

Special Report n°1/2017

# More efforts needed to implement the Natura 2000 network to its full potential



EUROPEAN  
COURT  
OF AUDITORS





# The audit scope and approach

The Court assessed whether the Natura 2000 network has been appropriately implemented.



We examined whether the network was appropriately managed, financed and monitored.

The audit concerned the Commission services, visits to five Member States (France, Germany, Poland, Romania, Spain) and the European Environment Agency.

Visits to 24 Natura 2000 sites in these Member States were carried out, survey was sent to the 23 other Member States.



We also consulted with various stakeholder groups.



# Main conclusion

While Natura 2000 does play a major role in protecting biodiversity, we concluded that the Natura 2000 network had not been implemented to its full potential. Significant progress is still needed if we are to meet the ambitious goals of the EU2020 biodiversity strategy.

There are 3 building blocks for this.....



# *I “Member States were not managing the Natura 2000 network sufficiently well”*

1. Coordination in and between Member States insufficient.
2. Conservation measures delayed or ill defined.
3. Problems with the “appropriate assessment” of projects impacting on Natura 2000 sites.
4. Scope to improve dissemination of Commission guidance.

## ***II “EU funds were not well mobilised to support the Natura 2000 network”***

1. Lack of reliable information on use of EU funds for 2007 – 2013 period.
2. Prioritised Action Frameworks a good initiative but not well prepared.
3. Assessment of future funding needs incomplete at programme and site level.
4. EU funding schemes insufficiently tailored to Natura 2000 objectives.

### ***III “Monitoring and reporting systems for Natura 2000 don’t provide the right information”***

1. The EU funding schemes had no performance indicators tailored to Natura 2000 (indicators were for general biodiversity objectives)
2. At site level, monitoring was often incomplete.
3. Standard Data Forms not updated.
4. Member State data reported for the “State of Nature” report still incomplete ”

# Recommendation 1

## **To fully implement the Natura 2000 Directives:**

- Member States should improve coordination , particularly between agricultural and environmental ministries;
- Member States should complete conservation measures for designated sites, and improve their “appropriate assessments”;
- Commission should promote application of guidance, results of biogeographical seminars, and best practices.

# Recommendation 2

## **To provide a better financing framework:**

- Member States should estimate actual spending and funding needs at site level and for the network as a whole;
- Member States should update their Prioritised Action Frameworks;
- Member States should ensure consistency between the PAF's and the programming of the various EU funds, and propose measures better targeted at Natura 2000;
- Commission should support Member States.



# Recommendation 3

## **To better measure results:**

- Member States should include relevant Natura 2000 indicators for the EU funds;
- Commission should establish cross cutting Natura 2000 indicators for the EU funds;
- Member States should prepare and execute monitoring plans at site level, and update Standard Data Forms regularly.

# Thank you

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