieved, we will re-submit the project during the next structural fund programming phase. To improve EU funding for biodiversity projects, it is recommended that:

- 1) There is greater integration between structural funds and the goals of the Natura 2000 network.
- 2) In light of the difficulties encountered in applying national norms on public works to multi-year biodiversity conservation projects, the adoption of ad hoc normative instruments should be encouraged.

## 9 DEVELOPING ECO-TOURISM ACTIVITIES IN PROTECTED AREAS IN THE MORAVA FLOODPLAIN AREA

### Zahorie region, Bratislava & Trnave, Slovakia

Name of the financed project / measure	Funding sources	Amount EUR	Amount %	Beneficiary	Main benefits / innovative characteristic of the project
Developing ecotourism activities in the Zahorie region (SK)	EU financing: INTERREG	75,789.27	57%	SOS/BirdLife Slovakia	The project provides a good example of increasing awareness of the importance and benefits of Natura 2000 sites among the general public. In addition, the project successfully contributed to the management objectives of the site by developing low impact sustainable tourism activities.
	Slovak Republic	37,025.26	28%		
	SOS/BirdLife Slovakia	4,113.92	12%		
	Region March Thaya Auen and Austria	15,667.40	13%		
	<b>Total budget</b>	<b>132,595.85</b>			

### SUMMARY

SPA Záhorské Pomoravie stretches along the Morava River along the Slovak – Austrian border. It is a lowland area known for a large number of rare and endangered plant and animal species and has been designated as an SPA. The area is primarily used for agricultural hay production, forestry, hunting and recreation. In order to advise the public in an engaging way about the SPA, a project for developing eco-tours was prepared. The partners were SOS/BirdLife Slovakia and Region March Thaya Auen. The project was carried out from June 2006 until January 2008.

The total project budget was €132,595.85 funded by Interreg III A (57% co-financing). This EU funding provided an opportunity to cooperate with an Austrian partner, who had previous experience of guiding. Support for nature conservation and tourism is amongst the main objectives of Interreg IIIA.

The project was based on previous similar experiences in Austria related to ecotourism. It included many activities and measures necessary to train guides, create excursions, to print a handbook for guides and to erect information boards. Marketing of excursions was also one of the activities, as was the realisation of excursions or team-building seminars for guides.

The project fulfilled its aim to enhance awareness about nature conservation in Natura 2000 sites amongst the public. The project contributed to the conservation objectives of the site by developing low impact sustainable tourism activities and promoting the site's natural values to better understand the valuable services and opportunities it provides for the whole region.

The project was successfully undertaken and subsequent phases are under preparation.

## THE NATURA 2000 SITES

The Záhorské Pomoravie SPA in Slovakia (Bratislava, Trnava region) stretches along the Morava River from Skalica to Devínska Nová Ves over an area of nearly 28,500 hectares. It partly overlaps with the Landscape Protected Area Záhorie (national protection category). This lowland area is comprised of the Morava river alluvium and shifting sand habitats. The area around the lower section of the Morava River in the Slovak and Austrian side is a relative well-preserved area, as indicated by a large number of rare and endangered plant and animal species. The necessary condition for the existence of such a rare biota is low disturbance by anthropogenic activity, which highlights the unique value of the area. The site has been designated as an SPA (Záhorské pomoravie, SKCHVU016).

### Natura 2000 sites:

SPA Záhorské pomoravie (primarily targeted by the project – 90 %).

Nine other sites partly targeted by the project (10 %) are: Malé Karpaty SPA, Devínska Kobyla SCI, Biele Hory SCI, Gajarské alúvium Moravy SCI, Alúvium Moravy pri Suchohrade SCI, Devínske jazero SCI, Horný les SCI, Devínske alúvium Moravy SCI, and Skalické alúvium Moravy SCI.

### Habitats

The prevailing habitats are intensively cultivated agricultural land, meadows, mixed forests, as well as sparse communities of soft and hardwood alluvial forests and wetland habitats (e.g. oxbow lakes). The area is mainly used mainly for haymaking, forestry, hunting and recreational activities (tourism, cycling, sport fishing). It is an important area for breeding and migrating water birds and other bird species that use riverine habitats, as well as birds of prey. Moreover, it is an important roosting area for migrating geese. The main threats to the area include agricultural intensification and an increase in recreational activities.

*Species:* The Záhorské pomoravie SPA (originally proposed with the name Morava SPA / Morava IBA) is one of the 5 most important areas for the following breeding bird species in Slovakia: *Porzana porzana*, *Botaurus stellaris*, *Milvus milvus*, *Falco cherrug*, *Milvus migrans* and *Ixobrychus minutus*. The site supports more than 20,000 individuals of several geese *Anser* sp. during the winter season. More than 1% of national populations of the bird species: *Alcedo atthis*, *Ficedula albicollis*, *Circus aeruginosus*, *Ciconia ciconia* and *Sterna hirundo* nest in the area.

The area is used primarily for agricultural hay production, forestry, hunting and recreational use (hiking, cycling, sport fishing).

All measures relating to nature protection are undertaken by the Administration of the Protected Landscape Area Záhorské pomoravie table (State Nature Conservation of Slovakia, SNC) in accordance with the Management Plan for the SPA Záhorské Pomoravie. The Záhorské Pomoravie SPA Management Plan was approved in mid 2005. The financing and implementation of this plan is the responsibility of the SNC of Slovakia.

Activities carried out under the framework of this project are not included in the Záhorské Pomoravie SPA Management Plan, as it was approved after the project was developed.

Some key management challenges include (as described in the Záhorské Pomoravie SPA Management Plan):

- Conservation, including restoration of extensive management practices
- Grassland protection and management, avoiding the introduction of invasive alien species
- Management of gravel dredging
- Preventing damage to wetland habitats, illegal burning, chemical treatments, and uncontrolled grazing

The status of national populations of the 19 bird species, for which Záhorské Pomoravie has been designated as an SPA, is diverse. Some of them are nationally critically endangered and only have a few breeding pairs, others are widespread and face a low threat status. From this point of view the 19 qualifying species of the Záhorské Pomoravie SPA can be divided into 3 groups:

#### **Priority species**

*Milvus milvus, Milvus migrans, Falco cherrug, Porzana porzana, Botaurus stellaris, Luscinia svecica*

#### **Important species**

*Tringa totanus, Crex crex, Ciconia ciconia, Ciconia nigra, Sterna hirundo, Ixobrychus minutus, Circus aeruginosus, Alcedo atthis, Caprimulgus europaeus, Lullula arborea, Riparia riparia*

#### **Widespread (common) species**

*Dryocopus martius, Dendrocopos medius*

#### **Contact person**

Name: Irena Zajíčková

Organisation: SOS/BirdLife Slovakia

Address: Mlynské nivy 41, 821 09 Bratislava

Tel:00421 2 4221 5895

Email: [zajickova@vtaky.sk](mailto:zajickova@vtaky.sk)

## **INFORMATION ON EU FUNDS USED**

The original intention of SOS/BirdLife Slovakia was not to develop activities to directly improve the status of SPA Záhorské pomoravie, but rather to increase the general public's awareness of nature protection.

This SPA is a very important area in Slovakia because of the many interesting species found in the Moravia wet meadows. SOS/BirdLife Slovakia recognised that it presented a unique opportunity for starting activities which had not been undertaken previously. Its Austrian partner had similar experiences of guiding in the SPA on the Austrian side of the border, which SOS/BirdLife Slovakia could base their own activities on. This type of environmental education was found to be innovative and motivated people.

The main objective of the INTERREG IIIA initiative was to improve cross-border cooperation among neighbouring countries. The programme focuses on developing cross-border economic and social centres through common strategies for sustainable urban development. The programme was co-financed with ERDF funds.

**European Fund used**

Interreg III A Programme AT – SK

**Number of the project**

14150200004

**Contractor, Beneficiary**

SOS/BirdLife Slovakia  
Mlnyské nivy 41  
821 09 Bratislava  
Slovakia

**Project leader:**

Marek Brinzik 06/2006 – 06/2007, +421 904 307 946, brinzik@vtaky.sk  
Alexandra Novotna 07/2007 – 01/2008, +421 908 995 071, novotna@vtaky.sk

**Partner**

Region March Thaya Auen  
Rathausplatz 1  
2273 Hohenau an der March  
Austria  
Contact: +43 (0) 2535/ 31 161, info@marchthayaauen.at

**Overall Budget**

€32,595.85 EUR (total project budget)

**Money from the EU:**

€75,789.27

**Organizations which provided match funds:**

Slovak Republic – €37,025.26  
SOS/BirdLife Slovakia – €4,113.92  
Region March Thaya Auen and Austria – €15,667.40

**INFORMATION ON THE EU FUNDED PROJECT**

The main goal of the project was to develop eco-tourism activities in protected areas in Zahorie (Morava flood-plain area) region, including:

1. Development of sustainable guiding services and ecotourism programmes in the March-Thaya region.
2. Raising awareness of nature conservation and its importance (promoting nature conservation values, offering excursions for the public, producing information brochures and leaflets etc.).
3. Support for and cooperation with traditional craftsmen and traditional culture (developing traditional crafts as part of the ecotourism infrastructure).
4. Promotion of healthy living in the region.

The project was undertaken between June 2006 and January 2008. The two partner organizations SOS/BirdLife Slovakia and Region March Thaya Auen were responsible for undertaking activities on both sides of the border. Some of the activities were similar to others

that had previously been undertaken in Austria related to bird ecotourism. The current project includes the following activities and measures:

### **1. Ecotourism excursions**

The following 10 excursions were prepared: (1. Birds of Devinska Kobyla – half day hike; 2. The White stork, King of Marchegg – half day hike; 3. Canoeing down the River Morava – 1 day canoe tour; 4. Exploring the Countryside of Sastin – half day hike; 5. Adamov, a Waterfowl Paradise – half day hike; 6. Donau Auen, Miracles of Nature on the Danube – 1 day hike; 7. The Mysterious Land of Plavs – half day hike; 8. Canoeing down the River Morava 2 – 1 day canoe tour; 9. The Morava River Floodplain by Bike – half day bike tour; and 10. Exploring the Countryside of Skalica – half day hike / bike tour.

### **2. Cooperation with individuals and organisations**

To implement the project successfully, it was estimated that it would be necessary to cooperate with around 20 organisations from both the Slovak and Austrian parts of the region. The project ended up involving the following 19 organisations: Bicyba – Bicycle Bratislava, Daphne – ekocentrum, TIC Devínska Nová Ves, TIC Skalica, town Skalica, Sekulská ceramics, The State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic – SPA Záhorie, March Thaya Auen (AT), Auring (AT), NP Donau Auen (AT), Pedagogical-methodology centre, Bratislava Regional Administration, Trnava Regional Administration, Bratislava Culture and Information Association, Sekule village, Moravský Sv. Ján village, Šaštín – Stráže town, The First Shipping Company - Baťov kanál, and the Nature School in Moravský Sv. Ján, IC Pezinok.

### **3. Training for ecotourism guides**

8 Slovak guides were trained in 10 training events. The training programmes covered the following topics: Psychology and Safety in Canoes, Guide to Canoeing, History and Ethnography, Ornithology and History of Slovakia, Ornithology, Zoology and History in Austria, Botany and Historical Monuments in Slovakia, Nature Protection, Viticulture in Slovakia, Geography, Rules of Eco-tourism and Eco-tourism Marketing, Ethnography and Folk Crafts in Slovakia and History and Culture in Austria.

### **4. Printing of handbook for guides**

A handbook for guides was developed providing descriptions and additional information on all of the excursions.

### **5. Erection of information boards**

To provide general information, 8 information boards were erected, at strategic places to attract the highest concentration of visitors. Each information board focused on one topic, including the natural environment of the Záhorie Region, eco tours, the Bata canal, fishing in Skalica, Skalica vineyards and folk crafts.

### **6. Marketing of the excursions**

The excursions were promoted through 2 leaflets containing key information about the excursions and promotional brochures. 15,000 copies of the leaflets and 5,000 copies of the promotional brochures were printed. 10 promotional excursions were undertaken for different target groups (e.g. school teachers from the region, representatives from regional development authorities and others). The total number of excursions undertaken was 172.

### **7. Excursions for schools, teachers, and other stakeholders of chosen regions**

In total 14 free excursions were organised for interested members of the public. They were organised on request after the marketing campaign, and were attended by a total of 456 people interested in nature.

### **8. Guiding service for the public**

This activity was promoted during the project and is still continuing now that the project has finished.

### **9. Marketing for the next season**

This activity began during the project and is still continuing although the project has now finished.

### **10. Teambuilding seminar for guides**

A teambuilding seminar was organised for all guides and project team members at the end of the project.

Some innovative or best practice / demonstration activities worth highlighting are :

- Birdwatching / nature canoe trips, which had not been undertaken before in western Slovakia.
- Cooperation between NGO's and small craftsmen and local small and medium enterprises.
- Training of special Ecotourism Guides.
- Creating examples of local and regional sustainable development which respects natural values and doesn't require large investments.
- Connecting nature conservation and business activities (not widespread in Slovakia so far).

The project contributed to the conservation objectives of the site, as defined in the Development Strategy for the Bratislava region, the Programme of Economic and Social Development for the Trnava region and in the SPA Záhorské pomoravie<sup>11</sup> Management Plan with some activities, including:

- Development of low impact sustainable tourism, and
- Promotion of the sites natural value to increase understanding of the valuable services and opportunities it provides to the whole region.

Small local businesses (restaurants, B&B's etc) were promoted with support from municipalities in the region. The most significant cooperation was established with traditional craftsman of Sekulská ceramics, who were featured in the excursions. Skalica town municipality and the First Shipping Company contributed to the implementation of canoe trips in their region.

The first season result of the project ran from May – October 2008. The profit made from the excursions was not enough to cover all of the costs incurred, e.g. advertising costs. Based on the results, however, it is expected that in future the excursions will become fully self-sufficient (as the cost of undertaking the excursions in 2008 was 65,000 Slovak crowns (SKK) and the earnings were 50,000 SKK and it is expected that the income will rise to over 65,000 in 2009).

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<sup>11</sup> *Strategy of development in the Bratislava region*: strategic aims include: 4. Development of tourism – Priority of this aim: 1. Preservation of cultural, historical and nature heritage and 5. Nature conservation – Priority of this aim: 4. Environmental education

*Programme of economic and social development in the Trnava region*: Measure 5.2.1.4. Conservation, improvement and restoration of environment, includes the activities “building of information, education and consultancy centres oriented for nature conservation” and “building of infrastructure in SPAs”.

*Management Plan of SPA Záhorské pomoravie*: Operative aim 4.2.9. Improve the ecological awareness of the population.

One of the success factors of the project was that there was a clear goal and vision for its implementation. The project proposal was innovative for this region although it included activities that had proven to be successful elsewhere. Experienced staff and favourable cooperation from municipalities and small businesses, contributed to the overall project success.

The added value of the project at the European level was the presentation of the concept of nature conservation in a relatively new Member State, where environmental awareness has not yet developed to the same level as in Western Europe. The main lesson learned from the implementation of the project is the need for local cooperation and an understanding of local conditions. Promoting natural values in need of protection and the local benefits that arise from them without creating unnecessary conflicts is an approach that could feasibly be used in other similar regions.

## **GENERAL PROJECT BENEFITS**

### **Conservation benefits**

A professional guiding service for the benefit of the public is important both for raising environmental awareness as well as for increasing the popularity of nature conservation. A skilled team of nature guides is capable of organising many tours, catering for thousands of visitors per season.

The project did not focus directly on ecosystem management, but it certainly was beneficial in terms of increasing understanding of the Morava River and its flooded meadows, and the relationship between people and nature. During the trips, participants formed a more positive relationship towards the plants, animals and other aspects of the ecosystems. At the same time, information was disseminated regarding possible threats to the species and the need for the sustainable use of natural resources. The personal experiences of the excursion participants will certainly affect their behaviour in relation to nature conservation and could have a positive impact on decisions to use natural resources in other regions as well.

### **Economic benefits**

Within the project, all public excursions were provided for free. Currently SOS/BirdLife Slovakia is able to offer 10 professionally prepared excursions in the Zahorie region. Any profits will be used to support other ecotourism activities and nature conservation. Other indirect economic benefits are the additional income for local craftsmen, restaurants and guest houses from the eco-tour participants.

### **Social benefits**

The professional guiding service provided to the public is important both for raising environmental awareness and for increasing the popularity of nature conservation. Eco-tours and other events undertaken by SOS/BirdLife Slovakia enrich the social life and leisure activities available in the Zahorie region.

## **EVALUATION AND LESSONS LEARNT**

Following the project's success, two similar proposals were submitted, and a third is currently being developed. Fortunately, the priorities and conditions of the new programming period 2007 - 2013 are quite similar to those of the previous period 2004 – 2006, so it is possible to continue with this type of project. Similar activities are planned to take place not only near to

the Slovakia - Austrian border, but also in the Slovak - Poland and Slovak - Hungarian border regions.

This project illustrates the need to communicate the real benefits that Natura 2000 sites can bring to a local community and their role in delivering ecosystem services, such as recreation, in new Member States.

The conditions for project implementation were clearly established, however, the budgetary reporting conditions were less clear and changed repeatedly throughout the project's duration (e.g. originally just an invoice for office rent was needed, but several months later the rental contracts were also requested).

Moreover, in the programming period 2007 - 2013 the deadline of the call for proposals was moved from January 2009 to March 2009. This will make it challenging to ensure the continuity of the project through to a second phase.

Some possible recommendations to improve the ERDF EU funding line are to:

- Speed up the cash flow or offer a pre-financing grant.
- Keep the same clear and fixed rules in relation to project financing, from start to finish.

In 2008, SVS / BirdLife Switzerland supported the expansion of this project into a new area. Currently (January 2008) a new project has been prepared to extend this idea into other Slovakian regions (e.g. in the Small Carpathian mountains), and possible funding sources are being explored to support its implementation.

## 10 THE SLOVENIAN NATURA 2000 SITE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME 2007-2013

### Slovenia

Name of the financed project / measure	Type of financing	Total sum 2007-13 in €(Millions)	Amount %	Main benefits / innovative characteristic of the project
The national programme for managing Natura 2000 sites in Slovenia for 2007-2013  <b>Note: based on planned allocations only</b>	National budget	52,5	35.7%	The case study is an unique EU example of systematic coordination between national sectoral authorities leading to an adoption of a systematic approach at the national level to implement the 2007-2013 integrated funding model for Natura 2000 (i.e. using several available EU funds).
	Structural funds (ERDF)	57,3	39.0%	
	Rural development	21	14.3%	
	LIFE +	16,1	11%	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>146,9</b>	<b>100%</b>	However, it is still too early to evaluate the outcomes and success of this approach.

### SUMMARY

Slovenia has the highest terrestrial coverage of Natura 2000 sites amongst the 27 EU Member States, 35.5%, most of which is covered by forests (71% of the Slovenian Natura 2000 network). To ensure adequate management of these areas, the Natura 2000 Site Management Programme 2007-2013 was adopted by the Slovenian Government in 2007. This Operational Programme was developed using national funding during 2.5 years, allowing for intensive consultation, and

- Defines the Natura 2000 conservation objectives and measures to achieve them,
- Identifies the competent sectors and their related management plans and who is responsible for implementation,
- Enables horizontal links to be made to other strategic plans and Government development programmes,
- Identifies financial resources, and
- Attempts to use local and regional development opportunities linked to Natura 2000, and lists key research gaps.

Funding sources for the implementation of this programme include the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) , the Rural Development Programme, LIFE+ and national funds. This case demonstrates a nationally planned approach to use different EU co-funding sources to finance Natura 2000, a concrete example of how to implement the integrated option.

**Note:** The case study is based on planned budget allocations only and it is still too early to estimate the success of the planned allocations in practise.

## NATURA 2000 SITES

### Description of the Slovenian Natura 2000 network

Slovenia has designated 286 Natura 2000 sites, 260 according to the Habitats Directive (pSCI) and 26 according to the Birds Directive (SPA). SPA's cover 461,819 ha or 22.8% of the country. SCI's<sup>12</sup> cover 639,735 ha or 31.5% of the country. In total, the sites encompass 720,288 ha or 35.5% of the country, which is the highest (terrestrial) coverage in the EU.

**Table: Natura 2000 surface in Slovenia**

Type of site	Coverage (ha)	% of national territory
Sites of Community Interest (Habitats Directive)	639,735	31.5
Special Protection Areas (Wild Birds Directive)	461,819	22.8
Natura 2000 sites (SCI + SPA)	720,288	35.5

**Table: Terrestrial coverage of the Slovenian Natura 2000 network**

Land use type	Cover of Natura network (ha)	Area of Natura network %	Area of Slovenia %
Forests	508,300	70.6	25.1
Agricultural land (used and non-used)	159,100	22.1	7.9
Open land (e.g. mountains above tree line)	33,400	4.6	1.6
Other land use types	19,490	2.7	1.0
Total	720,290	100	35.6

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<sup>12</sup> Proposed SCI's have already been adopted by the Commission as SCI's, therefore the abbreviation SCI is used throughout the text.



**Map of the Slovenian Natura2000 network (in red).**

Forests cover 71% of Slovenia's Natura 2000 network, a figure which is around 15% higher than the European average and shows that, in general, they are in good condition. In spite of this, some forest types, particularly the lowland floodplain forest, have been considerably disturbed in the past and their condition, therefore, is not considered favourable. Regarding non-forest areas in the Natura 2000 network, around 20% are classified as in-use agricultural areas, the most important amongst them being extensive meadows. In many areas their condition is good or exceptional compared to other EU Member States. However, the pressures threatening their exceptional status are great, they are suffering either because of land abandonment and/or from intensification. Caves play an extremely important role in the Natura 2000 network, as they are subject to conservation in more than 70 areas (out of a total of 260). Continental waters represent just over 1% of the total area of the network, but their importance to the overall condition of the network is nevertheless vital. A large part of our waters are not in an outstanding conservation status. Furthermore, human dwellings are important for the reproduction, staging and hibernation of certain species, hence built-up areas are also an essential part of the Natura 2000 network. This particularly concerns bird (e.g. White Stork, Eurasian Scops Owl) and mammal (e.g. Bat) species.

**Table: Habitat types and species of Community interest in Slovenia**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Species and habitats of Community Interest recorded in SI</b>	<b>Species and habitats with recent and permanent surface /population in SI (for which Natura 2000 sites have been designated)</b>
<b>Habitat types</b>	61	56
<b>Mammals</b>	18	16
<b>Herpetofauna</b>	12	8
<b>Fish</b>	34	27
<b>Invertebrates</b>	42	33
<b>Plants</b>	34	27
<b>Birds</b>	210	105 / 43

### **Current management status and major management challenges**

The basic act establishing an integrated system of nature conservation, including ways and means of designating, conserving and managing the Natura 2000 network in Slovenia, is the Nature Conservation Act (Official Gazette RS, No. 96/04 – official consolidated version and 61/06 – ZDru-1; hereinafter: ZON). The fundamental planning document for the management of the Natura 2000 network is the *Natura 2000 site management programme 2007-2013*, adopted by the government in 2007. ZON states that measures to achieve the conservation of Natura 2000 sites are defined on the basis of a special management programme that is to be adopted by the government in the form of an operational environmental protection programme, the content of which, as well as the adoption process, are defined in the Environmental Protection Act and in the Resolution on the National Environmental Action Plan 2005–2012. When the government adopted this operational programme (Natura 2000 management programme), it also decided that the obligations are relevant to nature conservation, water management, natural resource use (forestry, hunting, fishing) and regional development, apart from responsibilities that lie with local communities and for research. A similar decision was already taken for agriculture, when the Rural Development Plan 2007-2013 was adopted. The management programme identifies conservation objectives and measures to achieve these objectives (protection measures) at Natura sites, as well as identifying who is responsible for their implementation and the financial resources necessary.

Protection measures are defined, taking into account the characteristics of the Natura site, including the socio-demographic, economic and cultural features, their actual situation in an ecosystem, and any existing or anticipated factors that could endanger them.

Protection measures include:

- 1) Nature protection measures;
- 2) Measures of modified use of natural resources to achieve conservation objectives;
- 3) Measures of modified agricultural practice to achieve conservation objectives;
- 4) Water management measures to achieve conservation objectives; and
- 5) Other measures, should they prove necessary for the creation of a favourable status of plant and animal species and habitat types.

### **Nature protection measures**

About 25% of the Natura 2000 network is designated as nationally protected areas. The provisions of individual protection regimes for specific protected areas may also be relevant measures for achieving Natura 2000 conservation objectives. All such provisions have been identified and underlined as nature conservation measures important for achieving Natura 2000 conservation objectives. In Annex 4.2 of the Natura 2000 site management programme 2007-2013 it may therefore be indicated that a measure is already being implemented due to existing protection or existing temporary protection. When a protection instrument stipulates that a management plan for the protected area is obligatory, this is largely understood to be an additional input for achieving the detailed conservation objective. In such cases, the measure also includes consideration of the drafting of a management plan, as a protection measure for the Natura 2000 site.

An additional 10% of the Natura 2000 network is planned for designation as national protected areas until 2012. This involves drafting and adopting an act on a protected area, which may additionally contribute to achieving the detailed conservation objective, by laying down protection regimes and by appointing a manager to implement proactive measures and investments.

The next set of nature protection measures constitutes contractual protection and stewardship. The programme lists planned contractual protection or stewardship measures on the site for the period 2007–2013.

**Table: Overview of planned nature conservation measures**

<b>Type of nature conservation measure</b>	<b>Number of sites with planned measures, to be implemented by the protected area manager</b>	<b>Number of sites with planned measures, to be implemented by the Ministry of the Environment</b>
Stewardship of caves		at least 33
Contractual protection or stewardship	7	53
Contractual protection of land in agricultural use	2 (1,200 ha)	
Designation	6	18

### **Measures of modified use of natural resources to achieve conservation objectives**

The most widely applied management of Natura 2000 sites relies on a modified use of natural resources (forestry, hunting and fishery) serving to achieve Natura 2000 conservation objectives. A detailed protection policy from the Natura 2000 site management programme is firstly included in the legally binding nature conservation guidelines, prepared by the public Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation (IRSNC) in accordance with ZON. Subsequently, in accordance with the provisions of Article 97 of ZON, they have to be included into the natural resource management plan, by which the policies of the plan, in accordance with sectoral legislation, are more precisely defined or transposed into measures. The framework for the implementation of these measures is also laid down in the forestry, hunting and fishery legislation. Forestry legislation in particular, provides for the planning of all forests regardless as to whether they lie within or outside of Natura 2000 sites and prescribed management is obligatory for every forest owner. Forest management plans are prepared by the Slovenian Forestry Service and adopted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food and Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning. Natura 2000 site measures are incorporated into these plans and the implementation of all necessary measures for ensuring the favourable status of forest habitat types and species bound to forest ecosystems, is done through forest management plans. A similar system of management plans exists for hunting (prepared also by the Slovenian Forestry Service and adopted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food and Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning) and fisheries (prepared by public Fisheries Research Institute of Slovenia and adopted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food and Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning), where prescribed management is obligatory for legal persons who have hunting or fishing management rights.

The forest, hunting and fishery management plans are as a minimum requirement, based on the detailed protection measures or policies from Annex 4.2 of the Natura 2000 management programme, but in the majority of cases also include the more precisely determined policies and measures stated in the nature protection guidelines. Guidelines may include other content (policies) necessary to achieve the detailed conservation objective.

### **Measures of modified agricultural practices to achieve conservation objectives**

In accordance with the regulations in force, the sustainable use of agricultural land is not regulated through the adoption of appropriate management plans. For farmland, the most important way of applying agricultural activity to individual farming models is based on appropriate programmes under the framework of the financial incentives of the EU Common Agricultural Policy. The most important are the Axis 2 agri-environmental measures of the 2007–2013 RDP. Already between 2004 and 2006, agri-environmental measures were the most widespread method used to achieve conservation objectives.

In large parts of the country, farming is based on grasslands because of climate. In the past, agriculture was abandoned in many of these areas and grasslands were left subject to natural succession (afforestation). Here, objectives to preserve farming in the area are fully compatible with nature conservation objectives. Therefore any agri-environmental measures which, through their requirements, ensure the conservation of permanent grasslands, also achieve conservation objectives (namely 214-I/7 Organic farming – Permanent grassland (EK T), 214-I/7 Organic farming – orchards (EK SD), 214-II/1 Alpine grazing (PP or PPP), 214-II/2 Steep meadow cutting (S35 or S50), 214-II/3 Hummocky meadow cutting (GRB), 214-

II/4 Meadow orchards (TSA), 214-II/7 Sustainable domestic animal husbandry (REJ), and 214-II/8 Conservation of extensive grassland (ETA).

Agriculture in many lowland areas of the country has been intensified, and in some places intensification is still continuing. Objectives to preserve farming in the area are therefore only partly compatible with nature conservation objectives. In these areas special Natura 2000 agri-environmental measures have been designed (two in the RDP 2004-2006 and five in the RDP 2007-2013), namely 214-III/2 Conservation of special grassland habitats (HAB), 214-III/3 Conservation of grassland habitats of butterflies (MET), 214-III/4 Conservation of litter meadows (STE), and 214-III/5 Provision of favourable status of populations of threatened bird species and humid grassland habitats (VTR).

The Natura 2000 management programme includes measures of modified agricultural use which ensure an outstanding conservation status of species and habitats. Funds from the RDP have been allocated to its implementation in the respective period.

**Table: Targets for participation in agri-environmental measures**

<b>Group of agri-environmental measures</b>	<b>Status in 2005 (surface area in ha)<sup>13</sup></b>	<b>Objective for 2010</b>	<b>Objective for 2013</b>
Conservation of permanent grasslands	18,920	20,800	26,330
HAB/VTR	1,110	1,570	2,900
MET	750	1,580	3,030
STE	20	230	460

In the areas of the meadow zones where physical conditions prevent overgrowth (e.g. above the timber line), modified agricultural use is not necessary. The method of ensuring modified agricultural use on state-owned land within the protected areas may also be based on an agreement between the Farmland and Forest Fund of the Republic of Slovenia and the ministry responsible for nature protection or the protected area.

In 2005, there was more than 50,000 ha of land on Natura 2000 sites which still existed as meadows or had existed as meadows in the recent past and are not subject to active agricultural use (i.e. they receive no state support). Overgrowth of vegetation from succession is already appearing in these areas. The ecological requirements of species for which these areas have been designated dictate that they only represent their habitats until succession has completed. On many Natura 2000 sites, properly modified agricultural use of these lands may provide for a favourable status of species and habitats. The majority of this land is to be found in areas which are also designated as Less Favoured Areas (LFA). Consequently, their restoration depends on the availability of funding for LFA payments within the 2007–2013 RDP, for which reason the framework for applying for these measures is limited to less than 10,000 ha collectively by 2013.

<sup>13</sup> in cases where the type of measure did not exist in RDP 2004-2006, the surface area of other related Natura 2000 targeted measures is taken

## **Water management measures**

Water management is important for conserving biodiversity and achieving a favourable condition of habitats and species within the Natura 2000 sites. 110 species and habitat types depend on water management to reach favourable conservation status (including bird species for which wintering sites are designated according to Ramsar and Birdlife criteria). These are species which spend part of their annual or life cycle in or near water for reproduction, feeding or overwintering, and habitat types bound to the constant presence of (underground or surface) water. According to the timetable laid down by the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC, a Water Management Plan for the Danube and Adriatic watersheds (WMP), with a programme of measures and other implementing regulations will be adopted in 2009. Therefore, in relation to water management, the Natura 2000 management programme only outlines a framework of environmental requirements of species or habitat types. This framework will be integrated into the relevant parts of the WMPs by applying nature protection guidelines, as in the text of the detailed protection policy, to achieve detailed conservation objectives in water management. The abovementioned plans include the WMP and the programme of measures; where detailed WMPs are adopted, the latter are also taken into account.

## **Other measures**

Other measures necessary to achieving a favourable status of plant and animal species and habitat types, particularly refer to regional and tourism development, status monitoring, communication, education and training.

The sustainable development of regions and the development of tourism and other entrepreneurial opportunities are connected to sustainable biodiversity management, including marketing and providing long-term biodiversity conservation. Sustainable development opportunities offered by the Natura 2000 sites in Slovenia, formed the basis of a list of necessary investments and services adopted as a part of the Natura 2000 management programme. Investments and services are primarily centred on the existing protected areas, which may include Natura 2000 sites and where a manager has already been appointed, and on the planned protected areas whose managers will be appointed when the Natura 2000 management programme is underway. The first set lists the national programme of investments and services tied to the development of park infrastructure for the advancement of tourism in protected areas. Part of these investments may, in accordance with the resources available for these purposes, be co-financed within the framework of the Natura 2000 management programme for Strengthening Regional Development Potential: development priority 3.5.3 *Linking natural and cultural potential, and priority policy 3.5.3.1 Increasing the competitiveness of the tourist economy*. The second set contains project proposals (types of investments and services) that may contribute to the conservation of Natura 2000 sites and increase their potential for tourism and regional development. This is meant for local communities or their authorised institutions that are eligible to apply for structural funds within the framework of the Natura 2000 management programme for Strengthening Regional Development Potential, programme 3.5.4 *Development of regions*. Projects are endorsed by regional councils.

An analysis prepared under the National Capacity Self Assessment project under UNDP<sup>14</sup> shows a chronic lack of coordination of information on the status and trends of biodiversity, as well as on the ecology and biology of species and their vegetation. Even more apparent is the lack of synthesis of information, or monitoring over long time periods. To increase the number of research projects concerning the status and trends of biodiversity, as well as the ecology and biology of species and their vegetation, and to make an effective contribution to enhancing the information system for biodiversity conservation, the Natura 2000 management programme outlines research activities that are indispensable to improving knowledge of the ecology of plant and animal species and habitat types (in Annex 4.4). This annex will be taken into account in the allocation of funds for research programmes and projects, target research projects and other appropriate programmes.

For some species and habitat types in individual areas, no measures to achieve detailed conservation objectives could have been proposed on the basis of the existing resources, nor could any detailed conservation objectives have been set. Such species and habitat types are listed in Annex 4.7 and for these, small, highly targeted research studies should first be undertaken, the results of which will subsequently be used in the next revision of the management programme or in the drafting of a new management programme.

In relation to monitoring the conservation status of habitats and species the Natura 2000 management programme provides a detailed account of the animal and plant species and habitat types subject to conservation on Natura 2000 sites. ZON already stipulates that the body responsible for implementation is IRSNC, which undertakes, as one of its public service functions, monitoring of the status of biodiversity. The service is funded by financial resources which have not been addressed specially under the management programme. Certain types of monitoring activities are already underway, and the financial resources for them have already been approved. Under the new EU Financial Perspectives, the EU LIFE+ financial instrument has become available which, even more directly than in the past, will support the establishment of new monitoring schemes.

## **FUNDING INFORMATION**

Financial resources for Natura 2000 management may vary considerably with regard to the type of nature protection measures. A major set of measures is carried out through the drafting and adoption of acts, accompanied by administrative costs for the existing public administration. Within nature protection measures, these costs particularly include:

- Establishment of new protected areas;
- Adoption of management plans for protected areas;
- Granting of concessions for permitted cave use;
- Drafting and signing of contracts on protection or stewardship; and
- Adoption of other regulations (viewing and visiting restrictions and restriction of activities threatening protected animal species).

Within other measures, administrative costs relate to:

- Preparation of projects for the implementation of investments from Annex 4.6, which is the responsibility of the protected area manager;
- Monitoring the conservation status of species and habitats (including, among other matters, monitoring the status of plant and animal species, their habitats,

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.rec-lj.si/projekti/NCSA/Porocila.htm>

habitat types and special protected areas) and database management, performed as a public function by the IRSNC; and,

- Communication performed in the context of their duties by the MESP, IRSNC, managers of the protected areas, Agricultural Advisory Service within the Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia (hereinafter: CAFS) and the Slovenian Forest Service (hereinafter referred to SFS).

Such cases also mean continued implementation of the existing measures where financial resources already are provided under the main programme 1505 – Assistance and Support to Nature Conservation, under several budgetary items. Under the budget of this programme, €7,579,368 was provided in 2007 and €6,483,223 in 2008 under items connected to the implementation of measures under this Natura 2000 management programme (all items, except for items 2303 Biotechnology and 6169 ZSPJS implementation funds – public institutions).

Cave-related measures normally require no intervention. Measures of cave protection and permitted use (according to cave status permits) to achieving conservation objectives, as well as the method of their inclusion in cave management, are defined under the framework of measures stipulated under ZON and ZVPJ. In such cases financial resources are unnecessary and therefore not indicated.

Other costs for the implementation of nature protection measures and other measures are largely connected to the activities mentioned below.

In the case of successful applications, funds for the implementation of investments under Annex 4.6 are envisaged to be found under the framework of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Natura 2000 management programme for Regional Potential Development, as well as sets No. 51 *Promoting biodiversity and nature protection (including Natura 2000)* and 56 *Protection and development of natural heritage*, totalling €7.3 million for the period 2007–2013. This financial framework is also relevant to nature designation measures. Financing is also available under Axes 3 and 4 of the Rural Development Plan (RDP).

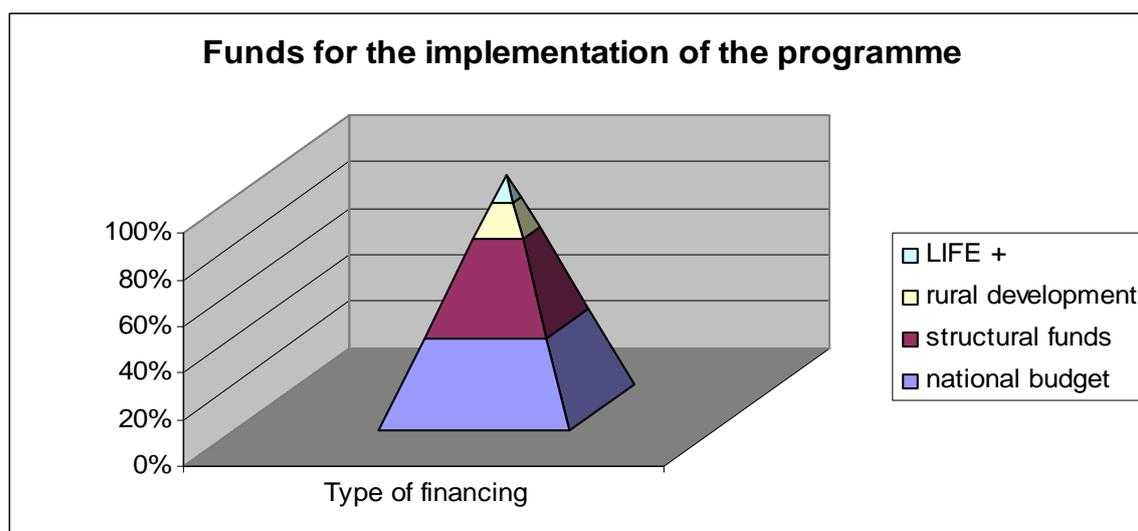
**Table: Funding for participation in agri-environmental measures**

	Status in 2005	Objective for 2010	Objective for 2013
Amount of annual funding for agri-environmental measures in Natura 2000 site zones	€2.4 – 2.7 million	€2.5 – 2.7 million	€3.2 – 3.4 million

To cover the costs arising from increased monitoring of conservation status and implementation of non-administrative nature conservation measures (funds for contractual protection or stewardship, if not subject to structural funds or RDP) and communication, budgetary items of the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning are earmarked for biodiversity conservation and Natura 2000. Particularly important is project funds from the LIFE+ programme which is the largest source available for monitoring nature conservation status and implementing non-administrative nature conservation measures. In Slovenia, LIFE is expected to contribute an additional €2–2.5 million annually to national budgetary funds. RDP funds are allocated for the enforcement of the targets for participation in agri-environmental measures in the respective period.

**Table & figure: Overview of the envisaged budget allocations under the Slovenian Natura 2000 Site Management Programme 2007-2013**

Type of financing	Total sum 2007-13 in € (millions)	%
National budget	52.5	35.7%
Structural funds	57.3	39.0%
Rural development	21	14.3%
LIFE +	16.1	11%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>146.9</b>	<b>100%</b>



## GENERAL PROGRAMME BENEFITS

The basic purpose of the Natura 2000 management programme is to detail the implementation of obligations under *the protection of special protected areas – Natura 2000 sites* for the period 2007–2013, as imposed on Slovenia by the Habitats Directive and Birds Directive (see Chapter 1.1). It also identifies which funding sources will be used to finance the implementation of these measures. Slovenia will thus be able to achieve one of the EU's objectives, namely a favourable conservation status of plant and animal species and habitat types important at the European level. By implementing the operational programme, the Slovenian Government will contribute to attaining sustainable development objectives.

The Natura 2000 management programme describes protection objectives and measures at Natura 2000 sites, as well as the competent sectors and body responsible for implementation of these protection measures. A further goal in this respect is to build horizontal links with strategic plans and development programmes.

The main content and characteristics of the Natura 2000 Site Management Programme in Slovenia are the following:

- 1) **A detailed definition of conservation objectives and measures at Natura 2000 sites**

- define in detail the conservation objectives and measures resulting from publicly available sources of knowledge (e.g. books, articles, reports, databases), to the level of precision permitted by these bases and references;
- define the conservation requirements of each individual Natura site (Annex 4.2) as the key information for stakeholders participating in the conservation of these areas;
- define direct protection measures for management plans for the protected areas;
- define measures of modified use to achieve conservation objectives in:
  - exploitation of natural resources,
  - forest management,
  - agriculture, hunting and fisheries,
  - water management;
- define other measures, should they prove necessary to reach a favourable status of plant and animal species and habitat types.

**2) Designate the competent sectors and body responsible for implementation of protection measures**

The goal of designating competent sectors and identifying who is responsible for implementation of the protection measures is to ensure they are implemented, to delegate responsibility and ensure that implementation of the operational programme can be monitored, and consequently successfully fulfil the objectives.

**3) Enable horizontal links to strategic plans and government development programmes**

- Prepare an overview of **potential development** that complements protection measures, and integrate this into other strategic plans and development programmes for individual regions and for the Slovenian Republic as a whole. This will provide a basis for drawing down EU funds, especially where the obligation to contribute to the conservation of the Natura 2000 network is stipulated as a prerequisite in the European legislation and as the basis for the endorsement of plans and programmes drafted by EU institutions, (particularly the National Strategic Plan for Rural Development, Rural Development Programme, National Strategic Plan for Fisheries Development, Fishery Development Programme, Programme for Drawing LIFE+ Funds, Operational Programmes for Drawing Structural Funds and Regional Development Funds); and,
- Acquire an overview of sustainable development needs on Natura 2000 sites, based on opportunities offered by Natura 2000 sites in Slovenia, and determine a financial framework for financing development projects.

**4) Take advantage of the opportunities offered by Natura 2000 sites for local or regional development, jobs and economic growth, taking into consideration the economic, social and demographic features and principles of sustainable development**

With their characteristics, the Natura 2000 sites contribute to conserving the cultural landscape and harbour potential for sustainable development (a comparative advantage), particularly for local communities with a relatively large proportion lying within the Natura 2000 network. An appropriate regional development policy in these areas could significantly influence high-quality regional development, an objective which is demonstrated through a number of best practice examples throughout the EU.

**5) Prepare an overview of gaps in research projects, expertise and data, to be covered by future research programmes**

High-quality and regularly updated data on animal and plant species and habitat types are a prerequisite for: rapid and educated decision making; evaluating planning and implementation procedures; drawing on EU financial resources; implementing cross compliance; and for drafting status reports and reports on the direction of sectoral

policies. An overview of research projects, therefore provides a basis for prioritising future biological and ecological research projects, as well as for establishing links among research institutions, public and private institutes and non-governmental organisations.

## **EVALUATION AND LESSONS LEARNT**

The Natura 2000 management programme was prepared and adopted in a process that started in 2005 and lasted for two and half years, allowing for intensive consultation. The programme has been prepared for a period of seven years which gives a reasonable amount of time for its implementation. During the preparation process it was important to prepare key content in cooperation with the relevant public services (from the fields of nature conservation, forestry, hunting, fishery, water management and agriculture), ministries and others involved in programmes for the spending of EU funds in the financial period of 2007-2013.

The guiding principle behind the preparation of the programme was that where a threat of significant reduction of the conservation status of a habitat type or species exists, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to avoid or minimize such a threat. On the other hand, knowledge of the state and trends of biodiversity and biology, and the ecology of species and habitat types, definitely contribute to identifying suitable measures for their conservation and provides for the appropriate sustainable use of natural resources. Therefore the first draft outlining conservation objectives, measures to achieve these objectives, and proposed monitoring and research activities, was compiled on the basis of publicly available information, (from the Symbiosis Institute). Quite a large amount of information was pulled together for the Natura 2000 site designation process in 2004. This first draft of the Programme was presented to experts (universities, institutes, and specialist societies), the IRSNC, and protected area managers. Objectives and measures were then modified according to expert opinion on the conservation status of habitat types or species.

The amended, second draft then underwent a consultation process with key participants in its implementation (the Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry – the Agriculture Advisory Service, the Slovenian Forest Service). The proposed measures were modified in respect to their feasibility in the field, especially for very ambitious measures. In this process, support from the LIFE project “Natura 2000 in Slovenia - management models and information systems”, run by IRSNC was very helpful. The draft management programme was also harmonised with national operational programmes prepared for drawing down EU funds, and this step was crucial to the final adoption of the management programme. The final draft programme was made publicly available (via the website of the Ministry for the Environment and Spatial Planning and through two workshops) and then incorporated information from local authorities, NGOs, key participants and public services, before being adopted by the government.

The most important challenge before 2013 is to put into practice sometimes very ambitious protection measures, in order to achieve conservation objectives.

### **Preliminary analysis of the application of the Natura 2000 Management Programme in Slovenia**

One protected area (Ljubljansko barje) has been designated since the adoption of the Natura 2000 management programme. Designation act of Ljubljansko barje landscape park areas has provisions that include some of the measures as defined in the Natura 2000 management programme to achieve conservation objectives of the respective Natura 2000 site. It is

foreseen that the provisions of the management plan for this protected area will include the remaining measures as defined in the Natura 2000 management programme.

Regarding management plans for protected areas, two have been prepared/adopted since the adoption of the Natura 2000 management programme. Management plans for protected areas include measures as defined in the Natura 2000 management programme to achieve conservation objectives of the respective Natura 2000 site, and thus serve as a protection measure for the respective Natura site.

However, there is no information yet on most of the issues related with the implementation of the programme, e.g. the number of sites where contractual protection and stewardship has been implemented by protected area managers or by the ministry, measures of modified use of natural resources serving to achieve conservation objectives, measures of modified agricultural practice serving to achieve conservation objectives and measures of water management serving to achieve conservation objectives, establishment and implementation of monitoring of the animal and plant species and habitat types.

From the first set of necessary investments and services for sustainable development on Natura 2000 sites, based on opportunities offered by the Natura sites in Slovenia, adopted as a part of the Natura 2000 management programme (the national programme of investments and services tied to the development of park infrastructure for the advancement of tourist offers in the protected areas) projects are being prepared to be co-financed within the framework of the Natura 2000 management programme for Strengthening Regional Development Potential: development priority 3.5.3 Linking natural and cultural potential, and priority policy 3.5.3.1 Increasing the competitiveness of the tourist economy. These projects include the development of park infrastructures in the Natura 2000 sites that are protected areas: Triglav National Park, Škocjanski zatok Nature Reserve and Strunjan Landscape Park.

ANNEX I: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR IDENTIFICATION OF GOOD CASES ON  
FINANCING NATURA 2000



## Best practice of Financing Natura 2000

NATURA 2000 PREPARATORY ACTIONS

Lot 1: Financing Natura 2000

Cost estimate and benefits of Natura 2000

ENV.B.2/SER/2007/0076

QUESTIONNAIRE

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### THE NATURA 2000 SITE(S)

Name of the Natura 2000 site(s):

Number of the Natura 2000 site(s):

Country:

Region (if relevant):

Very brief description of the site (or reference where a description can be found in English) (main habitats, species, geographical features):

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### CONTACT PERSON

Contact person who can be contacted to get more information about the provided best practice example:

Name:

Organisation:

Address:

Tel:

e-mail:

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**INFORMATION ON THE EU FUNDS USED**

List of European Union Fund(s) used:

Approximate amount of the EU funds used:

Reference to relevant Operational Programmes, funding lines or schemes (or name of the concrete EU funding project):

Beneficiary (-ies) of the funding programme/funding line/scheme/concrete EU funding project

Duration of the funding programme/funding line/scheme/concrete EU funding project:

Main goal of the funding programme/funding line/scheme/concrete EU funding project:

WEB page of the funding programme/funding line/scheme/concrete EU funding project (if possible):

Short description/summary of the funding programme/funding line/scheme/concrete EU funding project:

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**BENEFITS OF THE FUNDING PROGRAMME/FUNDING LINE/SCHEME/CONCRETE EU FUNDING PROJECT**

a) Conservation benefits:

b) Economic benefits:

c) Social benefits:

d) Ecosystem services:

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**COMMENTS**

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**ANNEX II: LONG LIST OF 27 POSSIBLE GOOD CASES ON FINANCING NATURA 2000**

Country	Case	Origin of the information	Selected
Austria (1)	Great Bustard	consultant Suske Wolfgang	
Austria (2)	Leckermoor	consultant Suske Wolfgang	
Austria (3)	Favourite places	consultant Suske Wolfgang	X
Belgium	La route de Terrils	BirdLife/Zoltan Waliczky	
Denmark	Varde valley	Henrik Lykke Sørensen (MS)	X
France	Aveyron	BirdLife/Zoltan Waliczky	X
Germany (1)	Mannscheider Bachtteil	Biologische Station Euskirchen/Dieter Pasch	
Germany (2)	Bremen - Weser	Christa Ratte	X
Germany (3)	Schleswig Holstein (1)	Christa Ratte	
Germany (4)	Schleswig Holstein 2 (Aukrug)	Christa Ratte	
Germany (5)	Fort Hahnenberg	Peter Torkler	
Greece	Monk seal conservation	WWF's Publication "EU Funding for Environment", 2005	
Hungary	Hevesi sík	MS (consultant Kavran Viktoria)	X
Italy	Puglia Region	BirdLife/Zoltan Waliczky	X
Portugal	Guadiana	WWF MedPO/Miguel Bugalho	
Slovakia	Bratislava region	BirdLife/Zoltan Waliczky	X
Slovenia (1)	Goricko	MS (Juliana Lebez Lozej)	
Slovenia (2)	Julijske Alpe	MS (Juliana Lebez Lozej)	
Slovenia (3)	Škocjanski zatok	MS (Juliana Lebez Lozej)	
Slovenia (4)	Natura 2000 Management Programme	MS (Andrej Bibič)	X
Spain (1)	Isla de Tenerife, Canary Islands	WWF Spain	X
Spain (2)	Monfragüe, Extremadura	WWF Spain	
Spain (3)	Cabo Cope, Murcia	WWF Spain	
Spain (4) (also PT)	Madeira/Canarias	WWF Spain	
Spain (5)	Peñalara, Madrid	WWF Spain	
Spain (6)	Guadamar, Andalucia	WWF's Publication "EU Funding for Environment", 2005	
United Kingdom (1)	Restoring Beckingham Marshes	BirdLife/Zoltan Waliczky	
United Kingdom (2)	Berrwyn	BirdLife/Zoltan Waliczky	
United Kingdom (3)	Arran	MS (Wyn Jones)	X

## ANNEX III: THE FORMAT GUIDANCE THAT WAS PROVIDED TO THE AUTHORS OF THE INDIVIDUAL CASES.



### **Best practice of Financing Natura 2000**

NATURA 2000 PREPARATORY ACTIONS

Lot 1: Financing Natura 2000

Cost estimate and benefits of Natura 2000

ENV.B.2/SER/2007/0076

#### **FORMAT GUIDANCE for the Best Practices**

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#### **EXPECTED PRODUCTS – BASIC FEATURES**

1. **1 Report** in MS Word (doc): approximately 7-10 pages of text, in English language, reviewed by a native speaker, including all relevant information as described below
2. **5-10 Pictures** in digital format (jpg or others): characteristics described below
3. **1 Presentation** in MS PowerPoint format (ppt): characteristics as described below

#### **THE REPORT – Basic information it should include**

##### *THE NATURA 2000 SITE(S)*

- Country
- Region (if relevant)
- Name of the Natura 2000 site(s)
- Number of the Natura 2000 site(s)
- Description of the site (including main habitats, species, geographical features)
- Current status of the management (Existence of management plan and short overview of needed management measures)
- Major challenges for management, i.e. main challenges to achieve a good conservation status of the habitats and species which you can find in the Natura 2000 site

##### *INFORMATION ON THE EU FUND(S) USED*

++If there is more than one EU fund involved, please provide the relevant information for each fund separately++

- Which European Fund(s) has been used? Please provide a reference to the national operational programme(s)
- Number of the project(s)
- Who was the contractor and beneficiaries of the project (organization, address, name of the project leader, telephone, e-mail)
- Who were the project partners (if any)
- How much was the overall budget of the project(s)
- How much money has been provided by the EU
- Which organization(s) have covered the matching funds and how big was the contribution of each organization

#### *INFORMATION ON THE EU FUNDING PROJECT*

- Main goal of the project
- Duration of the EU funding project
- Short description/summary of the project and if possible links (web-page) of the project
- Detailed description of the funded activities and measures, including their impact on the site
- Which 5 actions would you specifically highlight as “innovative or best practice / demonstrative”
- How the project/measure has contributed to the conservation objectives of the site?
- Have local people been involved in the project – if yes who and how (farmers, enterprises, other stakeholders)
- Has the project helped you in securing the continuation of funding also in the long run, i.e. after the termination of the project?
- According to you, what might have been the factors making your project successful in being funded from the EU fund(s) in question?
- According to you, what was the added value of the project at the European level:

#### *BENEFITS OF THE EU FUNDING PROJECT*

- Please provide a list of the different benefits of the project
  - a) Conservation benefits
  - b) Economic benefits
  - c) Social benefits
  - d) Ecosystem services

#### *EVALUATION AND LESSONS LEARNED OF THE EU FUNDING PROJECT:*

- Would you submit another proposal under the same/similar funding line? If yes, why? If no, why?
- What are your recommendations to improve the EU funding line which you have used?
- Any further ideas, comments or recommendations?

## **THE PICTURES – Basic format**

*5-10 photographs in digital format, with the following characteristics:*

- From the area or region/country N2K sites
- From nature and from people
- Relevant to the site or the issue
- Including caption (short description) and author
- Good artistic quality
- Minimum 320 dpi

## **THE PRESENTATION – Basic format**

*A digital presentation (ppt format) with 3 slides:*

- Based on the information from the report
- Including just the key ideas: short, concise and clear pieces of information
- First slide introduces the issue (sites/measures, management status, challenges), second slide presents the positive use of the EU funds, third slide highlights the key lessons learned and recommendations
- Including some of the pictures described before

WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

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

#### **WWF European Policy Office**

168 avenue de Tervuerenlaan  
Box 20  
1150 Brussels  
Belgium

Tel: +32 2 743 8800  
Fax: +32 2 743 8819  
[www.panda.org/eu](http://www.panda.org/eu)



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