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## Problems Nature 2000 sites

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### ABSTRACT

In spite of widespread support from the population of most member countries for European Union policy, including support for sustainable development, in many EU countries, the levels of acceptance of new environmental protection programmes have been and, in particular in new member states, still are considerably low. The experience of the countries which were the first to implement union directives show that they cannot be effectively applied without widespread public participation. The goal of this study was, using the example of Poland, to assess public acceptance of the expansion of nature conservation in the context of sustainable development principles and to discover whether existing nature governance should be modified when establishing new protected areas. The increase in protected areas in Poland has become a hotbed of numerous conflicts. In spite of the generally favourable attitudes to Nature that Polish people have, Nature 2000 is perceived as an unnecessary additional conservation tool. Both local authorities and communities residing in the Natura areas think that the programme is a hindrance, rather than a help in the economic development of municipalities or regions, as was initially supposed. This lack of acceptance results from many factors, mainly social, historic and economic. The implications of these findings for current approach to Nature governance in Poland are discussed.

**Keywords:** Nature 2000, Nature conservation, Public participation

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Nature 2000 network of protected sites designated under the Birds (79/409/EEC)<sup>1</sup> and Habitats Directives (COM/88/0381)<sup>2</sup> of the European Union is a key pillar of its policy for the conservation of biodiversity. The current development phase of the Nature 2000 network focuses the attention of all parties involved to the challenges of management planning and the implementation of management instruments and management measures. Therefore, the European Commission commissioned a project entitled “Dealing with Conflicts in the Implementation and Management of the Nature 2000 Network - Best Practice at the Local / Site Level”. The project reviews the experiences of the Member States in multiple-use, participatory management planning and conflict management relative to Nature 2000 sites. As part of this study, a European-wide review and five country studies (Slovenia, Czech Republic, The Netherlands, France and Sweden) were carried out to assess and analyse sources of conflict and the strategies that have been developed to resolve them. This report presents the findings of this study. Furthermore, the results of the European workshop held in Brussels on the 18th of June 2009 are included in the report.

Therefore the European Commission has commissioned a study entitled Contract “Dealing with Conflicts in the Implementation and Management of the Nature 2000 Network - Best Practice at the Local / Site Level” which reviews the experiences of the Member States in conflict management on Nature 2000 sites. It focuses on ways found to involve stakeholders in the management of Nature 2000 sites and innovative ways developed to balance the economic, social, cultural and environmental objectives of the sites. Also methods and tools that can prevent or solve conflicts between stakeholders involved in the management of Nature 2000 sites is of interest, that can be collected from anecdotal evidence from individuals and organisations operating at the site level such as the managers of protected areas as well as from overall literature available on this topic. The study is executed by a consortium of 3 organizations - Alterra, ECNC and Eurosite, working together in a Project Management Team (PMT) (see text boxes for more information on the respective organizations).

## **2. POTENTIAL SOURCES OF CONFLICTS RELATED TO MULTIPLE-USE OF NATURE 2000 SITES**

The following multiple-use issues related to management planning or necessary management measures are mentioned in reports and statements made during the workshop. Potential sources of conflict with daily land users:

- Actual restrictions to current land use of a Natura 2000 site. Publications refer to various restrictions foreseen in the current land use of the areas in a broad range of different land uses as agriculture, forestry, hunting, tourism, transport, fishery and extraction industries or mining;
- Inadequate financial compensation or financial means to compensate for the restrictions imposed;
- Increased administrative and bureaucratic procedures;

- Reduction and/or interference of the sovereignty of landowner to decide on the management of his own property;
- No (or limited) acknowledgment of existing local knowledge and expertise in the process of management planning;
- Different perceptions and views on nature/biodiversity and ways of protecting it between stakeholders involved in the process;
- Different time horizon for considering management issues between the landowners/managers (30 to 40 years) and administrators/politicians (5 to 10 years).

Potential sources of conflicts with economic sectors (related to plans and projects):

- Restricted options for land use change;
- Conflicting policies due to lack of integration between different (sectoral) plans and processes to develop these plans.

### **3. CONFLICTS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

Often a real conflict emerges from a dispute that escalates in terms of a gradual change from a disagreement to a conflict between people and/or groups - as not every quarrel or disagreement can be seen as a real conflict, existing definitions used to describe types of conflicts in a policy context were reviewed and three types are presented:

- 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 cooperation 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;
- 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.

Solutions to prevent and resolve disagreements and conflicts occurring in the field of Natura 2000 management are looked for in procedures as well as in resources that are used – these include:

- Improved information and communication means (local information meetings, door-to-door distribution of leaflets, local media, (local or regional) information points);
- Improved participation of a broad range of stakeholders (procedures for consultations, setting up of advisory groups);
- Developing and offering various management (planning) options and tools enabling landowners and land users to choose measures that might be compatible with their business;
- Financial incentives and compensatory measures. Also, other alternative sources of income like eco-tourism and branding are developed.

Within the field of Natural resource management many protected area managers have practical experience regarding participatory approaches and conflict management. Also several academic studies have been dedicated to emerging issues of conflict surrounding the management of Natural resources and ways to solve them. Conflicts related to the management of protected areas, in this case Nature 2000 sites, are not a new phenomenon. But in some areas the process of establishing the Nature 2000 network has resulted in the complication of pre-existing conflict. In order to ensure adequate participation in implementing the Nature 2000 management, and to avoid conflict and to redress conflicts that have arisen during the site selection and designation stages, attention must be given to participatory processes. Conflict management and conflict resolution is an integral part of the site management process and management planning of Nature 2000 sites.

In many countries Nature 2000 sites are privately owned and leased and the management of the Nature 2000 sites depends on the active involvement of landowners and users. The importance of involving these stakeholders in the management of protected areas are apparent and reasons most often cited for doing so are:

- Democratic necessity. Involving the right people (e.g. stakeholders as defined in the text box below) in the management process respects their landowner and citizen rights and recognizes their vital role in the management of Nature 2000 areas.
- Increase of social acceptance and public support for the management of the site. In many Nature 2000 sites the management of habitats is undertaken by private owners, NGO's and other non state organizations. Effective and efficient management requires the support of local stakeholders.
- Sharing of knowledge and understanding. All stakeholders have unique different perspectives as to what the problem is and what constitutes a good solution. In developing management plans it is important to involve all (key) players in order to ensure that the best solutions are found and to build consensus. One of the important aspects of stakeholder involvement is to encourage people to work together, as part of a common effort that is driven by commonly agreed objectives; especially if sites are owned by various private owners or organizations working jointly on management issues increases change of success for the whole site.

However involving stakeholders in the management of sites requires investments of time and resources and can increase the complexity of the process of management planning. It also requires a long term commitment from the various parties and might not always lead to the expected results.

Often a real conflict emerges from a dispute that escalates in terms of a gradual change from a disagreement to a conflict between people and/or groups. So, because not every quarrel or disagreement can be seen as a real conflict, the term conflict requires further definition for a better understanding of how to deal with them and of the process of conflict management.

Because Nature 2000 is a policy instrument, existing definitions used to describe types of conflicts in a policy context were reviewed and three types are presented:

- 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 cooperation 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;
- 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 (see Conflicts in nature conservation). As a result the disputes drift outside settled social mechanisms.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

The Nature 2000 network of protected sites consists of sites designated under the Birds (79/409/EEC)<sup>4</sup> and Habitats Directives (COM/88/0381)<sup>5</sup> of the European Union and is a key pillar of the its policy for the conservation of biodiversity. After the selection of sites, the currently development phase of the Nature 2000 network draws the attention of all parties involved - policy makers, site managers, researchers, landowners, local communities, different economic sectors (e.g. tourism, recreation, water, transport, agriculture, forestry, and fisheries) – to the challenges of management planning and the implementation of management instruments and management measures. As part of the overall implementation, special attention is given to stakeholder interest and social support for the management of the Nature 2000 network (related to article 2 of the Habitats Directive). The need to combine the conservation goals of the Nature 2000 sites with the existing land use and its future development generates tensions and presents significant practical challenges. Clarity needs to be created on the management instruments and measures required to ensure the favourable conservation status and their consequences for land use relevant to the diverse actors at the local level. Also, the need to reconcile economic, social, cultural and environmental objectives requires constant and skilful attention. Nature conservation professionals at the policy and management levels are the ‘front-line’ and they require specific support to enable them to fulfil their Nature 2000 responsibilities.

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