

NGOs recommendations for the future financing of Natura 2000

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The current Financial Period 2007-2013 shows that the financing of the Natura 2000 network will not be solved through a small-dedicated fund for the environment, and by adding mainly voluntary opportunities for Natura 2000 through integration of measures in further potential EU funding lines. There is the need to improve funding for Natura 2000 as the European network of sites, essential for biodiversity, and especially as the network moves to being finalised. Member States and the European Commission must strengthen their efforts to ensure sufficient funding for the entire network. The recent cost estimate of Natura 2000 of about € 5.8 billion per year broadly supports the 2004 estimate of €6.1 billion.

The ecological, social and cultural value of Natura 2000 sites is huge. For example, the Institute for Environmental Studies from the Free University of Amsterdam calculated that the societal benefits of the Natura 2000 network in the Netherlands were approximately €4.5 billion Euros per year¹. Another example from Scotland looked at the cost-benefit analysis of the Scottish Natura 2000 network using the Total Economical Value concept. It found that the full conservation of Scotland's 300 Natura 2000 sites had a benefit to cost ratio of around a factor of seven over a 25 year period² - for every euro spent, the value of benefits are multipliable by seven.

Furthermore, EU Member States must strengthen their efforts to establish a well-managed Natura 2000 network. Financing Natura 2000 and its management is interlinked, and the current lack of management planning should be solved as soon as possible. The proposed Biogeographical process is welcomed.

Fifteen EHF members have developed the following seven recommendations financing Natura 2000 during the post 2013 Financial Period. The establishment of a Priority Action Framework is a key tool within this proposed new financial architecture for Natura 2000:

1. Sufficient funding for Natura 2000 from the EU and Member States' budgets (around 6 billion € per year in total) to finance the development and implementation of the management measures

In concrete, the EU budget for Natura 2000 should cover between 50 and 75 % of the total costs of Natura 2000 (between € 3 – 4.5 billion per year).

2. Improve the direct allocation

The EU's dedicated fund for the environment (Financial Instrument for the Environment, LIFE+) is currently far too small. The future LIFE+ fund must start playing a more significant role in financing the whole Natura 2000 network – it must go beyond financing only some individual sites. A five-times increase of LIFE nature would guarantee that around 25 % of the Natura 2000 costs are directly covered by a dedicated EU environmental funding line.

3. Improve the integration approach

An integration of Natura 2000 in all relevant EU funding lines seems to have the best potential. However, the existing "integration option" for financing Natura 2000 lacks a clear mechanism for proper implementation and does not guarantee that Natura 2000 is integrated in relevant national operational programmes of EU funds. The relevant funds regulations need clear and dedicated mechanism to support Natura 2000 investments. Clear indicators or dedicated programme priorities as well as better budgeting procedures are needed to secure transparency and an improved financing for Natura 2000.

4. Establishment of Prioritised Action Framework

Integrating Natura 2000 financing into different funding lines has a lot of advantages but creates a complex structure. This complexity could be resolved with the establishment of Natura 2000 Prioritised

¹ Kuik, Brander & Schaafsma (2006) Globale Batenraming van Natura 2000 gebieden - <http://www.grazingnetworks.nl/userImages/Image/batenraming%20N2000.pdf>

² <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/06/19426/38108#3>

Action Frameworks, as suggested by the European Commission. This would help to increase transparency and monitoring. It would also improve the uptake of the integration approach for Natura 2000 in all EU funding lines at the national level as well as clarify which actions are financed under each EU funding line. Current EU funds provide a number of opportunities to finance Natura 2000 already. The voluntary principle alone has not guaranteed sufficient money for Natura 2000 within the Financial Perspective 2007-2013. Providing information through Natura 2000 Prioritised Action Frameworks would also help national budgets to contribute more specifically to fill funding gaps for activities, which cannot be financed from EU funds. To guarantee coherence, all Natura 2000 relevant EU funding regulations should make a clear reference to the Natura 2000 Prioritised Action Framework. This should make sure that Natura 2000 measures defined are fully eligible for co-financing.

The Prioritised Action Framework should include:

- National Natura 2000 funding strategies for the next Financial Perspective, explaining key priorities which need to be addressed over the whole period
- Description of Natura 2000 measures to be financed.
- Contribution of each EU fund (budget and measure) to the national Natura 2000 network for the next Financial Perspective.
- Contribution of MS fund(s) (budget and measure) to the national Natura 2000 network for the next Financial Perspective.
- Implementation plan.
- Monitoring and evaluation plan.

5. Provide full accountability of EU funding for biodiversity and more specifically for the Natura 2000 network

All EU funds should provide full transparency on the use of public money, showing how much money is available for Natura 2000. For that reason all relevant EU funds should include Natura 2000 related indicators for their performance.

6. Eliminate any harmful subsidies

In addition, all EU funds should be “biodiversity-proofed” with the aim not to subsidise the destruction of biodiversity –and Natura 2000 in particular- from the same funds that are set out to support biodiversity.

7. Evaluate funding opportunities which go beyond public funding

In addition to public financing there is the need to critically evaluate further sources for financing Natura 2000. The potential of market based instruments and innovative funding (including private funds) should be evaluated in detail, also in light of the work under the CBD related to resource mobilisation and new and innovative funding mechanisms.

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On behalf of the following EHF members:

