

## Fitness Check of the nature directives: FACE note on better implementation of Natura 2000

While the creation of the Natura 2000 network has been a success, there have been inadequate efforts to restore and improve the condition of habitats inside and outside of the network. Instead, too much focus has been put on increasing species protection. If this approach is not modified, species will continue to decline regardless of their legal protection and the EU will fail to meet its ambitious biodiversity targets under the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020.

In the context of improving the implementation of the EU nature directives, FACE believes that:

- Member States need to complete the establishment of the Natura 2000 network.
- There needs to be dedicated funding for the Natura 2000 network and greater financial support from other policy instruments affecting species and habitats (e.g. CAP).
- There should be increased stakeholder involvement in management planning for Natura 2000 sites. This would promote bottom-up approaches to conservation.
- Management planning for Natura 2000 sites needs to take better account of the cultural and socio-economic activities that help(ed) to create and maintain most Natura 2000 sites.
- The Natura 2000 Award should continue to develop with a new “cultural heritage” category.
- Knowledge transfer between Member States using the Biogeographical processes should continue to be promoted in conjunction with broad stakeholder engagement.
- Member States should be encouraged to initiate support mechanisms to promote bottom-up/community based conservation projects within Nature 2000 sites.
- Relevant rural stakeholders should be appropriately rewarded for supporting and enhancing the qualifying interests of Natura 2000 sites.
- The European Commission should create better awareness of the legal basis (Article 10, Habitats Directive and Article 3, Birds Directive) to conserve biodiversity outside of the Natura 2000 network.
- There should be greater recognition that sustainable hunting represents a strong incentive to support the maintenance of habitats and species within the Natura 2000 network.

