

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**

Held under the auspices of the **Slovak Presidency of the EU**

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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- most Natura 2000 **cost estimates** are outdated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)