



EUROPEAN FOREST INSTITUTE

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# Natura 2000 and Forests Challenges and Pathways for Implementation Forest Day, Brussels

13-10-2015



# Background

## Natura 2000

- Ambitious and unique nature conservation project
- Aims to protect (in) multi-use landscapes - combining biodiversity conservation and sustainable development
- Charming approach – but also challenging





## Background (2)

### BeFoFu project (BioDivERsA project, 2010-2014), analysed

- The implementation (politics) of Natura 2000 in forests
- Management and conservation strategies and the impact of climate change

### BeFoFu approach

- Local case studies in 6 EU member states (AT, DE, ES, FR, NL, UK) and an EU level policy analysis
  - Extensive interview data on local implementation & stakeholder workshop
- Identification of **conflicts, challenges** and possible **policy solutions** regarding Natura 2000 implementation in (managed) forests



# Typical implementation conflicts...

Type of conflict	Substance	Occurrence	Most involved actors	Conflict regulation strategies
<b>Procedural</b>	Procedures, feelings of exclusion	Mostly site designation, several countries	All types of actors, land users being most affected	Changing the implementation mode (participation), compromising on the conservation science-based rationale
<b>Interest-based/material</b>	Property/use rights & costs	Whole implementation process	Land owners and users	Compensation payments, delayed implementation, (only) soft & symbolic management regulations
<b>Ideological and knowledge-based</b>	Conflicting management paradigms	Whole implementation process	All types of actors	(Only) soft & symbolic management regulations, compromises, participation & learning



## ...and related challenges for implementation

1. Balancing conservation and wood production?
2. Stakeholder participation?
3. Climate change?
4. Funding?
5. Policy integration?





# Balancing biodiversity conservation and timber production

On many Natura 2000 forest sites, wood production and nature conservation are pursued jointly

- Both goals are compatible to a certain degree
  - But: competition for biomass causes conflicts
  - Incompatibilities in scale and time
- How to designing and implement a fair and effective policy approach to management?





# Integrating stakeholders without compromising biodiversity conservation

Shift from expert-based to more participatory implementation approaches

- Acceptance has increased amongst forest owners and users
  - Yet, participation takes time, may weaken conservation objectives; and stakeholders have refused to participate at all in some cases
- How to get stakeholder integration and conservation together?





# Achieving a favourable conservation status under climate change

Effects of climate change cannot be mitigated by local management alone – changes in the presence of species may be inevitable

- A flexibilization of habitat designation and condition assessment may be needed  
→ When and how to implement this politically?



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# Conserving forest biodiversity without reliable funding

Natura 2000 implementation creates costs

- Overall too little funds available for forest owners (compare with agriculture)
- But: funding issue is complicated (diverging policy preferences; lacking commitment)

→ How to address it?





# Conserving forests under Natura 2000 while other policies encourage harvesting them

Natura 2000 goals are formally recognized by other land use policies – but contradicting incentives are in place

- Policy incoherency tends to increase during implementation – coordination of policies is a major challenge
- How to achieve a truly integrative approach?





# (Policy Solution) Pathways





# Pathway 1: take time to learn

## *Evaluation of the current situation*

- Implementation of Natura 2000 in forests is still evolving

## *Major rationale of the path*

- Allow for enough time and facilitate policy learning across countries

## *Governance arrangements*

- Improve information & mechanisms for exchange and mutual learning
- Openly discuss challenges, but also chances and best practices
- Develop guideline reports including benchmarking



## Pathway 2: reinforce the ecologic rationale – strengthen the role of conservation science

### *Evaluation of the current situation*

- Implementation of Natura 2000 in forests is ineffective

### *Major rationale of the path*

- Concretize core concepts based on scientific knowledge (conservation status, management strategies)
- Implement necessary measures and monitor success

### *Governance arrangements*

- Crucial role for (conservation) science
- Make sure that objectives are achieved via instrument mix including regulatory requirements and incentives



## Pathway 3: (re-)inforce the social rationale – make Natura 2000 a citizens' project

### *Evaluation of the current situation*

- Implementation of Natura 2000 in forests is hampered by its technocratic image

### *Major rationale of the path*

- Involve concerned citizens into the creation of management strategies

### *Governance arrangements*

- Create local implementation fora
  - Develop jointly agreed perspective on objectives, trade-offs and conflict regulation tools
- A true engagement will likely improve policy effectiveness in social & ecological terms



# Pathway 4: (re-)inforce the economic rationale – investing in Natura 2000

## *Evaluation of the current situation*

- (Economic) interest conflicts are the core of implementation problems

## *Major rationale of the path*

- Provide for a new and efficient funding strategy

## *Governance arrangements*

- Assess current funding situation
- Assess and discuss (political) obstacles for a more efficient funding strategy
- Develop funding instruments that take forest owners attitudes towards their forests into account



# Pathway 5: work towards an integrated European land use and conservation policy

## *Evaluation of the current situation*

- Implementation problems of Natura 2000 in forests are the result of contradicting and insufficiently integrated policies

## *Major rationale of the path*

- Work towards a ‘holistic’, integrated land use & conservation policy

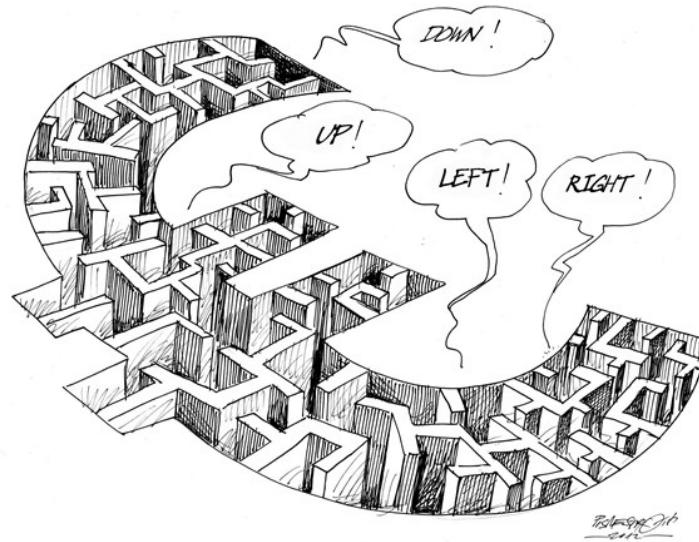
## *Governance arrangements*

- Assess and evaluate the current state of policy integration
- Agree on an integrated policy approach based on this analysis
- Implement, evaluate, and re-design/correct the integrated policy approach



# Conclusions

- Natura 2000 unique European project
- Conflicts and challenges remain
- Different pathways can (need to) be combined – not all can be gone at the same place and time





# !Thank you!

In case you want to read more

**Winkel, G.; Blondet, M.; Borrass, L.; Frei, T.; Geitznauer, M.; Gruppe, A.; Jump, A.; De Koning, J.; Sotirov, M.; Weiss, G.; Winter, S.; Turnhout, E.** (2015): The implementation of Natura 2000 in forests: a trans- and interdisciplinary assessment of challenges and choices. Environmental Science and Policy 52: 23-32.

*We thank the research funding agencies Austrian Wissenschaftsfond, the French Agence Nationale de la Recherche, the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, The Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research, the UK's Natural Environment Research Council and the UK's Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs.*

*This project has been funded under the Biodiversa network*