



natura

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EDITORIAL

DGXI's new Deputy Director General, Mr. Jean-François Verstryngne, was until recently Director of the Cohesion Fund. He is therefore well placed to highlight the link between Natura 2000 and spatial policies.



Nature is a major element of our European heritage and deserves the Union's attention, not in the least because it transcends national frontiers. How can the Union's development contribute to improving the quality of its natural areas? One way of ensuring better coherence and convergence between EU policies and instruments is to ground them, right from the start, on the fundamental goals we all share: economic and social cohesion and a level playing field for all the Union's regions. If we want to achieve quality lifestyle areas which are attractive to live in, these goals must be attained through sustainable development.

In order to avoid fragmented views and objectives, the Cardiff Summit recently reconfirmed that environmental effects must be evaluated and taken into account in all Union programmes and policies, existing or proposed. Greater integration of the environment into the functioning of the Institutions themselves and into major policies

are first concerns, the Summit concluded. To translate this into tangible actions, suitable instruments have to be created and the necessary finances committed.

Spatial planning is a key tool in achieving this integration process. The Commission's 1994 Communication

«Europe 2000+» already pointed out how the natural heritage could benefit from coordinated zoning of the Union's territory. Europe 2000+ has been developed further in the 'European Spatial Development Perspective', proposed by Council in June 1997 and under public debate since.

Besides the land use plans elaborated at regional and national level, there are the strategic lines of communication agreed on at EU level (the Trans-European Networks). Natura 2000, which is identifying geographically demarcated, distinct sites of Community importance and suggests objectives and prescriptions in terms of preserving the habitats and species occurring there, is equally a European network. Each affects the other, and this must be integrated.

Under the aegis of Agenda 2000, the Commission is proposing a substantial increase in the resources for integrating the natural environment into the Agricultural Policy and the Structural Funds, so as to reflect the shift in Union policies towards sustainable development. LIFE (Nature), although modest by comparison, remains a vital instrument to launch innovative models of sustainable land use within the Natura 2000 network.

Nature is not separate; it permeates other policies. A panoramic, bird's-eye vision of land use and spatial planning at Union level will help to differentiate EU interventions more accurately in function, among other considerations, of the ecological properties of each part of the Union. In this exercise Natura 2000, which is already having an impact on land use, has a key role to play.



The NATURA 2000 Newsletter is produced by the Nature Conservation Unit of the Environment Directorate General (DG XI.D.2) of the European Commission. It provides regular updates on the implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives and the establishment of the NATURA 2000 Network.

Deputy Director General of DG XI

IN FOCUS

SPA classification: Court of Justice clarifies Member States' duties

Member States are obliged to classify as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) all the sites, which applying ornithological criteria, appear to be the most suitable for the conservation of bird species listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive. This is the key conclusion of the Court of Justice in its landmark judgement, delivered on 19 May 1998¹, in this important test case for the implementation of the directive. It upheld the Commission's claim that the Netherlands had clearly failed to classify a sufficient number and area of SPAs.

This case focused on the key duty under Article 4(1) of the directive for the protection of endangered and vulnerable bird species. This requires Member States to 'classify in particular the most suitable territories in number and size as special protection areas for the conservation of these species, taking into account their protection requirements in the geographical sea and land area where this directive applies'.

It was the first time that the Court was confronted with a case relating to the overall nature of the duty to classify SPAs. Earlier Court decisions

had dealt with matters of legal interpretation arising from threats to **individual sites** such as Santoña marshes (Spain) and the Lappel Bank (United Kingdom).

These previous judgements had confirmed the importance of ornithological criteria. Scientific criteria for identifying important bird sites had already been elaborated as early as 1981 when the first inventory of important bird areas in the European Community was prepared. During the 1980s the European Commission had also set up a working group, which led to the identification of Community-wide criteria for the selection of SPAs. These were discussed within the Committee established under the Birds Directive, the so-called ORNIS Committee. They were then used in the preparation of the 1989 inventory of important sites in all Member States that qualify for classification as Special Protection Areas (referred to as IBA 89) by experts from the Member States and the non-governmental organisation BirdLife International.

Key elements of the case

The IBA 89 has been used by the Commission as a scientific reference against which the progress of individual Member States could be evaluated. In taking the case against the Netherlands to the Court the Commission had concluded that by classifying as SPAs less than 50% of the sites (both in number and in surface area) listed in this scientific inventory the Netherlands had manifestly failed in its obligations under the directive.

Consequently, many Annex I species of birds that occur in the Netherlands, and for which site protection is an important mechanism for their conservation, were poorly represented in SPAs. The Commission also drew attention to the fact that populations of at least nine of these species had declined in the Netherlands by a least 50%. While acknowledging that declines of migratory species could be due to factors operating elsewhere in the species range this could not be argued in the case of the Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* and the Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* which are largely sedentary.

The Commission, whilst fully recognising that other conservation measures are required for many Annex I birds, including wider countryside measures for dispersed species, argued that these cannot be a substitute for classifying the most suitable territories as SPAs. This failure to classify effectively meant that such areas would not be subject to the protection regime, now defined in Article 6 of the Habitats Directive², that applies to all SPAs.

Occurrence of some Annex I species, as percentage of national population, breeding in IBAs and SPAs in the Netherlands (at time of Court application)

Species	IBA (%)	SPA (%)
<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	58	18
<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	95	35
<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	100	79
<i>Tetrao tetrix</i>	100	3
<i>Crex crex</i>	32	1
<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	78	62
<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	36	2
<i>Sterna albifrons</i>	100	39
<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	63	15
<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	66	7

Source: Vogelbescherming

Avocet, *Recurvirostra avosetta*. Photo: Paul Goriup/Piscis Nature Photos.



In its defense the Netherlands argued that Member States had a margin of discretion in implementing Article 4(1) - the classification of SPAs was only one of the measures by which a Member State may perform its obligations under this article. It contended that, by taking other relevant measures, such as its Nature Conservation law, the sale of sites to nature conservation organisations and bird conservation plans, it had complied with the directive. It further contended that when adopting the special conservation measures Member States can also take account of economic and recreational requirements in accordance with Article 2 of the directive.

In support of the Netherlands, Germany contended, on the basis of the Member States' margin of discretion, that Article 4(1) leaves the choice of SPAs to Member States and that this provision does not require a particular number of areas to be classified. Rather it requires them to ensure that the SPAs which are created are suitable for the conservation of endangered bird species.

Main conclusions of Court

The judgement of the Court of Justice in this case includes the following key elements:

- Article 4(1) of the directive requires Member States to classify as SPAs the most suitable territories in number and size for the conservation of the species mentioned in Annex I, **an obligation which it is not possible to avoid by adopting other conservation measures**
- **economic requirements mentioned in Article 2 of the directive may not be taken into account when selecting an SPA and defining its boundaries.**
- the margin of discretion that Member States have in choosing the most suitable territories for classification as SPAs does not concern the appropriateness of classifying as SPAs the territories which appear the most suitable according to ornithological criteria but only the application of those criteria for identifying the most suitable territories for conservation of the species listed in Annex I of the directive
- consequently **Member States are obliged to classify as SPAs all the sites, which applying ornithological criteria, appear to be the most suitable** for conservation of the species in question
- the IBA 89 inventory, though not legally binding on the Member States concerned, represents a list of sites of great importance for the conservation of wild birds in the Community.
- in this case the IBA 89 had proven to be the only document containing scientific evidence making it possible to assess whether the defendant State had fulfilled its obligation to classify as SPAs the most suitable territories in number and area for the conservation of the protected species.

Implications

Following the judgement the Netherlands is taking steps to significantly increase its SPA classification in line with the Court's ruling.

However, this judgement has also clear implications for many other Member States. Based on the scientific evidence it appears that only Belgium and Denmark have largely met this requirement even though the Birds Directive was adopted almost 20 years ago. The judgement should therefore give new impetus to Member States to complete the SPA element of the NATURA 2000 Network

Legal procedures for insufficient SPA classification are underway against several other Member States. In these legal procedures the Commission will continue to use the IBA 89 as the scientific reference list for those Member States who have not produced, using valid ornithological criteria, national reviews of sites that qualify for protection under the directive.

This decision is also very important for the integration work of DG XI. The scientifically identified Important Bird Areas, still to be protected under the Birds Directive, will in the future have to be taken into full consideration in other policy areas e.g. when the Commission has to approve co-financing under the Structural Funds.

¹ Case C-3/96, Commission v Netherlands, supported by Germany.

² cf Natura 2000 newsletter, issue 2, December 1996.

CRITERIA USED FOR THE IBA 1989

Breeding sites

1. Sites supporting 1% or more of the breeding pairs of the biogeographic population.
2. If 1) is not appropriate (e.g. the biogeographic population not known, 1% criterion too high to select important sites), criteria have been based on the specific characteristics of dispersion and habitat preferences of the species
3. If 2) also impossible, all sites with proved breeding (this applied to six very poorly known seabirds only: *Bulweria bulwerii*, *Puffinus puffinus mauretanicus*, *Puffinus assimilis*, *Pelagodroma marina*, *Oceodroma leucorhoa*, and *Oceodroma castro*)
4. Sites of particular importance for marginal or isolated breeding populations, with criteria based on specific characteristics of dispersion and habitat preferences of the species
5. All regular sites of rare or endangered species or sub-species; or small or endangered distinct biogeographical populations: c.2,500 pairs. (for some colonial species a level of five pairs is used to exclude irregular breeding sites).
6. For widely dispersed species, sites are selected on the basis of high densities or good numbers
7. Regular sites for significant numbers of three or more Annex I species

Sites other than breeding sites

8. Sites having 1% (at least 100 individuals) of the flyway or biogeographical population of one species
9. Sites having (at least) 20,000 waterfowl or 5,000 birds of prey on passage during a migration season
10. Sites with particular importance for marginal populations, with criteria based on specific characteristics of dispersion and habitat preferences of the species
11. Sites which hold 5 (gregarious species 25) individuals of rare and endangered species or sub-species or small and endangered biogeographical populations (less than 10,000 individuals in number).
12. Sites regularly holding significant numbers of three or more Annex I species

Sites were also included if they were amongst the 100 most important in the Community, or among the five most important in a region of the Community for Annex I species or sub-species.

ON SITE

Land managers and conservationists join forces to promote Scotland's Atlantic oakwoods



Loch Maree Atlantic oakwood habitat mosaic. Photo: Edmund May

Mention Scotland today and most people conjure up images of bleak windswept hills, vast open glens, moody skies and moors stretching as far as the eye can see. It is hard to imagine trees, let alone whole forests, intruding on this picture postcard scene. Yet, many hundreds of years ago, Scotland was quite a different landscape. Large tracts were covered in forest habitats such as native pine, oak and birch forests right the way across, from the east to the west coast.

The Atlantic oakwoods were one of the important habitat types. This climax community now forms the main deciduous component in temperate rain forest areas and is restricted, within Europe's Atlantic coastline, to the west of Britain and Ireland (and listed under the Habitats Directive as 'Old oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles'). It is characterised by an extremely rich lower plant and fern flora and is a haven for migrant song birds.

In Scotland, large tracts of which are known for their harsh climate and poor soils, the Atlantic oak woodlands once played an important socio-economic role in the survival of the small rural communities that surrounded them. They provided grazing and shelter for livestock, a renewable source of timber and firewood, plentiful wild game and, later, charcoal for small-scale iron smelting and bark for tanning leather. Viewed retroactively this traditional use probably amounted to sustainable forest management.

However, over the past three centuries this localised form of management gradually disappeared, first in the face of large-scale commercial felling for the iron and shipbuilding industries, then through the planting of fast-growing conifers as part of the Government's policy to establish a strategic timber resource. Increased grazing pressure by deer and sheep also took a heavy toll on the forests' potential to regenerate itself, as did the invasion of rhododendron. The oakwoods were left depleted, both in terms of their biodiversity and their potential to provide local community benefits.

Restoring Scotland's Atlantic oakwoods

Undoing the effects of the management of the last 300 years will be a difficult task. Part of the solution may lie in trying to 're-connect' local communities with their forests. After all, unlike some forest habitats that are best left untouched from a conservation point of view, Atlantic oakwoods do lend themselves well to positive management, which could be practiced to the mutual advantage of the forests and the communities alike.

In 1997, a LIFE project on Atlantic oakwood forests was co-financed with just these concepts in mind. Run by the Caledonian Partnership, which is an innovative broad partnership between Government forestry and conservation agencies, conservation NGOs and research bodies – the project focuses on 7 of the 9 pSCI sites proposed by the UK under the Habitats Directive for this habitat type. Five of these sites are in Scotland, and one each in England and Wales. The project aims to restore these pSCIs to a more favourable condition by removing those threats that are currently compromising the habitat. In this context some 700 ha of land is being cleared of introduced species such as rhododendron or under-planted conifers to allow the natural regeneration of oaks and other native trees. Additionally, to reduce grazing pressure – particularly in Scotland, fencing will be erected to keep out deer and sheep.

Caledonian Partnership members at Loch Etive woods.

Photo: David Hetherington/Highland Birchwoods



This last measure may, at first sight, seem an expensive and interventionist way of protecting the forests. However, consider the following: in upland Scotland deer densities of between 10 and 20 animals per km² frequently occur (ten times the level in continental Europe), deer range across land owned by many different people and are traditionally managed to maximise the sporting interest. Fences are therefore a practical answer to 'kick-start' forest regeneration, whilst the Deer Commission Scotland works with land owners and government organisations to find a long-term solution for reducing overall deer numbers. In this respect, efforts are already underway to develop a strategic approach to this sensitive problem through the establishment of pSCI-scale deer management plans, in which all interested parties are involved.

Providing a focus for local action

However, the greatest challenge for the project lies in its acceptance by the private sector. Most of the forests targeted in Scotland are situated in remote upland regions and owned by a large number of private individuals, some of whom are no longer part of the local community. Many have reservations about what is perceived as a 'top down' approach to land use planning. The Habitats Directive and LIFE instrument could be seen as just another form of interference, with little or no economic benefits for the owners themselves.

To counter such apprehensions, the project has tried to tap into existing knowledge, expertise and communication channels through **local operational planning teams**, set up for each pSCI. Made up of local officers from the relevant countryside conservation agencies, together with the Forestry Commission, these teams are working in partnership with individual owners at a 'grass roots' level to seek a consensus on the measures to be implemented for a particular site. By pooling the different types of expertise, they can design activities that are not only appropriate for the conservation of the forests, but are also economically attractive to the local people. For example, at the Loch Sunart pSCI in the western Highlands of Scotland, Forest Enterprise (the executive agency of the Government's Forestry Commission), has been able to access additional funds from outside the project to train a number of local people in the skills necessary to undertake habitat restoration work within the LIFE project.

Policy support for local actions

Other factors have also influenced the acceptability and impact of the measures funded through the LIFE project. Of particular interest is the fact that its restoration actions are closely linked to the Forestry Commission's Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) – a widespread and well-recognised economic incentive for sensitive native woodland management in the UK, disbursing annually over

58 million ECU to forestry activities in the private sector. The benefits of this close association manifest themselves in several ways. By acting as a complementary fund, LIFE can ensure the highest quality conservation management of key sites for the habitat concerned. These high quality sites can in turn play an important demonstration role in promoting best practice on a wider scale through the WGS and, together with the other innovative techniques developed through the LIFE project, inform and influence the basis upon which grant applications are approved.

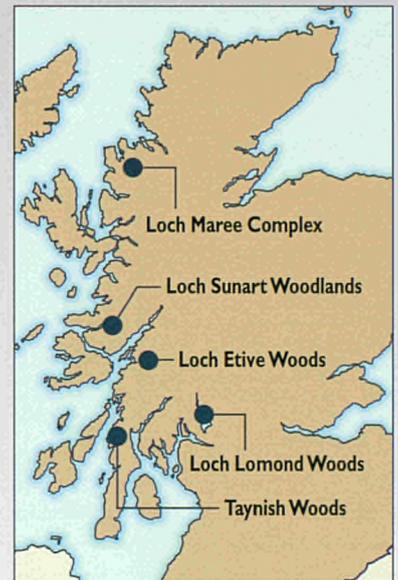
Creating a long term economic interest in conserving oakwoods

The land owners themselves also benefit, not just because the funds provide much needed start up capital for getting conservation friendly woodland management schemes off the ground but also because they can see a clear policy commitment towards restoring native woodlands. This in turn creates a favourable climate for launching new small-scale economic ventures in the forestry sector.

But apart from incentive grants and job training schemes, will this link between conservation measures to restore Atlantic oakwoods and economic incentives to manage the resource be sustainable in the long run? It is perhaps too early to say but the LIFE project has certainly started the ball rolling in Scotland by initiating a dialogue with the people who live and work in these forest areas and by demonstrating ways in which the linkages can work. In this context, it is also encouraging to note that a budding market is already developing for local hardwood timber produce – whether for rural housing, furniture or other crafts and that members of the Caledonian Partnership are involved in other projects designed to support and stimulate this market.

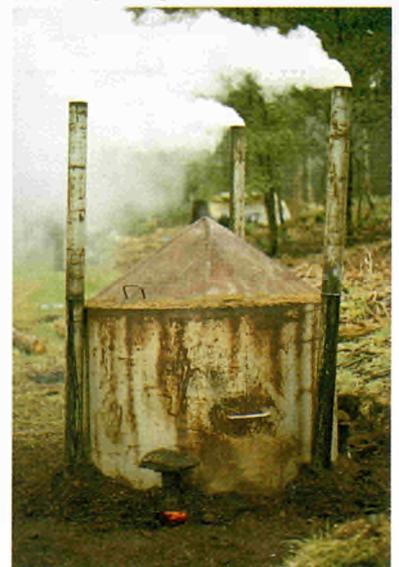
For further Information on the project:

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Location of LIFE project Atlantic oakwoods in Scotland.

Producing charcoal from rhododendron cut from oakwoods. Photo: David Hetherington/Highland Birchwoods



NATURA BAROMETER

(as of 14/10/98)

Member State	Birds Directive SPA Classification					Habitats Directive Proposed SCIs (stage I)				
	Number of SPAs	Total area (km ²)	Area Maps	Information	Progress	Number of sites proposed	Total area (km ²)	Site maps	Natura 2000 forms	National list
België/Belgique	36	4,313				101	908			
Danmark	111	9,601				194	10,259			↑
Deutschland	551	14,121				375	5,171			
Ellas	52	4,965				230	25,745			
España	170	33,191				588	70,250			
France	107	7,600				543	10,581 ⁽¹⁾		0	
Ireland	109	2,226				39 (207)	523 (5,530)			
Italia	108	4,530				2,480	46,074 ⁽¹⁾			
Luxembourg	6	14				0	0	0	0	0
Nederland	28	3,448				76	7,330			↑
Österreich	58	11,333				91 ⁽²⁾	11,019 ⁽²⁾			
Portugal	36	3,323				65	12,150			
Suomi	15	967	0	0		415	25,599			
Sverige	275	22,658		0	↑	1,449	42,241			↑
United Kingdom	180	7,493			↑	331	16,877			
EUR 15	1,842	129,783				6,977	284,727			

(1) Data for some sites missing

(2) This figure is an estimate

Notes: Several Member States have designated significant parts of their coastal waters. Certain sites have been, totally or partially, proposed under both Directives. Only sites that have been formally and definitively proposed are taken into account in the Natura barometer. Some Member States have however also transmitted provisional lists of sites; these are given in brackets.

Keys: 0 no or insignificant classification

classification notably insufficient

classification incomplete

classification complete

0 list insignificant or not transmitted

partial but insufficient national list

substantial national list but information still incomplete

complete national list according to Member State, information transmitted is coherent

↑ significant progress since last Natura barometer

0 no transmission

incomplete information or partial transmission

complete for transmitted sites

computerised and coherent for transmitted sites

For further information contact: Micheal O'Briain, DG XI.D.2 for SPA classification and Fotios Papoulias, DG XI.D.2 for proposed SCIs.

NEWS ROUND UP

The Natura Barometer: commentary on progress

Since the last Newsletter, the most significant progress has been realised in the following countries:

- Denmark added another 131 sites to its national list of pSCIs which now covers a total surface of around 10,000 km², a big part of it being marine areas;
- Sweden has raised the number of SPAs to 275 and pSCIs to 1,449 sites adding around 6,500 km² to the surface area covered;
- The Netherlands have increased their national list of pSCIs to 76 sites;
- Additional sites have also been proposed by Germany (+80 pSCIs) and the UK (+30 pSCIs and 12 SPAs), while Ireland has now officially transmitted its first batch of sites (39 pSCIs).

Further sites from Austria and Ireland arrived whilst finalising the Barometer and will be taken into account in the next issue.

Bath Conference 'Natura 2000 and People: a Partnership'

This conference took place on 29–30 June in Bath under the UK presidency. Some two hundred people, representing all interest groups, attended to discuss how to involve local stakeholders in the conservation and management of Natura 2000 sites across the EU. A special edition of the Natura 2000 newsletter, summarising the main conclusions of the Conference, was presented at the Council of Environment Ministers meeting on 6 October. *For further details contact: B. Marchant DG XI.D.2.*

Innsbruck Conference on 'Natura 2000 – a chance for nature conservation in Europe'

Under the new presidency, the Austrian Environment Ministry, in cooperation with the Ministry for Science, the Land of Tyrol and the European Commission, hosted a conference on nature conservation on the 22–23 October. The first day was devoted to examining progress on the implementation of the Natura 2000 network in Austria, Germany and the UK. The second day considered, in two parallel workshops: "*wildlife ecology and wildlife management*" with particular attention to the issue of hunting in Natura 2000 sites and "*science and research*" with emphasis on the role of science in building up the Natura 2000 Network – particularly in light of the monitoring requirements under the Habitats and Birds Directives. *For further information contact: G. Liebel, Ministry for Environment, Youth and Family; fax 0043 1 51522 7402.*

The EU Structural Funds 2000–2006: conserving nature, creating jobs

The European Commission proposals for revising the Structural Fund Regulations are currently under discussion and, if accepted, should offer greater scope for financing nature conservation projects. The new regional rural development plans, for instance, would include projects aimed at '*the preservation and promotion of a high nature value and a sustainable agriculture respecting environmental requirements*'. They also propose to widen the eligibility criteria for support from European Regional Development Fund to include '*the protection and improvement of the environment taking into account the provisions of precaution and preventive action in support of economic development*'.

In the past, take up for nature projects has been low – often because organisations are not aware of the opportunities available to them. To counter this, a partnership of environment organisations across Europe, led by the Institute for European Environment Policy and supported by a consortium of bodies including the European Commission, has launched an EU wide information and awareness programme to show how the Structural Funds can be used to protect nature and create jobs at the same time.

The programme will produce information dossiers on:

- The opportunities created by the new Structural Fund and Rural Development Regulations,
- the requirements of the Habitats and Birds Directives and management implications for Natura 2000 designation,
- current and proposed national arrangements for developing and implementing Structural Fund measures
- and case studies on existing conservation projects that have been successful in obtaining funds

For further information contact: Karen Mitchell, IEEP London, UK. Tel: 0044 171 799 2244; fax: 0044 171 799 2600; e-mail: kmitchell@ieeplondon.org.uk

Projects funded under LIFE-Nature in 1998

A record 85 projects, totalling almost 102 million ECU, were agreed for funding this year under LIFE Nature, the EC will be committing 48 million ECU to these projects. Over the last three years, the emphasis has shifted away from projects targeting bird conservation towards those focusing on the conservation of habitat types and other species listed under the Habitats Directive. This is in line with the increasing number of sites proposed under the Natura 2000 Network. A consolidated report briefly describing each of the projects in its original language, and in English and French, is now available. *Copies from I Venti DG XI.D.2. and via Internet (coordinates given in the box at the end of page 8).*

LIFE 1999 application round

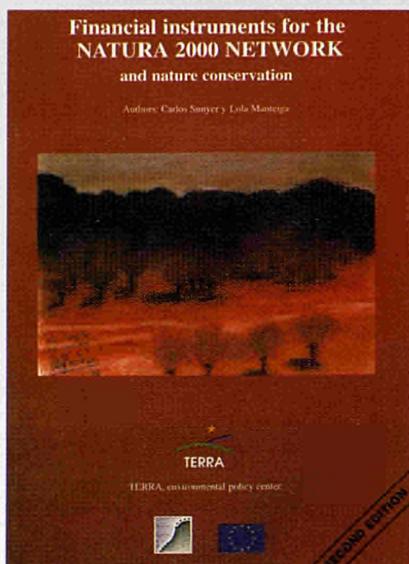
Applications have to be submitted to the national competent authorities before the end of the year. The exact dates are given in the application brochure, which is now available from these bodies or via Internet. This year, an accompanying brochure entitled 'a step by step guide to preparing a project proposal' guides the applicant through the all stages of preparing a well conceived project.

Guidelines on the functional assessment of European wetland ecosystems

This project, undertaken by Prof. Edward Maltby and his team from the Wetland Ecosystems Research Group with funds from the DGXII STEP Programme, has resulted in a set of user friendly guidelines to help assess types of wetland and to identify their functions and economic values. This should assist the user in choosing best practice methods for wise management and practical conservation efforts in the field. For more information contact *Prof. Maltby at Royal Holloway Institute for Environmental Research, UK. Tel: 0044 1784 477404; fax: 0044 1784 477427; e-mail: e.maltby@rbhnc.ac.uk*

Seminar on Natura 2000 by the Natur- und Umweltschutz-Akademie des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany

In February, the Academy held a seminar on "Natura 2000 – a Network of SPAs and SCIs" in Germany. The seminar report gives the minutes of the various contributions made and some useful background information on Natura 2000. *Report available in German only from NUA, Siemensstr. 5, D-45659 Recklinghausen, Fax: 0049 2361 305340.*



Financial Instruments for the Natura 2000 Network

TERRA, a Spanish Environmental organisation, has published – with the support of DG XI and the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Development and Fisheries – a book on the EU's financial instruments and their potential application to nature conservation. The book starts with an overview of the Natura 2000 network and its financial implications and goes on to review the LIFE, Structural and Cohesion Funds, CAP accompanying measures and other Community initiatives. It also gives case studies of projects that were successful in obtaining funds. *For copies of the 2nd edition, available in English and Spanish, contact TERRA, Jorge Manrique 1, 28420 La Navata, Madrid tel/fax: 0043 918586827 e-mail: terra@quercus.ec*

A new methodological guide for establishing 'documents d'objectifs' for Natura 2000 sites

In 1995, the Reserves Naturelles de France embarked on a LIFE project to devise a methodology for establishing 'documents d'objectifs' in Natura 2000 areas. These are a kind of management plan intended to describe the existing heritage of an area and to define strategies for conserving or setting trends for it. The methodology was tested out on 36 sites and has since resulted in a new set of guidelines. The intention is not so much to propose a uniform template for policy documents on Natura 2000 sites but rather to guide the applicant through all the potential issues and considerations to be taken into account when devising such a document. This includes advice on how to involve and consult local stakeholders in the development process. *Copies of the guidelines available in French from ATEN, 2 place Peirre Viala, F-34060 Montpellier Cedex; fax +33 467 52 77 93 (price 60 FRF).*

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