

EU Nature Directors Meeting
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Nature Conservation and EU Financing – Challenges, Best practice, Options

Workshop conclusions

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The workshop

Hosted by **NABU (BirdLife Germany)**, **SOS (BirdLife Slovakia)** and **BirdLife Europe**

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The workshop

European Commission (morning)

- Fitness Check findings on financing and way forward

Member State views (morning)

- Slovakia
- Romania
- Germany
- Discussion

Practitioners' experience (afternoon)

- Structural Funds, Romania, WWF
- Rural Development, Hungary, Ministry of Agriculture
- View of non-state forest owners, Slovakia
- LIFE and PAF, LIPU, BirdLife Italy

Summary of morning session: The key challenge

Broad agreement that benefits of Nature Directives by far exceed costs, but...

“The current funding gap is so large that achievement of the objectives of the Directives will not be possible without a very significant increase in funding” (Fitness Check Evaluation Study, 2016)

Issues are: availability – accessibility – administration

Key challenges mentioned

- Structural funds were **not designed with nature conservation in mind** – fit the funds to nature – not nature to the funds!
- **harmful subsidies** continue (e.g. CAP Greening has not resulted in real improvements)
- **current prioritisation of funding in Member States** does not meet requirements of Nature Directives implementation
- **tracking** of biodiversity spending is very difficult across the funds, current method of EU is very questionable
- most Natura 2000 **cost estimates** are outdated
- **administrative resources** are bottleneck for implementation of Nature Directives, including financing
- **controllability requirements** prevent many targeted biodiversity measures

Debate on a standalone EU fund for nature

- **Germany:** Federal Minister of Environment, Länder Nature Directors and NGOs support the idea and prepare first rough proposals
- **Slovakia:** supports the idea because such a fund would allow to focus funding directly at needs of species and habitats (“*Fit the fund to nature, not nature to the funds*”)
- **European Commission:** expect study results 2017 including pros and cons of a standalone fund
- **Agreement** that under any system land users need to be key partners and beneficiaries of EU funding, but some say that this can be achieved better (more targeted) through a standalone fund

Best practice and lessons learnt: main issue for the afternoon

**Report and presentations can be provided
later!**

Additional details about Member State presentations

Slovakia

- spent about 2% of received EU funds on Natura 2000; national spending only 15 million EUR in the same period – *Ministry: “far too little”*
- mixed experience with integrated approach, big financing gaps exist also in Slovakia (e.g. in the area of forests)
- tracking is very difficult
- LIFE: 14 projects with 19 million EUR – very effective, but very limited in size; national co-financing mechanism in place
- PAFs: useful, but so far limited impact

Romania

- Challenge is governance: great number of Natura 2000 sites and big total area
- National agency for natural areas not yet operational
- Management Plan evaluations exceeded capacities of the Environmental Agency and Ministry of Environment
- LIFE no longer co-financed in Romania, leading to drop in applications
- Despite increasing resources human pressures increased constantly

Germany

- CAP Greening: not effective, as not ambitious enough
- Rural Development: few targeted measures because of controllability issues
- No “incentive component” for ambitious measures (just “income foregone”)
- Programming, implementation and monitoring very difficult as it is spread across many programme categories
- Regional Development Fund: only very few Länder use ERDF for nature (1.3% of total, 0.1% for Natura 2000)

Germany

- New estimate for costs of Nature Directives implementation: 1.4 billion EUR/year (more than doubling of 2004 estimate)
- No data on current level of spending
- Germany calls for fundamental change: new dedicated EU nature protection fund (supported by Länder Nature Directors and NGOs, German Farmers Association)