



EUROPEAN FOREST INSTITUTE

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**Natura 2000 and Forests**  
**Challenges and Pathways for Implementation**  
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# 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



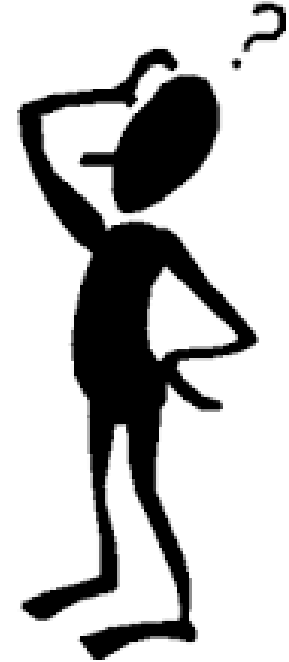
# Typical implementation conflicts...

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?







# 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*

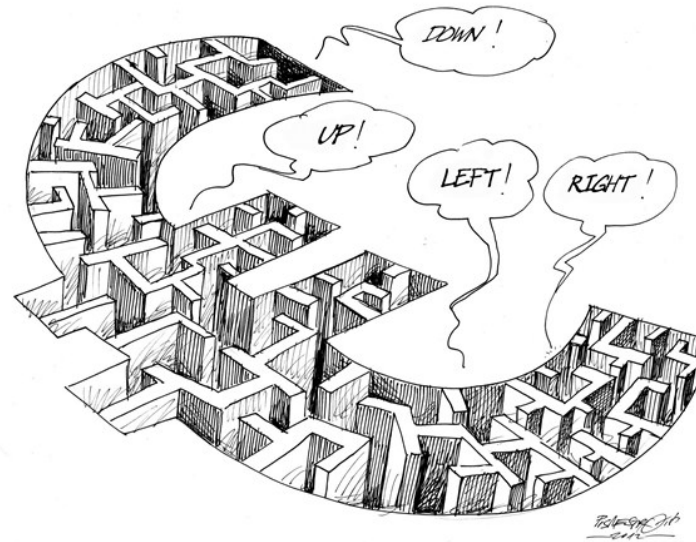
- Assess and evaluate the current state of policy integration
- Agree on an integrated policy approach based on this analysis
- Implement, evaluate, and re-design/correct the integrated policy approach





# 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.; Geitzenauer, 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.**

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