

EURO – SITE – MANAGER

ISSUE 1 - APRIL 2010

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Welcome to the first issue of Euro-Site-Manager! This series of newsletters provides site managers with insights about who's who and what's where in Brussels. Our aim is to bring Brussels and the issues that could affect your work closer to you. Also, we are very keen to hear about issues affecting your work, to share that with your network colleagues and also Brussels-based institutions.

This is a key moment in time to be aware about developments taking place in Brussels. The new Commission and Commissioners are now in place and the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty are being implemented. In the run-up to the EC's next programmatic period (2013-2020), there are major issues being debated and determined, which will affect all site managers in the coming decade – these include, establishing major funding mechanisms for nature conservation, the setting of a post-2010 biodiversity target and prioritised ways of working to achieve that, and policy-led developments which will shape operating contexts.

Eurosite believes that the need for networking is more important than ever because the scale of the challenges facing Europe's nature has never been greater. Biodiversity is continuing to be lost at an alarming rate and the impacts of climate change are a major threat; in addition, ecosystems services, new funding methods and the need for increasingly integrated cross-sector joint-working are likely to be placed 'centre-stage' in the framework of EU legislation and policy and national nature conservation priorities.

For members and other organisations with whom we interact, the Eurosite network needs to serve as a crucial coordinating mechanism to foster and facilitate the exchange of information, views, experiences, best and worst practices: that is required to underpin and inform greater understanding about the importance of sites, their connections, their biodiversity and what sites mean for people, their life quality and Europe's nature in the coming years. As well as working as effectively as possible at site level, Eurosite members and their staff should also be encouraged, supported and enabled to develop a European level of experience and see their work within a wider operating context.

Your feedback matters - please send any specific comments you have about the issues raised or any general comments and thoughts about Euro-Site-Manager to info@eurosite.org to help us improve the newsletter. We hope you enjoy reading this first issue!

1. Management of Protected Areas

The European Commission has recently established an Expert Working Group on Natura 2000 Management comprised of Member States, NGOs and other stakeholders. Eurosite has a seat on this group. The group is currently advising on two discussion papers which have been prepared by the European Commission. The first relates to the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and the second to the setting of conservation objectives for Natura 2000 sites. The Commission is revising both these discussion papers in preparation for the next working group meeting, which is expected to take place on the 21st June.

1.1. Designation of Special Areas of Conservation

Member States have a duty under the Habitats Directive to designate Sites of Community Interest (SCIs) as SACs within 6 years, which means that most Member States have to do this by 2010 or 2011. The Habitats Directive does not set out a detailed procedure for SAC designation and so legal clarity is required for a number of issues. The Commission has summarised these issues in a discussion paper, including: the national legal basis for designation; boundaries and maps; site descriptions and site conservation objectives. Following the outcomes of this discussion, the EC intends to produce further guidance on SAC designation, to provide common understanding.



Photograph by Karin Nuijten, Eurosite

1.2 Setting Conservation Objectives for Natura 2000 Sites

The Commission has produced a second working paper on 'setting conservation objectives for Natura 2000 sites'. The Commission has raised a number of issues which are currently being discussed by the working group, including: the species and habitats for which conservation objectives are needed; the scale of definition; common standards; the need for legal underpinning; and deadlines.

In March 2010, Eurosite provided feedback based on members' comments regarding the two papers. It is Eurosite's view that increasing and improving practical skills in site management is a basic and fundamental priority, which goes to the heart of ensuring effective implementation of Natura 2000. There is an urgent need to encourage and provide practical support for capacity building initiatives to improve site management techniques and approaches. Setting best practice standards and providing practical training and learning opportunities are critical to enable the intent of the Directives to be achieved across Europe.

Although the purpose and intent of the Directives are clearly not negotiable, the management arrangements may be. It was noted that, given the variability in the conservation regimes and management planning approaches developed and applied by different Member states, as well as potential future changes in Europe's nature itself, 'one-size-fits-all' approaches are not possible. Flexibility in the manner of implementing Natura 2000 is required, as well as confirmation of what processes would apply to ensure that the Directives still remain valid and enforceable under such varied circumstances. However, practical guidance would be helpful in specifying key criteria for participative management processes, and best practice examples could help illustrate how the Directives are being made to work in different contexts.

Some further specific points of feedback included the following:

- The need to avoid fragmentation and promote 'ecological cohesiveness' (e.g. through the establishment of buffer zones and ecological links between sites), are key areas where members feel specific advice (best practice examples) about how to take into account and manage for connectivity would be useful;
- The interim period between proposal of an SCI and designation of a SAC is critical - specifying the threats at the SCI proposal stage is extremely important to prevent possible damage during this period;
- Maps with clearly defined boundaries are essential parts of the act of designation, ideally accompanied by written descriptions, ecological arguments and reasons for designation of a site. Making these public the moment the site is proposed would also help the consultation process. Other relevant information could include 'up-front' statements about the percentage of national coverage of a habitat/species, why this would be adequate and also statements for each site detailing the share of the percentage of national coverage being met;

- Given the dynamic and evolving nature of sites, including impacts of climate change and other environmental changes, it is increasingly important that management plans specify what ecological targets must be met to maintain, achieve and/or improve a site's conservation value. Encouragement and support to develop adaptive management plans should be provided so that changes to a site can be measured and the impacts of prioritised (planned) management activities monitored;
- Effective management planning requires collection of ecological data so that the outcomes of implemented actions can be adequately assessed and also measured in terms of resource requirements – what resources were projected, what resources were actually expended and what the measured impacts were.

A copy of the complete response from Eurosite to the two European Commission papers circulated for comments is available in English from info@eurosite.org.

2. Financing for Protected Areas, Species and Habitats

2.1 Communication on Financing for Natura 2000 Sites

The EC is working towards a new Communication on Financing Natura 2000, expected to be launched in the first half of 2011. This will update the previous Communication on estimated costs and benefits of Natura 2000, produced in 2004. It is also expected to evaluate the effectiveness of the current 'integration approach' and provide a future financing perspective for Natura 2000. Experience to-date highlights that the uptake of funds under different EU instruments has failed to correspond to the financial needs of Natura 2000, as indicated by the Member States themselves, and it is estimated that only 20% of the total financing needs for managing protected areas in Europe are currently being met.

The necessity to take action for the management and restoration of Natura 2000 is underlined by the first conservation status assessment of species and habitats protected under the Habitats Directive, published in 2009, which revealed that only 17% of assessments were favourable¹. In light of the overall objective to achieve favourable conservation status for all species and habitats of EU conservation concern, a significant and measurable improvement in favourable conservation status is required to be delivered by Member States supported by appropriate EU financial mechanisms. Equally, the new EU biodiversity headline target on halting biodiversity loss and restoring it as far as possible reflects this need: in its Spring 2010 Conclusions the Council stated "that protected areas and ecological networks are a cornerstone of efforts to preserve biodiversity" and, in relation to Natura 2000, stressed "the need to ... put in place adequate finance and effective management and restoration measures".



Photograph courtesy of Scottish Natural Heritage

The next period will be critical for making Natura 2000 fully operational: it is expected that focus will increasingly shift to the effective protection, management and restoration of Natura 2000. A key priority will be the designation by Member States of these SCIs as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), the setting of conservation objectives for the sites and the putting in place of effective management measures to achieve these (e.g. management plans)².

Critical questions to be discussed, include:

- Are existing national and EU financial instruments and approaches fulfilling the provisions of Natura 2000 (Article 8 of the Habitats Directive)?
- What are the experiences with using the existing Rural Development, Cohesion and Regional Policy, Fisheries and LIFE+ funding instruments for Natura 2000?

1. 2000-2006 report available at http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/knowledge/rep_habitats/index_en.htm

2. Member States are legally obliged to designate SCIs as SACs within 6 years, establishing priorities in the light of the importance of the sites for the maintenance or restoration, at a favourable conservation status, of the habitats and species and for the coherence of Natura 2000, and in the light of the threats of degradation or destruction to which those sites are exposed. The six-year deadline for SAC designation has already expired for some SCIs and will become increasingly relevant over the next few years. The six-year deadline will have expired for 7,477 SCIs by the end of 2010 and for 15,232 SCIs by the end of 2012.

- Is funding going to the right beneficiaries?
- Are there specific administrative or political barriers to be addressed?
- How should priorities for EU co-financing best be defined and benefits demonstrated?

This is obviously a vital issue for Eurosite members. Currently, we are gathering members' feedback – a key point raised, for example, is the need to diversify funding mechanisms and ensure that these are more easily accessible to smaller NGOs and even GOs, especially those in Central and Eastern Member States. Currently, the preference given to larger projects, the payment structure, match-funding requirements and administrative requirements are major disincentives for many organisations. A proposal to consider a 'LIFE-light' version for part of the budget has been suggested to help resolve this issue. Another comment raised was the current use of tendering and calls for proposals as a means for allocating funding: a more interactive and collaborative approach, whereby projects are first drawn up in outline only, to be further developed in dialogue with the Commission, would allow a more efficient investment of energy and resources by all organisations.

A stakeholder conference will be organised by the EC in July 2010 to discuss these issues further.

2.2 LIFE+ Funding Consultation

The EC is consulting on its LIFE funding programme regarding what has worked well in the past and what could be improved. A meeting is being organised in Brussels on 31 May, immediately prior to the Green Week, to gather the views of stakeholders. Eurosite will be present at this meeting, where they will be representing the views of the membership. If you have any specific comments you would like to be raised, please send these to info@eurosite.org by 15 May 2010.



Photograph courtesy of Frédéric Dupuy, Conseil Général de la Gironde

3. A Biodiversity Vision, Targets and Monitoring

3.1 New EU Biodiversity Vision and Targets

On 15th March, the EU Environment Council adopted a new vision and headline target for biodiversity as follows:

“AGREES on a long-term vision that by 2050 European Union biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides – its natural capital – are protected, valued and appropriately restored for biodiversity’s intrinsic value and for their essential contribution to human wellbeing and economic prosperity, and so that catastrophic changes caused by the loss of biodiversity are avoided”.

“For this vision to be achieved AGREES further on a headline target of halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss”.

This headline target was the strongest of four options which had originally been proposed by the European Commission and is stronger than the previous EU 2010 biodiversity target because it takes the need for restoration into account, in addition to halting biodiversity loss. You can read the full text of the EU Environment Conclusions here: http://www.eu2010.es/en/documentosnoticias/noticias/mar15_consejoambiente.html

Furthermore, this biodiversity vision and target were endorsed by the EU Heads of State, in the European Council meeting of the 25th and 26th March. The conclusions of this meeting stated: *“There is an urgent need to reverse continuing trends of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation. The European Council is committed to the long term biodiversity 2050 vision and the 2020 target set out in the Council’s conclusions of 15 March 2010.”*

Next Steps in the Process

The European Commission will develop a new Communication on achieving the new target and set out a number of new sub-targets, by the end of 2010.

Esther de Lange, a Dutch MEP from the European People’s Party (Christian Democrats) is responsible for drafting a European Parliament report on the new biodiversity targets on behalf of the Environment Committee. The report will go forward for adoption by the Environment Committee on the 2nd June, and the deadline by which MEPs can submit amendments on this report is 5th May. The European Parliament Fisheries Committee has already drafted an opinion to the Environment Committee, underlining the importance of marine biodiversity and the urgent need to designate marine Natura 2000 sites.

Internationally, preparations are now beginning for the next Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Conference of the Parties (COP 10) which is taking place in Japan in October. During this conference a new CBD strategic plan and a new international biodiversity target will be presented. The draft new strategic plan is already being consulted on, and will be discussed in the next SUBSTTA meeting, taking place in Nairobi in May. It is hoped that the adoption of this strong target for biodiversity by the EU in advance of the CBD COP 10, will encourage the adoption of a similarly strong target internationally.

3.2 Stakeholder consultation on Post-2010 Biodiversity Strategy

The Commission is convinced that a Post-2010 Biodiversity Strategy can only be successful if embraced by all stakeholder groups whose activities are interlinked with biodiversity. In the context of Green Week, the Commission is therefore organising a stakeholder consultation to obtain a representative picture of the positions of relevant stakeholders. The meeting will be held in the afternoon of 3rd June 2010 in the Charlemagne Building of the European Commission (170 Rue de la Loi, 1049 Brussels).

After a short introduction by the Commission, participants will be invited to express their views and contribute ideas on how to shape the strategy to ensure its success in reaching the 2020 target. The meeting will be held in English. Participation is open to Member States and all interested stakeholders.

If you want to confirm your interest in this meeting, please visit - http://ec.europa.eu/environment/consultations_en.htm - and submit a registration form before 5 May via e-mail to ENV-BIODIVERSITY@ec.europa.eu. Due to the limited capacity of the venue, seats will be allocated to ensure a fair and representative participation of stakeholders. Invitations will be limited to one individual per organisation and priority will be given to organisations representing the views of stakeholders at EU level.

Stakeholders will have the possibility to express their position in writing for up to two weeks after the meeting. Additionally, an open Internet stakeholder consultation will be run for 8 weeks in the summer.

Participants in this stakeholder event will also be automatically registered for Green Week (see article 4.2).

3.3 European Red Lists Produced for Dragonflies, Butterflies and Beetles

The European Commission recently released new European red lists for dragonflies, butterflies and saproxylic beetles (beetles that depend on decaying wood), produced by IUCN. They show that almost one third of European butterfly populations are declining and that 9% are threatened with extinction. They also show that 11% of saproxylic beetles and 14% of dragonflies are threatened with extinction within Europe. Assessments are underway for a number of other taxonomic groups, and it is expected that European Red Lists for molluscs, freshwater fish and vascular plants will be published in early 2011. To find out more and search for specific red list species, go to: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/redlist/>

4. Biodiversity Matters: Public Awareness-Raising

4.1 New EU Biodiversity Campaign

The European Commission has launched a new campaign on biodiversity with the strapline, "Biodiversity – we are all in this together". The main aim of the campaign is to show citizens the impact that biodiversity loss has on daily life and encourage them to do something about it. You can visit the campaign website at: <http://www.weareallinthisogether.eu>

4.2 Green Week

The EU Green Week will be taking place in Brussels on 1st to 4th June on the theme of Biodiversity. The event is free and open to anyone who pre-registers on the website, giving people the opportunity to visit exhibition booths and attend seminars on the following subjects:

- The state of biodiversity and nature in Europe and the world today, and ideas concerning future EU policies on biodiversity and nature;
- Current pressures on ecosystems;
- The benefits provided by biodiversity and nature, and possible solutions to the current rates of loss, including discussions about the economic dimensions and ecosystem services, etc.

Eurosite has been successful in gaining an exhibition booth together with the EUROPARC Federation which will be used as a focal point for information sharing with members. We will be at stall number 19 just next to the PC corner. If you would like more information on Eurosite's participation and seminars of particular interest to site managers, please contact: cpointers@eurosite.org.

Alternatively, for more information on Green Week and programme seminars, visit the website at: <http://www.greenweek2010.eu/>

4.3 Latest Eurobarometer Survey on Public Attitudes to Biodiversity

A new survey has been undertaken to assess public attitudes to biodiversity within the EU. This latest report shows that two-thirds of EU citizens are familiar with the term 'biodiversity' which is an increase from the last survey taken in 2007. The highest public awareness of biodiversity is within Germany and Austria. However, 78% of respondents had never heard of the Natura 2000 network. To view the full report, go to: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm

5. Linking Nature and Climate Change

5.1 Creation of a new European Directorate General on Climate Change

With the new incoming Commission and appointment of new Commissioners, DG Environment has been split in two to create a new DG dedicated to climate change called DG Climate Action. All policies relating to nature, biodiversity and ecosystems will remain with DG Environment, together with waste, water and air quality. The new DG Climate Action will cover climate change mitigation and adaptation and ozone protection.

The new Environment Commissioner is Janez Potočnik, from Slovenia, who was previously European Commissioner for Science and Research. The new Climate Action Commissioner is Connie Hedegaard from Denmark, who was previously the Danish Minister for Climate and Energy.

There is concern that this split of DG Environment into two different DGs will make it even more difficult to ensure coherence between EU biodiversity and climate change policies and to promote the integration of ecosystem-based solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

5.2 Climate Change Adaptation

Last year the European Commission adopted a White Paper on Adaptation to Climate Change. The European Parliament is in the process of responding to this White Paper by drafting an own initiative report on Adaptation to Climate Change. The rapporteur for this report is MEP Vittorio Prodi from Italy (Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats). A draft report has been passed by the Environment Committee and is now going forward to the European Parliament plenary for final amendments and adoption. Unfortunately, the current version of the report makes little reference to the important role played by ecosystems in climate change mitigation and adaptation, although it does mention the importance of Natura 2000 in helping ecosystems and species adapt to climate change and the need for active site management and proper financing.

5.3 Biofuels and Highly Biodiverse Grasslands

The sustainability requirements of the EU Renewable Energy Directive and the Fuel Quality Directive state that the raw materials for biofuels or bioliquids cannot be grown on highly biodiverse grassland areas. DG Transport and Energy is therefore developing guidance on the criteria to be used to define an area as a 'highly biodiverse grassland'. The DG has just finished a consultation on the issue which will feed into the guidelines it is producing.



Photograph courtesy of National Trust Photo Library

6. Agriculture and Forestry

6.1 EU Consultation on Forests

The European Commission is currently running a consultation on its Green Paper 'On Forest Protection and Information in the EU: Preparing forests for climate change'. They are interested to receive comments from stakeholders to decide whether additional action is needed at EU level to better prepare European forests for climate change. To view the green paper or respond to the consultation, please go to this link: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/consultations/forests_en.htm.

Also, if you are interested to contribute to a joint response from Eurosite members, please send comments to info@eurosite.org.

6.2 Consultation on the Common Agriculture Policy

The EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is due to be reformed in 2013. In advance of this process, the EU has already launched a consultation to gather views from all interested EU citizens and organisations on the future direction of European agricultural policy. In particular, the EU are seeking consultation responses that highlight the importance of supporting those agricultural systems that provide public goods such as habitats for species and ecosystem services. If you would like to respond to this consultation, please go to the website: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/debate/index_en.htm

Again, it would be useful to also send a copy of any responses to info@eurosite.org so that the views and opinions of Eurosite members can be recorded.

Brussels Agenda - Forthcoming Meetings and Events of Interest in 2010

April

- 26 - 28 European Parliament Environment Committee**
EP Committee meeting at European Parliament, Brussels
Organised by the European Parliament

May

- 3 EP Sustainable Development intergroup meeting on "Wood energy"**
EP intergroup, open to pre-registered participants at European Parliament, Brussels
Organised by IUCN and EBCD
- 3 - 4 European Parliament Environment Committee**
EP Committee meeting at European Parliament, Brussels
Organised by the European Parliament
- 10 - 21 CBD SUBSTTA**
CBD technical preparatory meeting in Nairobi
Organised by CBD
- 18 EC Expert Working Group on Biodiversity Reporting**
European Commission technical working group meeting at DG ENV, Brussels
Organised by DG ENV
- 22 International Day of Biodiversity**
Organised by CBD
- 31 (week of 31 May)**
EP Sustainable Development intergroup meeting on "Preparation for the CBD COP10"
EP intergroup meeting, open to pre-registered participants, at European Parliament, Brussels
Organised by IUCN and EBCD
- 31 (+ 1 June)**
LIFE Financing Consultation
EC meeting (invitation only) in Brussels
Organised by DG ENV

June

- 1 (+ 31 May)**
LIFE Financing Consultation
EC meeting (invitation only) in Brussels
Organised by DG ENV
- 1 - 4 Green Week**
Event, open to registered participants, in Brussels
Organised by DG ENV
- 2 - 3 European Parliament Environment Committee**
EP Committee meeting at European Parliament, Brussels
Organised by the European Parliament
- 7 (week of 7 June)**
EP Sustainable Development intergroup meeting on "Forest Fires"
EP intergroup meeting, open to pre-registered participants, at European Parliament, Brussels
Organised by IUCN and EBCD

continues...

June

- 17 - 18 EU Council meeting**
Heads of State meeting in Brussels
Organised by the EU Presidency
- 17 - 18 Workshop on Biodiversity and Water**
Representation of North-Rhine-Westphalia to the EU, Brussels
Organised by representation of NRW to the EU and DG ENV
- 21 EU Environment Council**
EU Environment Ministers' meeting in Brussels
Organised by the EU Presidency
- 21 (tbc) European Commission Natura 2000 Management Group**
EC Technical Working Group meeting in Brussels
Organised by DG ENV
- 21 - 23 European Parliament Environment Committee**
EP Committee meeting at European Parliament, Brussels
Organised by the European Parliament
- 22 European Commission Co-ordination Group on Biodiversity**
EC Technical Working Group meeting in Brussels
Organised by DG ENV

July

- 5 (week of 5 July)**
EP Sustainable Development intergroup meeting on "Water and Biodiversity"
EP intergroup meeting, open to pre-registered participants, at European Parliament, Strasbourg
Organised by IUCN and EBCD
- 13 - 15 European Parliament Environment Committee**
EP Committee meeting at European Parliament, Brussels
Organised by the European Parliament
- 15 - 16 Stakeholder Event on Financing Natura 2000**
Stakeholder conference with invited participants, location tbc
Organised by DG ENV

September

- 8 - 9 Conference: "Biodiversity post-2010 - biodiversity in a changing world"**
Belgian EU Presidency conference, Gent, Belgium
Organised by the Flemish region
- 13 - 16 Eurosite Annual Conference 2010: "The Challenge of Managing Sites in a Changing Environment"**
Eurosite members conference, Dunblane, Scotland
Organised by Eurosite and Scottish Natural Heritage
- 23 - 24 High Level Conference: "Soil, Climate Change and Biodiversity - where do we stand?"**
High level conference in Brussels
Organised by DG ENV, DG Climate Action and Joint Research Centre
- 27 (week of 27 September)**
EP Sustainable Development intergroup meeting on "EU Forest Strategy"
EP intergroup meeting, open to pre-registered participants, at European Parliament, Brussels
Organised by IUCN and EBCD
- 27 - 29 European Parliament Environment Committee**
EP Committee meeting at European Parliament, Brussels
Organised by the European Parliament

October

date tbc **European Commission Natura 2000 Management Group**

EC Technical Working Group meeting in Brussels
Organised by DG ENV

4 - 5 **European Parliament Environment Committee**

EP Committee meeting at European Parliament, Brussels
Organised by the European Parliament

18 - 29 **CBD COP10**

CBD Conference of the Parties in Nagoya, Japan
Organised by CBD

27 - 29 **European Parliament Environment Committee**

EP Committee meeting at European Parliament, Brussels
Organised by the European Parliament

November

date tbc **EU Nature Directors meeting**

Meeting restricted to EU Nature Directors and invited stakeholders, location tbc
Organised by Belgian Presidency

6 **(week of 6 November)**

EP Sustainable Development intergroup meeting on “Invasive Alien Species”

EP intergroup meeting, open to pre-registered participants, at European Parliament, Brussels
Organised by IUCN and EBCD

9 **European Parliament Environment Committee**

EP Committee meeting at European Parliament, Brussels
Organised by the European Parliament

18 **European Commission Co-ordination Group on Biodiversity**

EC Technical Working Group meeting in Brussels
Organised by DG ENV

29 **(week of 29 November)**

EP Sustainable Development intergroup meeting on “Enhancing the Coherence of Natura 2000”

EP intergroup meeting, open to pre-registered participants, at European Parliament, Brussels
Organised by IUCN and EBCD

29 **(+ 1 December)**

European Parliament Environment Committee

EP Committee meeting at European Parliament, Brussels
Organised by the European Parliament

December

1 **(+ 29 November)**

European Parliament Environment Committee

EP Committee meeting at European Parliament, Brussels
Organised by the European Parliament

13 **(week of 13 December)**

EP Sustainable Development intergroup meeting on “Promoting Sustainable Agriculture”

EP intergroup meeting, open to pre-registered participants, at European Parliament, Strasbourg
Organised by IUCN and EBCD

EURO - SITE - MANAGER

Issue 1 - April 2010

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