

Natura 2000 and Forests: Assessing the State of Implementation and Effectiveness

M. Sotirov, G. Weiss, A. Jump, S. Garcia, M. Marchetti

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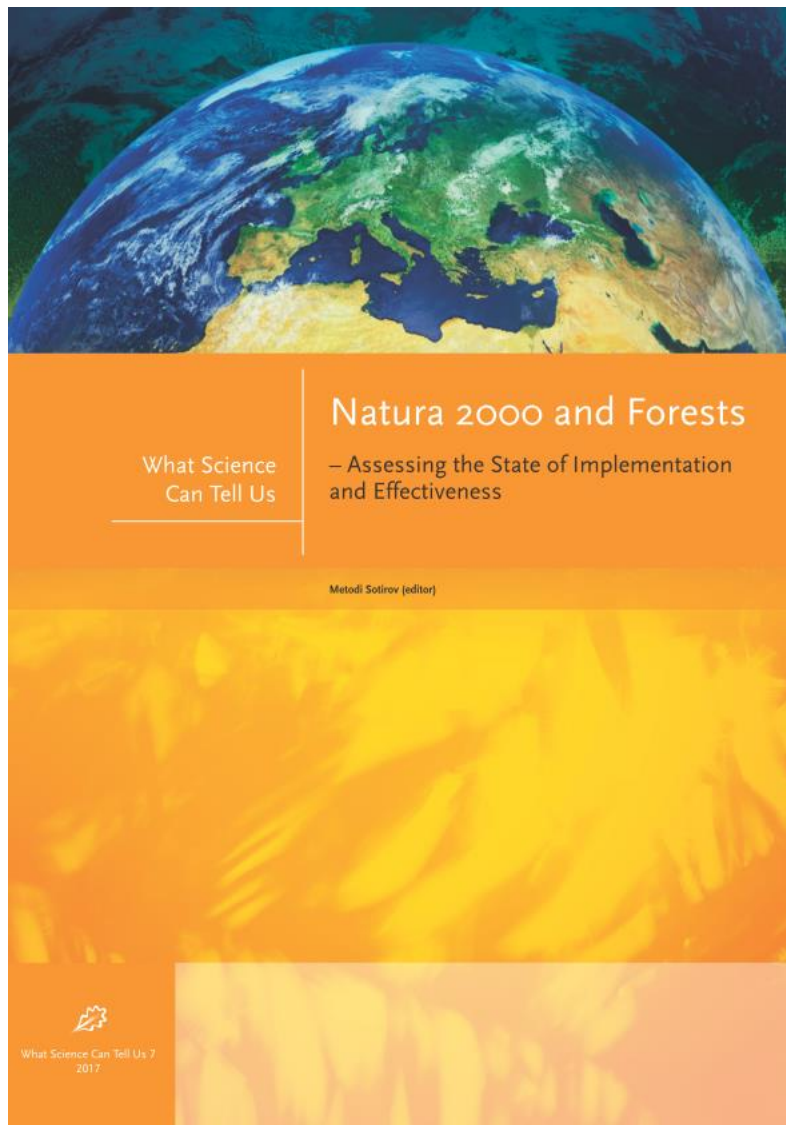
Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg



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Presentation based on a EFI commissioned study summarised here today

Funded by EFI Trust Fund for Policy Support

Coordinated by ALU-FR, with 20 researchers from 10 countries and multiple disciplines

Evidence: review of documents, scientific articles, interviews, economic and ecological data, external feedback

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Study objectives:

1. What is the state of biodiversity in Europe's forest?
2. What do we know about the implementation of Natura 2000 in forests in the 28 EU member states?
3. How effective is Natura 2000 in forests?
4. What do we know about the economic effects of Natura 2000 in forests and the related funding?
5. What are policy relevant conclusions?

What is the state of biodiversity in Europe's forest?

- **Decision-makers in Europe have faced contradicting information about the state of forest biodiversity:**
 - FOREST EUROPE: forest biodiversity is improving
 - Natura 2000: forest biodiversity is declining

- **Differences between the two monitoring processes in terms of:**
 - key concepts and definitions
 - assessment tools (criteria and indicators; thresholds)
 - levels and units of analysis
 - data collection and data analysis methods
 - knowledge production traditions
 - policy objectives and governance context.

What do we know about the implementation of Natura 2000 in forests in EU-28?

- Failures in legal transposition, identification, establishment and management of Natura 2000 sites
- Policy and management conflicts between authorities and stakeholders
- Differences across the EU Member States regarding:
 - ecological conditions, practices in biodiversity conservation, priorities
 - political systems, capacities, and socio-economic drivers
- Good practice examples regarding:
 - cooperation between public and non-state actors
 - participation in management planning, formulating conservation objectives and practical conservation measures

Best practice examples of Natura 2000 and forests

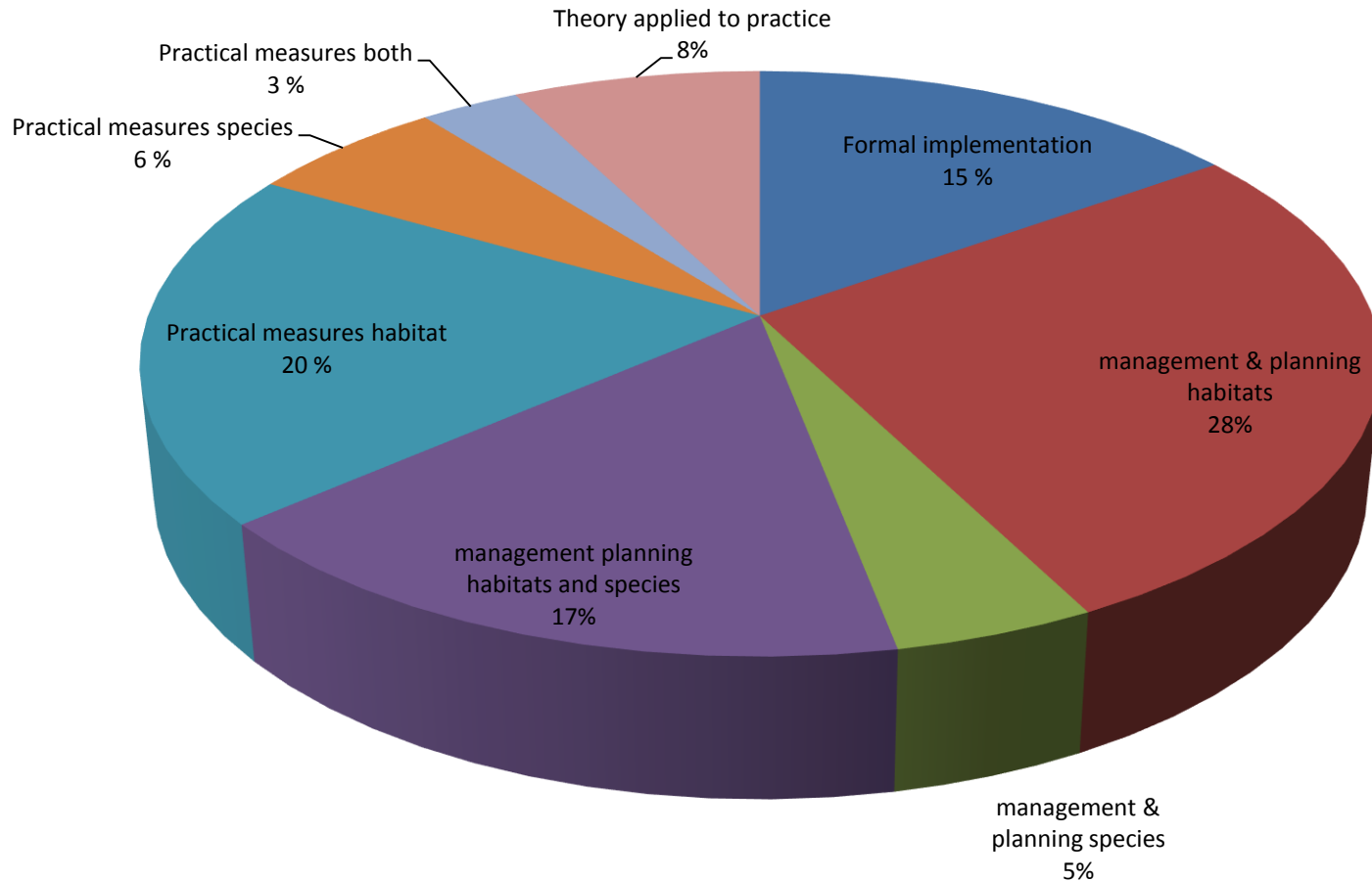


Figure 1: Best practice examples (N=66) of Natura 2000 implementation in forests: by topic (Sotirov et al. 2017)

How effective is Natura 2000 in forests?

- Knowledge about Natura 2000 effectiveness is nuanced
 - majority of habitats/species are in unfavorable conservation status
 - lack of effective management plans and measures
 - long-term ecological processes vs. recent Natura 2000 policy
 - best practices of Natura 2000 conservation in forests
- Effective habitats and species conservation under Natura 2000
 - depends on appropriate implementation across the EU-28
 - has to consider also climate change, nitrogen emissions and forestry operations
 - needs to still create a connected, flexible network that can cope with these changes

What do we know about the economic effects of Natura 2000 in forests and the related funding?

- Natura 2000 could trigger significant costs for forest owners, public authorities and stakeholders
- Its total value of forest benefits/ES largely overcomes the costs
- Low acceptance of Natura 2000 from forest owners/land users
 - some feel not well compensated for changing their practices
 - some do not want to change their practices even if compensated
- Available EU-level funding can only partly cover estimated costs
 - ineffective integration across policy sectors (envi, agri, forest)
 - diverging policy priorities at different policy levels
 - ineffective use of existing funds

Rural development funding for Natura 2000, 2007-2013

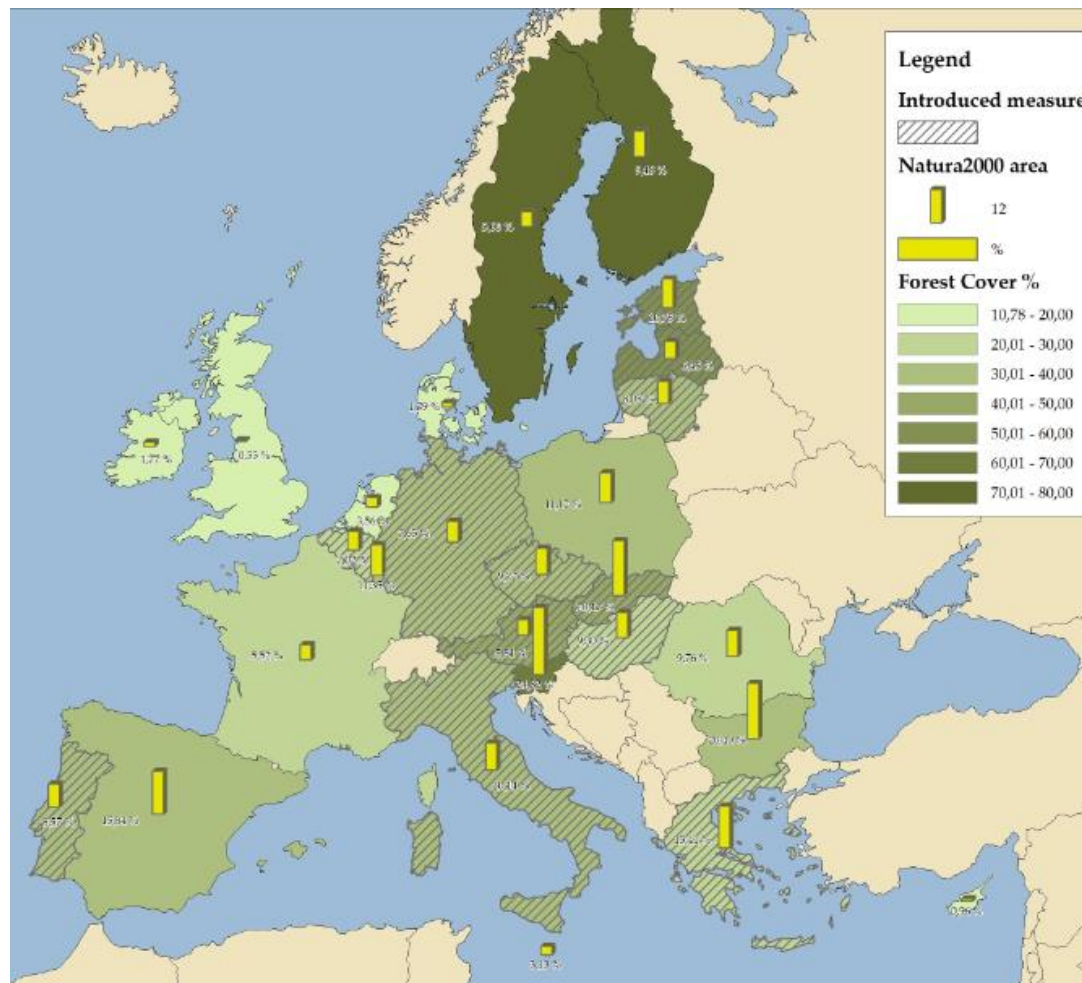


Figure 2: Distribution of planned RDP Measure 224 for Natura 2000 payments in forests across EU countries, 2007-2013 (Sarvasova et al. 2017)

Rural development funding for Natura 2000, 2014-2020

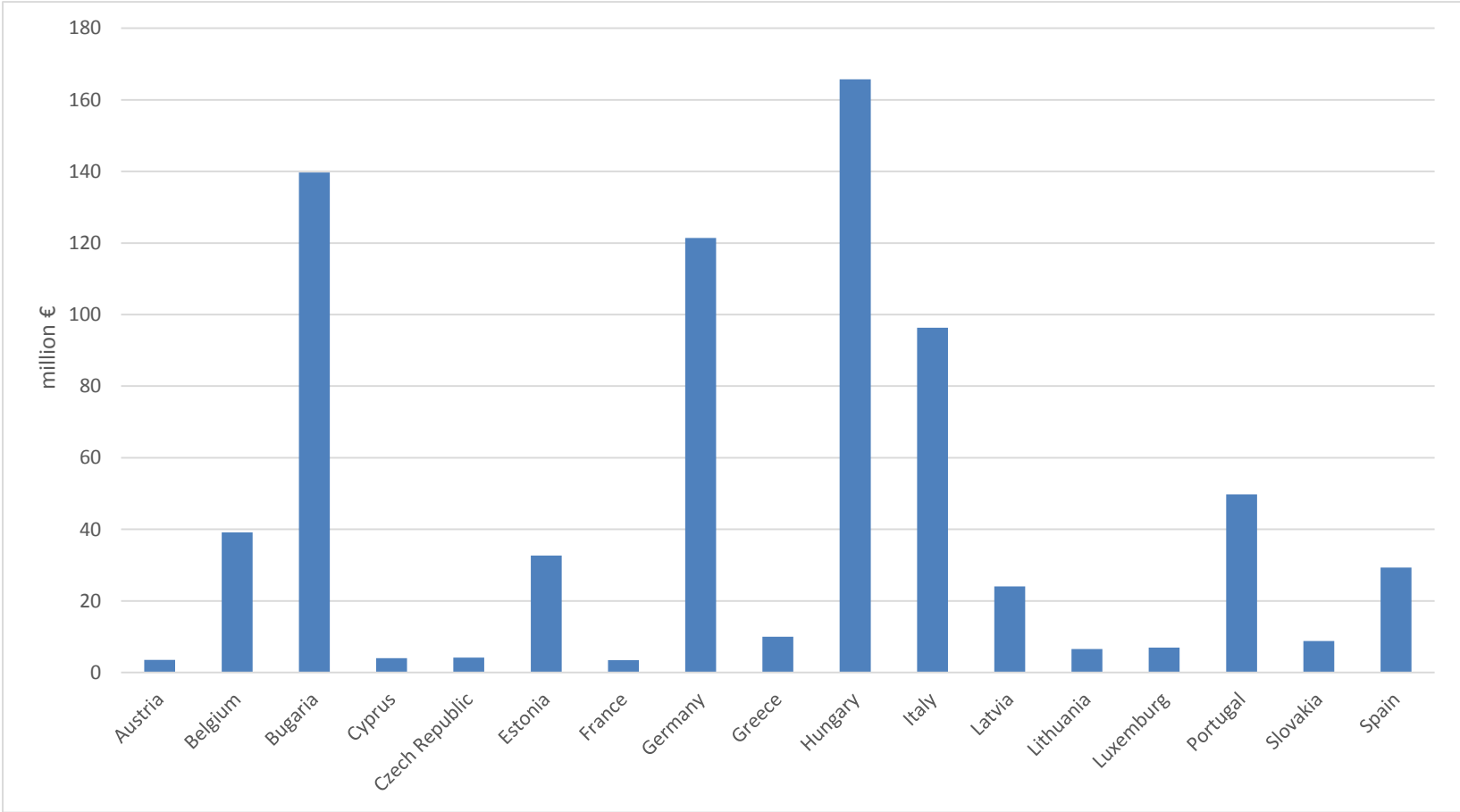


Figure 3: Indicative public support for Natura 2000 specific payment (M12) in RDP 2014-2020 (EC 2017)

Recommendations

- Tackle *ideological* and *information* challenges
 - by improving two-way communication between authorities and stakeholders
 - spelling out both win-win situations and trade-offs for nature conservation and forest management practices

- Tackle *economic* interest-based challenges
 - by encouraging co-funding from all administrative levels, and from nature conservation and forestry/agriculture sectors
 - by compensation payments to support conservation objectives

- Tackle *institutional* challenges in Natura 2000 implementation
 - by improving the cross-sectoral policy integration
 - by strengthening coordination between the nature conservation and the forestry/land-use sectors

Recommendations (2)

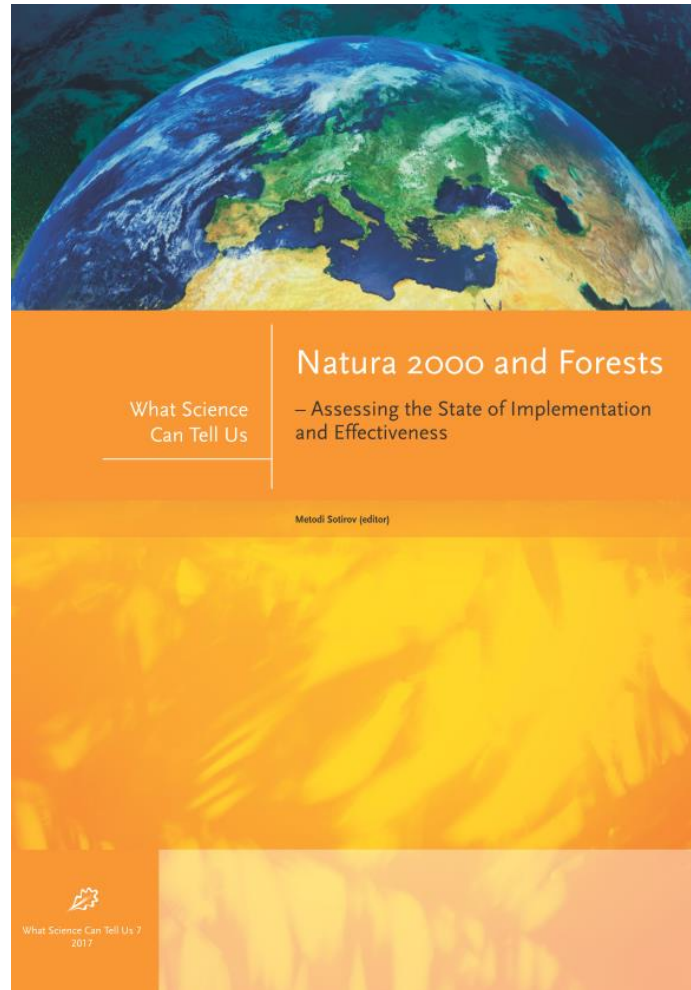
- Improve the positive effects of Natura 2000 in forests with
 - appropriate application of Natura 2000 policy
 - integrated/adaptable site management and (re-)designation to allow species and habitats to remain despite changes
 - creating safeguards towards meeting conservation objectives

- Involve forest managers/owners and nature conservationists in
 - setting conservation objectives and assessing conservation status
 - understanding the trade-offs between forest ES and Natura 2000 management objectives

- Share best practices of Natura 2000 management in forests

- Improve data quality, harmonization and standardization between FOREST EUROPE and Natura 2000

Thank you for listening!



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