

# Natura 2000 - Addressing conflicts and promoting benefits



**trust**

Sharing

**dialogue**

solution

COOPERATION

Communication

participation

# Introduction

The project 'Dealing with conflicts in the implementation and management of the Natura 2000 network- best practices at the local / site level' was commissioned by DG Environment in January 2009.

The aim of the project was to promote best practices for achieving a good balance between potentially conflicting interests related to the use and management of Natura 2000 sites, ensuring the engagement of different groups of stakeholders (including the public) into the protection and proper management of the sites and their ecological values. Specific objectives of the project were:

- to assess causes of conflicts surrounding the management and use of Natura 2000 sites;
- to identify and review examples of best practices;
- to formulate practical recommendations to avoid and resolve conflicts.

A European-wide review and five country studies were carried out to assess primary sources of conflict and the strategies that had been developed to resolve them. Also, 24 case studies of best practice regarding conflict resolution on site level from 12 countries were collected, described and analysed.

In addition, one European and three regional workshops were organised, attended by 133 participants from different groups of landowners and land users (economic sectors, NGOs, protected area administrations) to discuss their views and experiences on the management of Natura 2000 areas.

The project was led by Alterra (Wageningen, UR) in partnership with Eurosite and ECNC- European Centre for Nature Conservation.

## Download the project products from:

[www.ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/index\\_en.htm](http://www.ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/index_en.htm)

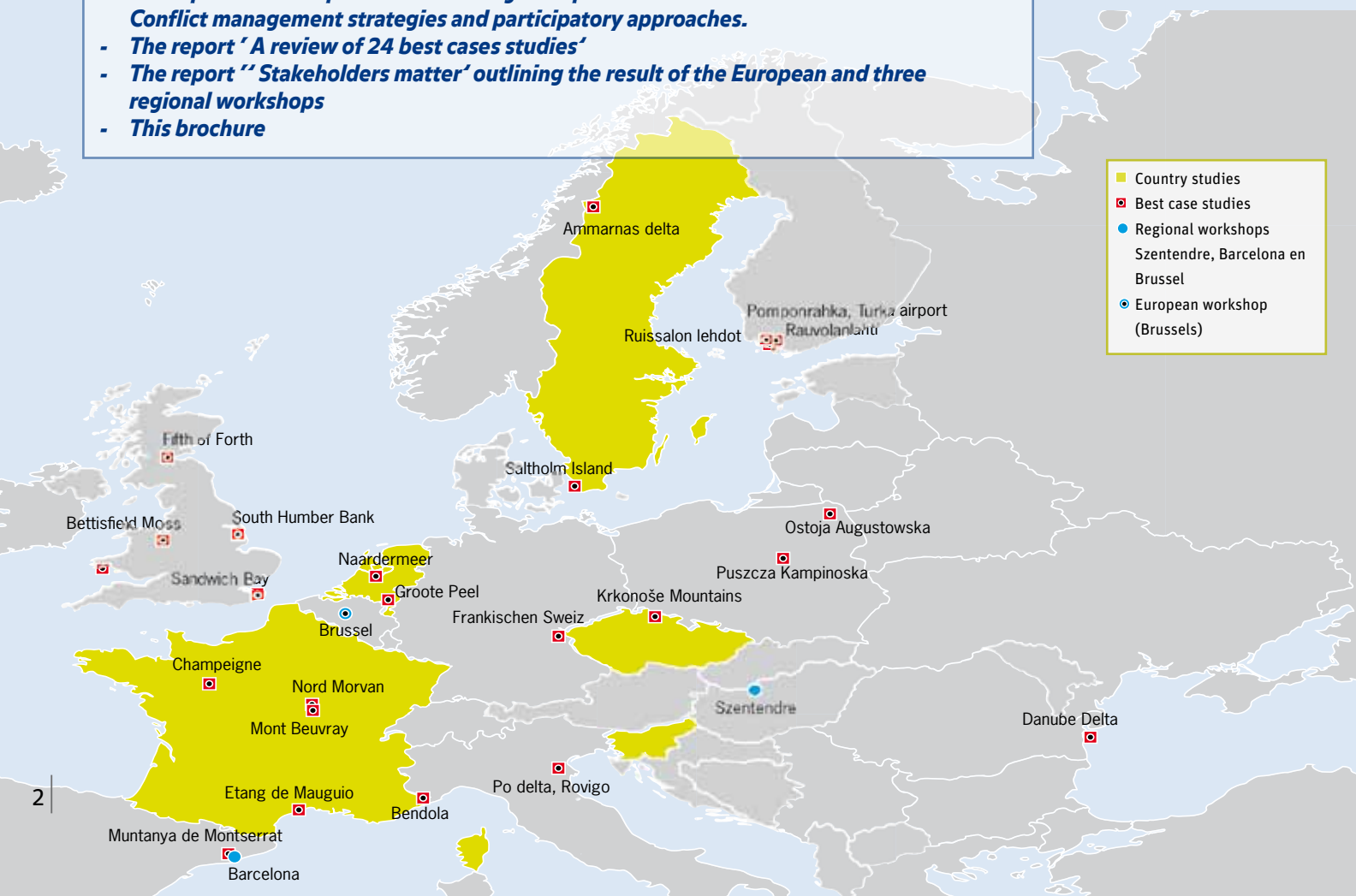
[www.alterra.wur.nl/UK/research/Specialisation+Landscape/Crossing/Projects](http://www.alterra.wur.nl/UK/research/Specialisation+Landscape/Crossing/Projects)

[www.ecnc.org](http://www.ecnc.org)

[www.eurosite.org](http://www.eurosite.org)

## Here you can find the following products of this project:

- **The report 'Current practices in solving multiple use issues of Natura 2000 sites: Conflict management strategies and participatory approaches.'**
- **The report 'A review of 24 best cases studies'**
- **The report "' Stakeholders matter' outlining the result of the European and three regional workshops**
- **This brochure**



# Main conclusions

**Given the scale, scope and ambition of the Natura 2000 network, conflicts are to be expected in its establishment and management. However, addressed in a proactive way, conflict can be managed or resolved in most cases. The challenge is how to deal effectively with 'on-site' conflict situations when they arise. Understanding the mechanisms and reasons of conflict is essential to finding workable solutions and developing sustainable management practices.**

**Left unaddressed or ignored, conflict can become a major threat, which can prevent reaching Natura 2000 objectives, be they at site, national or European level. This brochure and the project reports should be helpful to you, especially if you are affected by a conflict situation related to the management of Natura 2000 sites.**

## Stakeholders matter –

Landowners and land users need to be involved in decision-making processes for management planning, as well as in the management itself. Acknowledge their shared responsibilities by setting clear objectives for conservation, but ensure flexibility in agreed management measures.

## A good knowledge base is essential for communication and decision-making –

Good scientific data is essential, but local knowledge and experience should be used to fill knowledge gaps and to develop site-specific management measures tested over time. This has the added advantage of increasing support and sense of ownership of the process amongst landowners and land users.

**Participatory management needs to be learned** – Participatory management and planning for Natura 2000 sites present challenges and opportunities for all parties involved – those responsible need training about what to communicate, how to communicate, how to anticipate, mitigate or avoid conflicts and how to negotiate and build consensus.

## Implementing Natura 2000 is a process –

To ensure sustainable management, long-term commitments are needed to develop mutual understanding and to form a dialogue, which are prerequisites for building and maintaining relationships between land users and landowners.

## Information and education targeted to the needs of stakeholders –

Clear outreach, communication, information and education strategies are needed at different levels (site, national and Europe). Such strategies should, for example, highlight that a balance can be achieved between (perceived) socio-economic constraints, and benefits and opportunities from Natura 2000 sites, when clear management actions are developed in collaboration with stakeholders.

## Sharing innovation, knowledge and experience –

Exchange of best practices between landowners, site users, site managers, interested public, other economic stakeholders and policy-makers within and across EU Member States is the best way to show that Natura 2000 areas bring benefits at the local level.

## Responsibility for site management (measures) should be rewarded –

Easy, accessible and dedicated funding or reward mechanisms can help ensuring that private landowners and / or managers play their part in the management of Natura 2000 areas.

More detailed results and recommendations at national, regional and local levels can be found in on page 14 and 15 of this brochure.



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# Who is involved in Natura 2000?

**This project discerned three main groups of people and organisations ('stakeholders') involved in multiple land use and conflicts associated with the management of Natura 2000 sites.**

## **Competent organisations responsible for ensuring Natura 2000 conservation measures are taken**

Formally the responsibility for ensuring that the conservation management measures are taken in the Member States is usually allocated to one specific group or organisation. Depending on how the Member States have decided to organise the management of Natura 2000 sites the competent organisation responsible for the management process can be a local working group or committee (overseen by the government), an established management body of a protected area (for instance a National Park), local or regional administration (municipalities, provinces) or national, regional or local environmental authorities.

## **Regular site users such as forest owners, farmers, hunters, fishermen, local people, recreational users and site managers**

who are all involved in the management of the site. The Natura 2000 site is part of their daily living environment and often a source of their livelihood. Depending on the local situation, the number of regular land users can range from just a few to over 5000. Often there is no clear guidance or procedure on how to involve them in management planning, how much influence they have or should have, or how to generate workable solutions when there are competing priorities. A good analysis of the stakeholders' positions and objectives is essential to ensure progress.

Involving stakeholders in the process of management planning and actual management of the Natura 2000 site requires extensive information sharing, communication and consultation, which is time consuming for all parties concerned. Often the requirements for protecting the habitats and species of Natura 2000 lead to limitations for other land uses. Possible restrictions which need to be addressed in the process, include situations where, for example:

- Specific agricultural practices require a reduction of fertilization use, irrigation, nitrogen emission, decreasing grazing pressure, or harvest (due to delayed cutting dates);
- Specific forestry practices might be required leading to specific harvesting practices, ban on non-native trees or reduced harvest due to required amount of dead wood;
- Limitation of access for recreational users during specific times of the year might be needed, or the need for zoning of specific activities within the site;
- Restrictions to hunting related to the period of the hunting season or restrictions on species hunted;
- A change in fishery techniques might be required or areas are temporarily or permanently closed off for fishing.

**Developers** who are planning a new project in or near a Natura 2000 site that impacts on its conservation status, such as road construction, development of industrial and energy plants, tourist facilities and ports. These developers need to implement the provisions of Article 6(3) and, if need be, of Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, including the need to subject the plan or project to an appropriate assessment of its effects on the site. In these situations it is apparent who are the parties involved and there are clear procedures to follow. If a conflict occurs the court can, as a last resort, play a major role in addressing and resolving the conflict. Often in this situation early involvement of Natura 2000 area managers in the planning stage of the project can lead to development of solutions which are mutually beneficial.



*Involve people – it's a participatory process*



## CASE STUDY

**Mass tourism, Muntanya de Montserrat, Catalonia, Spain.**

**Focus stakeholder group: tourists**

### **Nature of conflict**

The impact of climbing on natural protected areas has become a serious conflict in the last two decades, exacerbated by the increasing popularity of outdoor activities and the effect of mass media promoting the region for tourism and recreation. Frequently, climbers were unaware that cliffs support a unique flora or fauna and equally unaware of the impacts of rock climbing on ecosystems and biodiversity.

### **How it was resolved**

It was important to make sure that nobody felt like they were “losers” in the resolution of this conflict. The key to achieving this was addressing the issue by means of a fully participative process. A commission composed of climbers, scientists and natural park managers was created to analyse and discuss causes and effects of conflict. From this commission, some climbing regulations and advice were provided for the climbing community. One example of the outcome of the commission's work was the creation of a map showing all the climbing routes in the area and their frequency of use. This map is a useful management tool and is very helpful in the decision-making process for climbing bans and regulatory measures, which take into account, for example, breeding seasons.

## CASE STUDY

**Extension of the operating life of a power station, Firth of Forth, Scotland.**

**Focus stakeholder group: developers of energy plants**

### **Nature of conflict**

Scottish Power, the owners/operators of the Longannet Power Station in Fife, Scotland, is extending the life of the power station, but require additional area to deposit the fly-ash, a waste product from the power station operation. It is currently deposited into the Torry Bay reclamation area within the Firth of Forth. Scottish Power had thought of extending the Torry Bay reclamation area into the Firth of Forth Special Protection Area, which would have entailed a significant loss of intertidal habitat.

### **How it was resolved**

Early discussion with Scottish Natural Heritage allowed Scottish Power to be clear about the process that would be required - Appropriate Assessment - and its likely conclusion, i.e. that it might not be possible to conclude that the integrity of the SPA would not be adversely affected. In these circumstances the proposal could only be approved if there were no alternative solutions and for imperative reasons of over-riding public interests, in which case compensatory measures would be required. Once Scottish Power were aware of this, other alternatives emerged and solutions were found that allowed both the development and protection of the site. It is a very good example of what can be achieved through early and proactive engagement with stakeholders.

*Early engagement and full dialogue*



# What are the issues?

When discussing the management of Natura 2000 sites, two different types of issues are raised:

- one type relates to the conflicting multiple use of sites at present or in the future due to change in management or planned plans and projects;
- the other is about the way the process of management planning is organized and information and communication are provided.

In many Natura 2000 sites, landowners and land users feel they have little influence on the management planning and they feel excluded from the process.

Underlying the discussion on management planning are also more fundamental questions regarding property rights, (the lack of) mutual trust between stakeholders, fear of restrictions and lack of knowledge and skills of all stakeholders in dealing with conflicts (see also Box Main outcomes of the workshops).

While reviewing Natura 2000 management planning it appears that a conflict often emerges from a difference of opinion that escalates (see 'Gradual steps towards outright conflict'). Early acknowledgment of the potential for conflict and addressing it proactively can avoid the situation from escalating to a conflict in which mutual trust between the parties is lost and people are no longer on speaking terms.

## The gradual steps towards outright conflict

Conflict often emerges from an argument that escalates in terms of a gradual change from a disagreement to a dispute between people and/or groups. As any quarrel or disagreement cannot be considered as a real conflict, the gradual steps towards outright conflict require further definition. In this project, three degrees of conflict were identified:

- Differences of opinion: individuals have a different view on an issue, however, this situation has not yet evolved into disagreement or conflict, often due to the fact that there is no need for co-operation;
- Disagreements: individuals disagree on the solution of a problem, however, mutual trust between them does not influence co-operation and negotiations are possible. Even if they may disagree on factual knowledge, or on the values they attach to this knowledge they are nevertheless assured of the co-operation of others;
- Outright conflicts: individuals disagree on a solution of a problem and the mutual trust between the parties is lost. As a result parties will choose for non-cooperative conflict strategies. These might result in subterfuge; lies, passive resistance, ridicule, feigned misunderstanding or even violent actions.

Conflicts are by nature dynamic, they evolve, they change. Conflict management approaches differ according to the phase in which the conflict is evolving and social context. When potential conflicts are not dealt with, real conflicts develop. When disputes go too far, they can lead to formal litigation. Ensuring respect of EU legislation at all levels tends to minimise conflicts, save time and money, achieve gains for Natura 2000 and society in general.

'be tougher on goals and softer on measures'  
'land owners are not the problem, they are the solution'

'farmers are not gardeners'  
'limit regulation to the basics'  
'better with nature than without'

'Conflict is not necessarily a bad thing'

*Work in small efficient groups and involve a mediator if needed*



## CASE STUDY

**Opposition of local land users to the Natura 2000 perimeter, Étang de Manguio, France.**

**Focus stakeholder group: land owners (farmers & hunters), hunting organizations and local authorities**

### **Nature of conflict**

In 2005, the “*Étang de Manguio*” was proposed for inclusion into the Natura 2000 network, as part of the process of implementing the Habitats and Birds Directives. Local stakeholders - four separate local authorities, ten hunting organisations, one group of local authorities and one group of land owners - took legal action to over-turn the decision made concerning the perimeter of the proposed Natura 2000 site. Local stakeholders considered the site boundaries as being imposed by government officials. Main reasons for legal action also included the incoherency of the perimeter and the lack of a previous specific inventory.

### **How it was resolved**

After long negotiations and the promise of financial support to be given by the government, elected local officials decided to assume their responsibility and develop the strategic planning document (called DOCOB) for the future management of important habitats and species. Rather than leaving this responsibility to the government public administration, the process was lead by the local formal structure called “*Syndicat Mixte de Gestion de l’Étang de l’Or*” (SMGEO). “Dialogue and negotiation” meetings were organised with the most important stakeholders in each of the local authorities and local stakeholders were involved in the working groups, thus allowing the full development of the formal planning document. The resulting management plan was developed over a two-year period during which 33 meetings including a total of 760 participants were organised. Stakeholders finally unanimously approved it in December 2008.

Key to the resolution of this conflict was the organisation of stakeholders and meetings into smaller, more efficient working groups, for example on particular themes or by professional categories. This allowed identification of common issues and issues where there was confrontation. Also, it enabled a more structured approach to stakeholder dialogue. Individual meetings with the most resistant (divisive) stakeholders to understand their motivations and confront them with other stakeholders, and the inclusion of mediators in leading some working groups were also extremely useful.

# Main outcomes of the workshops

**Together, the 133 participants in the four workshops represented a wide range of economic sectors, interest groups, experts and practitioners from different regions in Europe (Northwest, South, Central and Eastern) from the local to the EU level. In spite of some regional, cultural, historical and political differences, the main issues and recommendations resulting from the four workshops were largely similar.**

**Site governance** – A good governance structure for Natura 2000 sites, in which the main stakeholders can participate or be represented, is essential for a good management of the site. Good approaches have been developed (for example the ‘comités de pilotage’ in France) which can (partly) serve as a model to apply in other countries.

**Public participation** – An open and transparent participation process should be based on a stakeholder analysis, identifying groups which each require their own approach. For example a small number of key stakeholders (often land owners) should be involved from the start and throughout the process, whereas other groups may only require to be informed and or consulted at key stages.

**Communication and information** – A differentiated communication approach according to the target groups is essential. For example, land owners and Natura 2000 site users need short, clear and brief factual explanations about rules and (land-use or business) opportunities at local level, whereas policy makers and the general public would rather require reports outlining the wider benefits to society in terms of ecosystem services provided by the Natura 2000 network.

**Education and training** – The most urgent training and education need refers to communication and facilitation skills, as, often, conflicts that hamper the process of developing a site management plan fail due to poor communication skills of the process manager.

**Socio-economic dimension** – The livelihoods of local stakeholders often depend on the land comprised in the designated Natura 2000 site. They should be offered sufficient (financial) means (such as payments or compensation) or freedom to develop new forms of land use (innovation) to continue making a living.

**The human and cultural dimension** – the success of the management of Natura 2000 sites is fully dependent on a positive attitude and cooperation from a range of landowners and land users, who have personal ambitions, feelings, emotions and cultural backgrounds. This should be better reflected in the processes and sufficient time allowed for involvement of land owners and users, who often have a strong emotional bond to the land, to adjust.

**Knowledge and scientific underpinning** – A good scientific baseline and a functioning monitoring programme are important for targeted and adaptive management and in order to avoid the needless application of the precautionary principle leading to blanket protection and disenfranchised stakeholders.

**Sectoral and policy integration** – Natura 2000 should be better reflected in other policies and the provisions of the Birds and Habitats Directives better mainstreamed in other policies. Instead of being the last element included in local and regional spatial planning (‘because the EU tells us to do so’), efforts should be made to have Natura 2000 considered as an integral component in spatial planning frameworks.

**Networking and sharing of experiences** – Across Europe, much information and best practices are available on successful examples of multifunctional land use in Natura 2000 sites and integration in regional planning and policy. This information should be better disclosed and disseminated through networks, publications and events for the benefit of all.



# CASE STUDY

**An annual feast taking place on a table mountain in a nature protection area, Northern Bavaria, Germany**

**Focus stakeholder group: festival-goers**

## **Nature of conflict**

An annual feast called the “Walberlafest” has traditionally taken place on a significant table mountain in a nature protection area in the German region of “Fränkische Schweiz” (Franconian Switzerland) in Northern Bavaria for more than 200 years. This long tradition is an important part of the regional culture and attracts thousands of visitors each year. However the location of the feast is not only a popular destination for recreation but also a protected natural area. Dry grasslands, rocks, bushes and endemic species like *Hieracium harzianum* are all valuable elements of the region.

The mass of people coming to the mountain for this very popular feast causes damage to the landscape and habitats. Moreover, in the last decades, feast ‘infrastructure’ (i.e. electricity and motorised equipment) has increased and developed, leading to greater damage to the area. As a result, the feast is now controlled by official regulations. However, this does not alter the fact that the economic interests of the community and the interests of nature protection organisations and the rural district offices to minimize damage are poles apart on some issues.

## **How it was resolved**

Conflict, and the potential to develop this, is defused by regular ‘round table’ meetings. The different stakeholders with conflicting interests, including organisations, administrations and the local community, are invited to these meetings. During the meetings, which take place annually or more often if required, problems and interests are discussed and solutions and compromises are sought.

The organiser and moderator of each round table is the Area Manager (in German: “Gebietsbetreuer”). The Area Manager is a neutral and permanent contact person for the different stakeholders and interest groups in the region (property owners, farmers, administrations, schools, interested citizens, organisations, etc.) and mediates between them. Both the mediation and information roles of the Area Managers are key: indeed, insufficient information is often the reason for problems. By bringing stakeholders together, informing them about facts, and identifying different interests and requirements, Area Managers thus help to find workable solutions and compromises, whilst building more sustainable long-term, trusting relationships with key stakeholders.



# How to work together

The experiences of Natura 2000 site management shows that the management planning is not only about writing a good plan but also about the process of drafting the plan with all those involved or affected. Involving the landowners and land users in the site management planning is one way of avoiding or containing conflict. Good and useful experiences have been gained in all Member States on how to organise participatory management planning for the sites. As participatory planning takes a lot of time and effort, a key factor for success is that enough time and budget are being made available.

Based on the results of this project and available literature, the following recommendations can be formulated. They are addressed to the authorities responsible for management planning, in order to ensure a successful and effective participatory management planning processes that helps preventing conflicts:

- **Ensure early engagement and dialogue with relevant stakeholders.** At the start of the management planning process, analyse the relevant stakeholders and the ways to reach them (case studies page 5);
- **Be transparent about the decision-making processes** and the influence (whether advisory or approbatory) stakeholders have in the process. Show how stakeholders' feedback, concerns or issues have been addressed. In some Natura 2000 sites, informal working groups are set up that have an advisory role regarding draft plans, in other sites Natura 2000 joint management bodies have a formal role to approve management plans. (case study page 7);
- **Knowledge and understanding** are key criteria for equal and fair discussions and the avoidance or resolution of

conflict. Targeted information and technical support should be provided to all stakeholders so that they are able to participate fully in the finding of workable solutions (case study page 9,13). Often mitigation strategies and the search for compromises can often result in win-win situations when developed cooperatively;

- **Ensure an open, respectful atmosphere** during meetings, to ensure trust and relationship building. Also, informal contacts should be organised to enable people to get to know each other. (case study page 7,13);
- **Consider how to organise the involvement** of the various groups. Organising stakeholders and meetings into smaller, more efficient working groups (for example on particular themes or by professional categories) allows a more structured approach to stakeholder dialogue. Sometimes it is also useful organising individual meetings with the most resistant (divisive) stakeholders are needed to understand their motivations and highlight other stakeholders' perspectives (case study page 7);
- **Acknowledge contributions of landowners and land users** to Natura 2000 management by highlighting their involvement and for instance by developing specific award schemes.

Nevertheless despite good intentions and a sound participatory process conflict can still emerge. In this case the parties involved are no longer on speaking terms and there is a need for conflict management. An essential requisite for this is that an independent mediator is found which is acknowledged by all parties (case study page 7,13).



*Court decision can play a pivotal role*

## Winter camp of Rospuda Valley defenders



## CASE STUDY

**Opposition to the construction of the international road corridor 'Via Baltica' through the protected sites, North-East Poland.**

**Focus stakeholder group: : transport sector**

### **Nature of conflict**

The Pan-European Transport Corridor 'Via Baltica' will link Helsinki to Warsaw via Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The corridor upgrade is taking place as a series of separate individual projects rather than being planned in a strategic way. The obligations of the EU nature directives were not being properly taken into account in the planning of these individual projects and key Natura 2000 sites in North-East Poland were under threat from damage by a series of road developments connected to the initiative.

### **How it was resolved**

A coalition of Polish NGOs worked to bring the case to the attention of the Bern Convention and submitted a complaint to the European Commission in early 2006. This action highlighted serious concerns that seven road projects in North-East Poland, including the Augustow Bypass, did not comply with the requirements of EU nature laws. The Commission investigated the case and, when it was unable to resolve it through informal contact with Poland, opened legal proceedings. Several subsequent 'written warnings' to Poland were ignored and in March 2007 the Commission referred the case to the European Court of Justice, asking for an urgent order to stop damage caused by part of the project. An order was made in April 2007 – the first time such an order was made to protect a Natura 2000 site from imminent damage by development – which set a new precedent.

Important advances in resolving the conflict were made in October 2007, when a change of Polish Government and the new Environment and Infrastructure Ministers established a 'Round Table' to seek a compromise solution for Augustow Bypass threatening the Rospuda Valley, in which Polish NGOs participated. As an outcome of the Round Table, a new environmental assessment was carried out looking at three different routes – two going around rather than through the valley. Based on the results of this new study, in March 2009, the Polish Prime Minister announced that his Government would avoid building a highway through the Rospuda Valley Natura 2000 site. In October 2009, the Polish Government changed the route of the whole Polish section of the Via Baltica corridor. The new route bypasses most of the key Natura 2000 sites in NE Poland.

# Funding, Administrative systems, Technology, Knowledge, Courts

Besides the procedural and process dimension of participatory planning and conflict management, instruments are required to achieve successful negotiations, to find solutions and to reach agreement between the involved parties in terms of:

- **Availability of (sufficient) funds.** Financial incentives and compensatory measures might be needed for the compensation of landowners and users. The most commonly used are various types of agri- environmental contracts. Landowners and users involved in this project underline the need for targeted and flexible financial incentives (case study page 13). Also other mechanisms to compensate the loss of income are important such as promotion of ecotourism and branding of products;
- **Easy and efficient administrative procedures.** Many stakeholders fear the increased administrative burdens associated with their business being located in a Natura 2000 site. Simple procedures for licensing and obtaining funding for management with clear guidance and support are required. (case study page 13);

- **Development of innovative practices.** New land use technologies (e.g. for construction or harvesting) can solve conflicting multiple land use practices as they reduce the pressure exerted on biodiversity. Often land use sectors and developers play an essential role in development of innovative technologies (case study page 13);
- **Sufficient (scientific) knowledge** to assess effects of the various uses of a site on biodiversity and develop good management or mitigation measures. (case study page 5). This information should be accessible and understandable for a broad range of stakeholders.

Nevertheless sometimes conflicts between multiple uses of the site can only be resolved by a decision of the court as no solution can be found initially which is mutually agreeable for all parties concerned (case study page 11). Also in some cases the purchase of land or user's rights are seen as the only option to resolve the existing conflicting multiple uses.



## *Simplify the administrative system*



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## *Allow time to develop new technologies*



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## CASE STUDY

**Local farmers fear imposition of constraints in managing meadows, Parc Régional des Bauges et du Morvan, France**

**Focus stakeholder group: agriculture sector**

### **Nature of conflict**

Local farmers feared the imposition of so-called ‘constraints’ – for example the imposition of certain farming practices or even the banning of farming altogether – by the designation of Natura 2000 sites on their farms. At the end of the 1990s there was a joint lobbying action with foresters to reduce the perimeter of Natura 2000 areas before their notification to the European Commission.

### **How it was resolved**

The conflict resolved itself as soon as site managers entered into negotiation at the local level, distancing themselves from wider conflicts at the national level. At that time, agri-environmental contracts, already familiar to farmers, were more interesting financially when located on Natura 2000 areas: these were used as a key part of the contractual strategy France had chosen to implement Natura 2000. The mechanism enabled site managers to argue that farmers would simply be required to continue existing the farming practices.

The most important factor for success in the resolution of this conflict was the support offered to farmers so that they would not miss out on opportunities to benefit from Natura 2000 contracts. Also, the process used to develop the contracts was important. Contracts were first proposed during collective meetings, then during individual meetings on the farms. Finally, a new system of contracts based on a commitment to achieve results (performance standards), rather than a list of management practices is now put into place.

## CASE STUDY

**Opposition to the harvesting of mussel seed in the Wadden Sea, The Netherlands**

**Focus stakeholder group: fishery**

### **Nature of conflict**

In the Dutch Wadden Sea, the existing technique for harvesting mussel seed by dredging the seabed with a blade net (‘boomkor’ in Dutch), was considered causing too much damage to the ecosystem by nature conservation organisations. As mussel seed harvesting requires a license issued on an annual basis, each year the Federation of fisheries associations was being challenged in court by the conservation organisations.

### **How it was resolved**

After a long standing conflict with several court cases, through the involvement of an independent mediator an agreement was reached between nature organisations and united fishermen (Federation of fisheries associations) on the use of the Wadden Sea as an area for harvesting mussel seed.

Part of the agreement was that the current technique to harvest mussel seed using a ‘boomkor’ was allowed until 2020. In the mean time, the Federation of fisheries associations would invest in the development of a new technique, which consists of floating or suspended installations on which the young mussels will grow, thus catching mussel seed without causing disturbance of the seabed.

# Recommendations

## Information and communication

### Local

Develop a communication strategy which reviews whom to inform and what type of information is required and by which means. Make the access to relevant information as easy as possible for stakeholders for instance by local information meetings, door to door distribution of information and local media. Also the setting up of (local or regional) information points can be considered.

### National/regional

Develop national communication and information campaigns for Natura 2000 underlining that Natura 2000 is a distinction of quality and benefits.

### European

Make guidance material on stakeholder dialogue / conflict management / communication skills available in different languages. Promote and reward good initiatives with a European-level recognition system.

## Education and training

### Local

Make sure that those responsible for engaging with the local stakeholders have good communication skills. Provide them with training opportunities in communication, facilitation, participation processes and conflict management.

### National/regional

Invest in training programs on communication, participation processes and conflict management for Natura 2000 managers and facilitate the exchange of knowledge between those responsible for Natura 2000 management planning in the different sites.

### European

Facilitate the exchange of knowledge on participation processes and conflict management between those responsible for Natura 2000 management planning in the different countries by exchange of best practices.

## Natura 2000 site governance and stakeholder involvement

### Local

Involve all relevant stakeholders in an open and transparent process. Be clear on the process of decision making and the key role and influence they have.

### National/regional

Develop guidelines on how stakeholders need to be involved in the management planning of the sites and evaluate how the involvement and participation can be secured in practice.

### European

Encourage and facilitate Natura 2000 site governance through existing models already developed, tested and applied in some Member States and transpose what is applicable to countries where Natura 2000 site governance is still to be resolved.



## Knowledge

### Local

Good and reliable site information is required, especially a baseline for the state and trends of habitats and species and how land use practices affect them. As knowledge and data are often not available, scientific information needs to be integrated with local knowledge in order to ensure a knowledge base agreed by all.

### National

Invest in national monitoring programs and research on effects of various land uses on species and habitats of Natura 2000 sites.

### European

Invest in European wide research programs that enable exchange of knowledge on effects of various land uses on species and habitats of Natura 2000.

## Policy

### Local

Integrate Natura 2000 into the (sustainable) development strategy or spatial planning of the municipality thus ensuring integration with relevant local sectors and policies so that potential conflicts are identified at the strategic level and projects become designed in a sustainable way.

### National/regional

Use Natura 2000 as an ecological framework for spatial planning and integrate it with ecological networks (green infrastructure) and multifunctional land use in regional (rural) development.

### European

Support and promote efforts with different sectors to address potential national and international conflicts of planned developments in infrastructure at a strategic level.

## Finances

### Local

Assist landowners and users in accessing available national funds and consider the possibilities of generating local funds by developing alternatives such as eco-tourism and regional and local branding.

### National

Provide targeted schemes for financing the required management and if need be for compensating landowners and users.

### European

Ensure that there is adequate funding for establishing the agreed Natura 2000 management measures, from EU and Member State –sources and ensure that the funding indeed reaches the Natura 2000 areas .

But most of all it is important that all people involved in management planning, whether landowner, land user, government employee, scientist or NGO- member, are willing to co-operate and listen to the other's point of view.

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**Further information on the project and the various reports produced can be found on:** [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/index_en.htm)

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