



# Dealing with Conflicts in the Implementation and Management of the Natura 2000 Network Best Practice at the Local / Site Level (lot 3)

## A review of 24 Best Practice case studies

DG Environment contract 07.0310/2008/515147/SER/B2 as part of Preparatory Actions for Natura 2000 (ENV.B.2/SER/2008/0035)  
Final report for task 2



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*Natura 2000 is the centrepiece of EU nature & biodiversity policy. It is an EU-wide network of nature protection areas established under the 1992 Habitats Directive. The aim of the network is to assure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. The Natura 2000 network is comprised of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated by Member States under the Habitats Directive, and also incorporates Special Protection Areas (SPAs) which they designate under the 1979 Birds Directive.*

*It is important to remember that Natura 2000 is not a system of strict nature reserves, where all human activities are excluded. The network includes nature reserves, but, most of the land is likely to be privately owned. The emphasis is on ensuring that future management is sustainable, both ecologically and economically and in ways, which involve and include people.*

*... ensuring  
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# Foreword

This report is part of the DG Environment contract 07.0310/2008/515147/SER/B2 entitled “Dealing with Conflicts in the Implementation and Management of the Natura 2000 Network - Best Practice at the Local / Site Level” (lot 3), which is part of Preparatory Actions for Natura 2000 (ENV.B.2/SER/2008/0035).

There are three tasks delivered under this contract. This report is provided for Task 2: it reviews 24 best practice case studies on how conflict in Natura 2000 areas is resolved; it complements the report provided for Task 1, which reviews current practices in solving multiple use issues of Natura 2000 sites through conflict management strategies and participatory approaches. This report will contribute to Task 3, which provides recommendations for future actions to promote best practices in dealing with conflicts in the implementation and management of the Natura 2000 network.

## 1 Introduction

All European countries have identified natural areas, which are valuable to national and European nature. In European Union Member States, some of these natural areas are designated under the Birds and Habitats Directives and have been designated as part of an EU wide network of sites called “Natura 2000”. The Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) and the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) constitute the legal basis for the Natura 2000 network: together these Directives constitute the backbone of EU policy on biodiversity protection. They provide an essential framework to tackle some of the most pressing challenges affecting nature in the 21st Century: for example, biodiversity loss and the impacts of climate change. The Natura 2000 network of sites stretches across Europe, from the Canaries to the Black Sea, and from Cyprus to Scandinavian Lapland. Sites can be designated on both land and water. Over 25,000 sites in 27 countries are designated under the Birds and Habitats Directives: together they cover around 20% of Europe’s territory.

Following the initial selection and formal designation of sites, the implementation phase of the Natura 2000 network involves the definition of specific conservation measures, which are - in most EU countries and for most of the sites - developed through a site management planning process. The multiple uses and fragmented ownership of land designated as Natura 2000 means that conservation measures will more often than not touch upon the interests of a wide variety of stakeholders. Herein lies the challenge – policy makers, landowners, local businesses and different sectoral interests (for example, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, recreation, tourism), local communities, nature conservation agencies and NGOs are just some of the stakeholders who can have interests in and influence over the management of a Natura 2000 site. The diverse stakeholder interests can create tensions, arising from competing objectives, uses and ambitions, which can result in conflict situations.

Site management goals developed for Natura 2000, are most commonly expressed as nature conservation objectives. These need to be reconciled, within the framework of European law, with existing or proposed changes to land uses that are representative of local / regional economic, cultural, social and environmental interests. This has the potential to complicate the implementation of site management plans as Natura 2000 conservation objectives place real or perceived (as is more often the case) restrictions on the activities within the designated area.

Of course, the tensions and complexities experienced will vary from site to site, as will the site management strategies developed to implement Natura 2000 on individual sites. Nature conservation professionals at site management and policy level carry the responsibility to achieve the conservation objectives defined by Natura 2000. This report focuses on their experience, nature conservation practitioners in the ‘front-line’ working for Natura 2000, but also, objectively, reflects the perspectives of the stakeholders they work with to give a comprehensive understanding of how conflicts can arise when competing interests require to be reconciled. The degree to which nature conservation professionals can accommodate the needs of stakeholders while fulfilling their obligations is a critical point of discussion in this report.

This report for Task 2 of the EC contract [ENV.B.2/SER/2008/0035] presents a collection of examples of conflict situations and conflict resolution methods, tools and strategies either already implemented or being developed for the management of Natura 2000. The complexity and variability of Natura 2000 conflict scenarios in Europe determines that this report should be considered a sampling of examples, rather than a comprehensive overview of the situation in the European Union as a whole. However, the trends identified within the 24 case studies compiled in this report and the key messages derived there-from offer valuable insights and sound recommendations for the resolution of conflicts. As such, the report contains valuable lessons important for the development of best practice approaches and the continuing process of improving the quality of management for Natura 2000, our shared European natural heritage.

## 2 Partnership

This report is part of the DG Environment Service Contract “Dealing with Conflicts in the Implementation and Management of the Natura 2000 Network - Best Practice at the Local / Site Level” (lot 3), implemented by a consortium of 3 organisations - Alterra, ECNC and Eurosite, working together in a Project Management Team (PMT).

### 2.1 The partners

#### **Alterra**

Alterra is the environmental research institute of the Wageningen University and Research Centre concern (Wageningen UR). Alterra offers a combination of practical and scientific research in a multitude of disciplines related to environmental systems and sustainable use. The institute combines expertise on water and soils, ecosystems, water and climate, landscape, and geo-information for environmental assessments and works on environmental and resource economics issues together with the Wageningen UR institute LEI (Agricultural Economics Institute). In Alterra over four hundred scientists are employed. Alterra is part of the ALTER-Net network and the PEER network (Partnership for European Environmental Research Initiative) which was founded in 2001 to combine the forces of important European environmental research centres.

#### **ECNC - European Centre for Nature Conservation**

ECNC is a European expertise centre for biodiversity and sustainability with an active network of 46 partner organisations in 23 countries. It stimulates cooperation between science, policy and economy for the sake of biodiversity and people in Europe. It provides sound scientific expertise in support of governmental policies and promotes the integration of biodiversity considerations into other sectors of society. In its approach, ECNC combines vision with practical approaches and applicable expertise. ECNC undertakes studies in support of international policy development and implementation, organizes workshops and conferences that bring stakeholders together; develops advice that applies state of the art knowledge and expertise to policy issues; organizes capacity building and training programmes, and develops internet-based services for biodiversity information. ECNC plays an active role in achieving the objectives of the Countdown 2010 process. Through its five core programme areas (Nature and Society, Business and Biodiversity, European Ecological Network, State of European Nature and Biodiversity, and Support to International, National and Regional Biodiversity Processes) ECNC coordinates a wide array of projects.

#### **Eurosite**

Eurosite was created in 1989 in response to a clear demand for the exchange of practical nature management information within the European Community. Eurosite is now one of the largest European networks of nature conservation and site managing organisations and authorities, providing ways to work in collaboration for the benefit of Europe's nature and the human enjoyment of it. The network exists to amplify the diverse voices and interests of members across a spectrum of nature conservation issues. Eurosite is a unique network of governmental and non-governmental organisations, as well as private enterprises. As of November 2009, there are some 89 members from 23 different countries across Europe, providing access to Natura 2000 site managers and over 100 Natura 2000 'Ambassadors'. Members work together to address common challenges and issues on a European scale: through the network, they: (1) Focus on site management issues and 'on the ground' nature conservation; (2) Exchange knowledge, information and experience to inform, improve and promote good practice; (3) Lead in the development of new ideas for joint-working and seek ways to implement these; (4) Nurture relationships between members to support their work and help achievement of their mutual, specific nature conservation priorities.

### 2.2 Fields of expertise and the role of the Project Management Team (PMT)

With their different backgrounds, the three partner organisations have brought complementary expertise and experience into the project: scientific reflection on the topic was brought in by research organisation Alterra; practical knowledge and field experience was provided by Eurosite, through its network of governmental and non-governmental nature conservation organisations involved with day-to-day management of Natura 2000 sites; ECNC has worked to translate the project's content into information valuable for policy-making and has, along with the other partners, ensured consultation with major stakeholders through the organisation of several workshops in different regions of Europe.

A Project Management Team (PMT), made up of representatives from each of the partner organisations, oversaw the implementation of the three tasks being delivered through the Lot 3 project. For the development of this report (Task 2), the PMT discussed and approved the methodology, the Member States selected for survey, the types of conflicts to be addressed, the choice of stakeholders, the selection of case studies and the review of both the interim and final report.

### 3 Structure of this report: Summary of contents

This chapter provides a brief description of the following chapters in the report and how the contents are organised.

Chapter 4 – **Approach and Methodology for task 2** – describes the rationale and work method used to produce this report. It explains our practical-based approach to the collection and analysis of best practice case studies for task 2. The case studies are categorised, based on Articles 6.1 through 6.4 of the Habitats Directive, on the stakeholders involved, and with reference to an identified 'primary cause of conflict'. This structure runs throughout this report – the categories and case studies are:

#### Category 1

##### Local people and Natura 2000

Nr.	Country	Region / site	Conflict involves:
1.1	Sweden	Ammarnasdeltat	Objection to meadow re-creation & management
1.2	France	Bendola	Access & use of the future Natura 2000 site
1.3	United Kingdom	Fenn's, Whixall, Bettisfield	Opposition to the felling of invasive pine forest
1.4	Romania	Danube Delta / Tulcea	Anticipating restrictions for future development

#### Category 2

##### Users' expectations and Natura 2000

Nr.	Country	Region / site	Conflict involves:
2.1	United Kingdom	Thanet Coast & Sandwich Bay	Suspected disturbance of marine birds habitats
2.2	Spain	Muntanya de Montserrat	Impact of mass tourism
2.3	France	Etang de Mauguio	Opposition to the Natura 2000 perimeter by hunters
2.4	Italy	Po delta, Rovigo	Land users feel excluded in stakeholder process
2.5	Germany	Ehrenbürg und Katzenköpfe	Impact of traditional music festival
2.6	Finland	Ruissalon lehdot	International rock festival

#### Category 3

##### Land managers and Natura 2000

Nr.	Country	Region / site	Conflict involves:
3.1	Netherlands	Peelvenen	Impact of nitrate deposition on sphagnum
3.2	France	Champeigne	Opposition to designation & attached regulations
3.3	France	Nord Morvan	Farmers fear constraints to be imposed
3.4	France	Massif Forestier du Mont Beuvray	Foresters object during participatory process
3.5	United Kingdom	Pembrokeshire Marine	Scallop dredging within Milford Haven Waterway

#### Category 4

##### Land use and Natura 2000

Nr.	Country	Region / site	Conflict involves:
4.1	United Kingdom	South Humber Bank	A new biomass / bioethanol facility
4.2	United Kingdom	Fifth of Forth	Extension of the operating life of a power station
4.3	Netherlands	Naardermeer	A new motorway next to the Natura 2000 site
4.4.	Poland	Rospuda Valley	A new road corridor: Via Baltica
4.5.	Czech Republic	Krkonoše Mountains	Ski resort development on meadows
4.6	Finland	Pomponrahka	Expansion of Turku airport on the adjacent bog
4.7	Poland	Puszcza Kampinoska	Overlapping nature protection regulations
4.8	Finland	Rauvolanlahti	New residential areas next to wetland area
4.9	Denmark	Saltholm Island	A bridge placed near a bird roosting area

Chapter 5 – **The origins and causes of Natura 2000 related conflicts** – distinguishes between the origins of conflict, which can be seen as site-specific pre-conditions, and the causes of conflict, which relate to how stakeholders handle these conditions.

Chapter 6 – **The roles of stakeholders in conflict** – provides an overview of the stakeholders represented in the case studies. The stakeholders have been categorised into main sectors and stakeholder groups. This categorisation is used to show which type(s) of Natura 2000 conflict the stakeholders have been involved, according to the four case study categories in chapter 4. A reference to the appropriate case studies is given as a guide to the reader. This chapter also provides a description of how the main stakeholders get involved in conflict and why they are critical to achieve conflict resolution at local, national and European levels.

Chapter 7 – **Analysis of case study groups** – presents a more detailed analysis of the different case studies selected for this report. As in Chapter 4, the same four grouped categories are used and each case study is analysed in terms of the primary cause of the conflict it describes, the conflict tactics and conflict management approaches used, the role of the Natura 2000 manager and any specific issues raised.

Chapter 8 – **Approaches to conflict resolution** – describes the ways stakeholders interact with each other and why it is important to understand these interactions. Human dynamics and human behaviour are an essential part in the initiation, development, management and resolution of conflicts. In addition, the level of involvement or degree of resistance of stakeholders are key factors when deciding how to approach and manage a conflict. In this chapter, a spectrum of resistance and conflict tactics is introduced and the possible management responses to these are described. It covers:

- common methods used to anticipate, avoid or manage a conflict situation;
- methods and tools used in crisis management; and
- methods to understand the positions of stakeholders.

Finally, the fundamental skills Natura 2000 managers need to develop for conflict resolution are highlighted.

Chapter 9 – **Conflict management approaches & stakeholder involvement** – summarises several useful approaches to build effective dialogue, two specific conflict management approaches, which were used in different case studies - the Mutual Gains Approach (MGA) and Stakeholder Dialogue - and also techniques which could be considered when disputes go too far.

Chapter 10 – **Case studies: Conflict resolution for Natura 2000**: 24 case studies are included in this report. The case studies have been selected as, individually and collectively, they contribute to increasing understanding about how conflict is being addressed and resolved in 12 countries across Europe. We have chosen not just to ‘annex’ the examples – on the contrary, the case studies collected offer a valuable resource for Natura 2000 management – but to integrate and use them as a key to structure the report. We encourage readers to refer to chapter 10 regularly while reading the report, to digest the individual case studies presented and to derive your own conclusions: the aim is to offer readers new ideas for their own Natura 2000 activities, or reassurance for the activities they are currently undertaking or planning.

Chapter 11 – **Conclusions and Recommendations** – lists the main conclusions and key matters to be considered for further action at all levels: local, national and European.

Chapter 12 – **Suggestions for continued reading on Natura 2000** – provides additional sources of information for reference.

**Acknowledgements:** we express our gratitude to the authors of the case studies for their involvement and participation in this project; also, the commitment of all contributors to helping to develop a better understanding and implementation of Natura 2000 on the ground / site level.

## 4 Approach and Methodology for task 2

### 4.1 A practice based approach

This report for Task 2 provides a 'snap-shot' of how conflicts have been identified and are being managed within their current stage of development in particular Natura 2000 sites. Our analysis of the case studies aims to guide the reader, to help increase understanding about types of conflict and how to address them: also, taking the specific sites and their conflicts as a base, the report describes how the case studies can help the reader to more easily identify situations which, for example, relate more directly to his / her own experience. In this way, we aim to add value to this report by providing it as a tool for practical conflict resolution and to provide an overview of different types of conflict, their causes and solutions.

The approach adopted in Task 2 is complementary to the work developed under Task 1 and the report produced: "Current practices in solving multiple land-use issues of Natura 2000 sites: conflict management strategies and participatory approaches". Task 1 reviews current experiences on conflict and conflict management strategies in the European Union, including an in-depth analysis of the situation in five Member States: Sweden, The Netherlands, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and France. The report produced for Task 1 analyses who is involved, what conflicts can be distinguished, what causes them, how stakeholders are involved, what the success factors are for conflict resolution and Natura 2000. Finally, it draws conclusions on participatory approaches and smart solutions to prevent and manage conflicts.

The approach applied in Task 2 is a practice-based approach: it is based on and informed by the input of nature conservation practitioners and stakeholders involved at different levels of the Natura 2000 management and decision-making process. Different case studies are included to illustrate a wide range of local conflicts on Natura 2000 sites and how conflicts are currently being dealt with throughout Europe. This valuable "on-the-ground" knowledge and the direct experiences related, help to build understanding about the practical issues and challenges involved in implementing Natura 2000. The report for Task 2 provides an analysis of 24 case studies, which illustrate pragmatic, 'live' approaches to conflict resolution in Natura 2000 sites in very different contexts across 12 countries of Europe. The report sorts and organises the case studies to extrapolate common ingredients, issues and practical responses and offers recommendations based on these diverse situations.

### 4.2 The methodology

Working with project partners through the Project Management Team (PMT), countries and types of conflict were first discussed: from this, potential sources for case studies were identified in terms of their representativeness and based on criteria of geographical distribution and the wide range of conflict subjects they could yield. To draw-out core information and gather feedback, Eurosite called for expressions of interest to contribute to the project and combined this with targeted distribution of a specifically created questionnaire to selected individuals responsible for overseeing the management and management plans for Natura 2000 sites. This was followed-up with telephone discussions and exchanges of emails to expand on details, filter and select key points of interest during the summer and autumn of 2009. From that process, the case studies that form the foundation of this Task 2 report were selected.

This report contains 24 case studies from twelve countries (the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden & the United Kingdom). The case studies are representative of the variable stages of Natura 2000 implementation across the 27 EU Member States. It should be noted that a range of Member States were selected for survey by the Project Management Team (PMT). For this report, it was decided to focus on Member States that are relatively advanced in their establishment of the Natura 2000 network – basically, this means Member States, which have moved forwards from the site designation stage to the implementation of management planning strategies. The PMT felt that this approach would offer richer grounds to explore how conflicts were being identified, managed and resolved. It was also agreed that it would be useful to give more attention to conflicts related to and arising from the direct management of the Natura 2000 sites: fifteen case studies relate to the implementation of Articles 6.1 and 6.2 of the Habitats Directive; nine case studies relate to the implementation of Articles 6.3 and 6.4 of the Habitats Directive (see BOX 1 and 2, page 11).

### BOX 1: Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC and Birds Directive 79/409/EEC

The following articles of the Habitats Directive are particularly relevant to the conflicts described in the case studies. “Article 6 sets out provisions which govern the conservation and management of Natura 2000 sites. Seen in this context, Article 6 is one of the most important of the 24 articles of the directive, being the one which most determines the relationship between conservation and land use. The article has three main sets of provisions. Article 6(1) makes provision for the establishment of the necessary conservation measures, and is focused on positive and proactive interventions. Article 6(2) makes provision for avoidance of habitat deterioration and significant species disturbance. Its emphasis is therefore preventive. Article 6(3) and (4) set out a series of procedural and substantive safeguards governing plans and projects likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site. Within this structure, it can be seen that there is a distinction between Articles 6(1) and 6(2), which define a general regime, and Articles 6(3) and 6(4), which define a procedure applying to specific circumstances”.

#### Relationships with the Birds Directive 79/409/EEC

“There has been an important degree of merger or fusion between the schemes of both directives. First, special protection areas (SPAs) classified under the Bird directive are now an integral part of the Natura 2000 network. Second, the provisions of Article 6(2), (3) and (4) of Directive 92/43/EEC have been made applicable to SPAs”.

Extracts from MANAGING NATURA 2000 SITES. The provisions of Article 6 of the ‘Habitats’ Directive 92/43/CEE. 2000. Pages 10/11.

### BOX 2: Implementation of the EU nature directives according to case studies

The case studies illustrate the implementation of the EU nature directives as follows:

Habitats Directive	Birds Directive	Habitats & Birds Directives
80%	50 %	25%

### BOX 3: The Natura 2000 network in December 2009

	Special Protection Areas (SPAs) Birds Directive	Sites of Community Importance (SCIs) Habitats Directive
Number of sites	5,242	22,419
Total area of sites	574,819 km <sup>2</sup>	716,992 km <sup>2</sup>

Source: Natura 2000 barometer, Number 27, December 2009

## 4.3 Responses to the questionnaires

Selected individuals responsible for overseeing or being involved in the multiple use and management of Natura 2000 sites were asked to describe what was the most significant conflict they have encountered on their site. More specifically, they were asked how an appropriate balance was achieved between potentially conflicting interests and uses of the site in order to ensure both the engagement of stakeholders and respect for the ecological values of the site. The authors of the case studies replied to seven questions, describing their perception of the primary cause of the conflict, its background, the evolution of the positions of the main stakeholders involved, the management responses chosen to handle the conflict and his / her recommendations about how to deal with conflicts in Natura 2000 sites, how to involve stakeholders at the local level more effectively and how to shift stakeholder opposition to participation and cooperation.

This report reflects contributors' current circumstances, providing a 'snap-shot' of their existing stage of development in terms of implementing Natura 2000 and dealing with conflicts in different contexts: it is important to emphasise that the contexts and, therefore, the conflicts can change. The case studies have been analysed objectively and grouped according to the 'primary cause' of the conflict, which has been identified in four categories:

- Category 1 – Local people and Natura 2000;
- Category 2 – Users' expectations and Natura 2000;
- Category 3 – Land managers and Natura 2000; and
- Category 4 – Land use and Natura 2000.

The first three categories contain issues which can be linked to or be described in terms, which relate to the implementation of Articles 6.1 and 6.2 of the Habitats Directive: that is, in categories 1, 2 and 3, the primary cause of the conflict is directly linked to management of the site. In category 4, the conflict is linked to plans and projects, which could affect the favourable conservation status of the site or its integrity: here therefore, the primary cause of conflict relates mainly to implementation of Articles 6.3 and 6.4 of the Habitats Directive.

From the questionnaires, each case study contains: a summary of the issues, the primary cause of the conflict, the conflict tactics used, the conflict management approaches applied in response to conflict tactics, the role of the Natura 2000 manager (referring to the definition presented in Section 6.2) and specific questions or issues raised by the case studies.

The case studies reflect the variety of stakeholders and circumstances involved in delivering Natura 2000 at the local level. As dealing with conflict is a process of management, the case studies contained in this report and the conflict situations they depict can be interpreted in different ways: we do not suggest that all the conflicts presented have been indefinitely "resolved", but rather that the various conflicting issues have or are being positively addressed with the stakeholders involved.

#### **4.4 Best practice case studies**

The experience and insights of the contributing nature conservation practitioners are illustrative of the dynamic nature of conflicts and how they are managed in different countries. The conflicts presented are written directly by key stakeholders themselves: the views and opinions expressed in the case studies are the views and opinions of the authors and do not necessarily express the point of view of their employers, nor the opinion of the Eurosite network. However, their 'stories' are real-life experiences, which illustrate that the development of Natura 2000 is a changing and dynamic process with successes and failures at the local level: more often than not, this requires on-going and continuous management attention. Also, the case studies are reflections of their wider contexts and the ways each Member State has decided to implement the nature directives, according to, for example, different social contexts, histories of nature conservation, relationships with landowners, land users and land managers, densities of population, cultures and so on.

Our view is that these case studies can be considered as examples of best practice in terms of their own context and specific individual situations. We consider that this practice-based approach is appropriate for Task 2 as it illustrates the complex process in which Natura 2000 stakeholders are engaged.

## 5 The origins and causes of Natura 2000 related conflicts

As conflicts in Natura 2000 sites are often complex, the origins and main causes of conflicts can be difficult to identify or analyse in a systematic way. In Section 2.2 of the report produced for Task 1, examples of various forms of stakeholder involvement in the management of Natura 2000 sites are presented and it identifies that conflicts around Natura 2000 can be traced to either:

- The historical process involved in making decisions and managing a Natura 2000 site (Task 1 report 1, Section 4.4); or,
- A primary cause (Task 1 report, Section 6.1).

These two main sources of conflict are consistent with the case studies presented in this report.

### 5.1 Challenging the decision-making and management process of the Natura 2000 site

Conflicts related to the Natura 2000 decision-making and management process can occur because the process itself is not fully accepted by the stakeholders involved or because the process is not adequately implemented at different levels of the administrative structure. A conflicting situation can arise and develop throughout the whole decision-making process: from the initial provision of information stage, through the consultation processes (or lack thereof), and even during a shared decision-making process - for instance during the development of a management plan, which follows a bottom-up approach as presented in Section 2.3 of the Task 1 report, Figure 1. Conflicts are often driven by fear or misconception, strongly held positions and / or simple failures to understand alternative points of view.

However, in all four categories of the case studies of this report for Task 2, some general patterns can be observed – either singly or in concert, the primary causes of conflicts are:

- Lack of information or misinformation about Natura 2000 legislation and national regulations;
- Perceived lack of consideration or shared involvement in decision-making and management processes;
- Fear of administrative controls and loss of autonomy;
- Failure to understand the reasons why a site requires to be protected;
- Strongly held opinions on what is negotiable and non-negotiable;
- Different perceptions about what is of over-riding public interest;
- Changing administrative rules/ Overlapping nature protection regulations;
- Compensatory measures are either not in place, are changing or are deemed inadequate;
- Lack of consistency and coherence within the public authority decision-making process.

Inefficient, poor and ill-considered communication is often the root cause of conflict: for example, when landowners and land-users are afraid that the Natura 2000 designation will have a negative effect on the way they live and work. Often the perception is that the Natura 2000 designation will prevent or stop them doing things – for example, farmers fearing that the designation of farming land located within or even around the Natura 2000 area will impose constraints; sportsmen fearing that a Natura 2000 site designation implies that their sport activities are prohibited in the designated area. Misunderstandings can and do arise - in turn, this can give rise to mistrust, so that views become polarised and entrenched. This is always damaging, inclining people and organisations to feel threatened as they 'dig-in' to defend their position, views and objectives. Left unaddressed, there is inevitably the risk of a conflict situation boiling over.

Although there is ample information available on the Natura 2000 network, it is not always accessible to everyone, nor is it easily found or adapted to the stakeholders concerned. Also many public administrations were unable to provide concrete answers to stakeholders regarding the consequences of the designation for their land use. For instance, local stakeholders are often not aware of the benefits a Natura 2000 site can bring to their local businesses, like increasing number of visitors, and therefore clientele to the area; also, the potential benefits from financial support programmes available, which support the management of Natura 2000 sites can be over-looked. Sometimes conflicts are largely based on misunderstanding, confusion or misgivings, rather than evidence. Sometimes, the stakeholder involvement process stumbles because of unexpected reasons: for instance, a shared land management decision prepared and agreed at the local level may need to be confirmed at a higher administrative or political level - this may require a different time-scale, which does not reflect or respect the realities of the local stakeholders concerned and can lead to frustration, incomprehension, loss of trust, and ultimately disengagement.

Once opinions and views are formed, it is more difficult to re-inform or correct misgivings. A disengaged stakeholder, for example, is even less likely to be inclined to seek out 'correct' information or to come back to the negotiation table.

## 5.2 Primary causes of conflict per case study group

Areas designated for the Natura 2000 network are used by multiple stakeholders – people live, work, take exercise or conduct business in or within proximity of Natura 2000 sites; also, people simply visit sites to enjoy the beauty and tranquility of nature. The case studies in this report reveal numerous examples of primary causes of conflict - for example:

- Rejecting the designation of a Natura 2000 site or its precise perimeter;
- Challenging the definition of specific Natura 2000 conservation objectives;
- Refusing to accept the conservation measures necessary to achieve and maintain favourable conservation status;
- Refusing to accept the Natura 2000 objectives because the compensatory measures are considered as inadequate;
- Challenging the way measures are to be implemented in practice and monitored.

Through the analysis of the 4 categories of case studies, the primary causes of conflict can be illustratively summarised as follows:

- Category 1 - Local people have different perceptions on the future of the Natura 2000 site. For example, local people object to the restoration and management of meadows or the felling of invasive species, or the access to the Natura 2000 site.
- Category 2 - Land users have different expectations in the use and management of the Natura 2000 site. For example, through their activities, climbers, walkers, music festival participants, are unaware of their impact on priority habitats and their disturbance of priority species.
- Category 3 - Land managers contest measures to achieve or maintain the favourable conservation status of the Natura 2000 site and their involvement in delivering the collective objectives without adequate compensation. Credibility and financial support they expect or request to fulfil their role is often at the heart of the conflict; this is very sensitive to incoherencies between administrative rules and different time frames, in place at local, national and European levels.
- Category 4 - Proposals (plans or projects) which physically impact on or challenge the integrity of the Natura 2000 area. For example, developers want to use the Natura 2000 site for the expansion of an airport, the construction of an international road, or the creation of residential areas. Here, conflicts involve tensions between what is and is not in the public interest.

## 6 The roles of stakeholders in conflicts

### 6.1 Who is involved in a conflict?

In Section 2.3 of the report for Task 1, the statement is made that “often a real conflict emerges from a dispute that escalates in terms of a gradual change from a disagreement to a conflict between people and/or groups”. Many case studies in this report for Task 2 confirm this and illustrate that the origin of a conflict stems from who is involved in and around the Natura 2000 site. Understanding who the stakeholders are, how they interact and what their perspectives are, will make for more effective management of the causes of the conflict.

Table 1 on the following page provides an overview of the variety and types of stakeholders evident in the Task 2 case studies. Stakeholders are first grouped by main sectors of activities and then by specific stakeholder groups. They are then identified according to the primary causes of the conflict described in the previous section. A reference to the appropriate case studies is also provided as a guide to the reader.

### 6.2 Roles of the stakeholders in the case studies

Strongly held opinions by individuals can become strongly held opinions of a stakeholder group. This can result in a situation where conflicts escalate - differences of opinion become a disagreement, leading to a public dispute or even a major (national level) conflict. Understanding this is important as it enables Natura 2000 managers to assess what responses to conflict tactics may be appropriate or are likely to be more successful. (Chapters 7 and 8 of this report build on this by looking at what determines ‘success’ in resolving conflicts.) Several stakeholder groups appear in the case studies and the reasons why they are critical towards conflict resolution are described: the range of underlying positions which different stakeholder groups may take is described, alongside how different conflict tactics can be developed by different stakeholder groups. In the following section, stakeholders are listed according to their proximity to or remoteness from the Natura 2000 site: from the local to national and European level.

#### 6.2.1 Local level stakeholders

- The **‘Natura 2000 Manager’**. Usually a professional in charge of the Natura 2000 area responsible for maintaining or achieving the site’s favourable conservation status. He / she can be a ranger, a site manager or a Natura 2000 project manager. He / she is involved in the development of the management plan and / or its implementation. He / she can be given official status with a specific title such as: European Officer (UK), Opérateur Natura 2000 and Animateur Natura 2000 (FR), Gebietsbetreuer (DE). The key thing is that the Natura 2000 Manager is very close to the site: he / she is usually the first person who can identify (potential) conflicts because he / she is on the ‘front line’ and in regular contact with local stakeholders. The Natura 2000 manager is also usually the first person to be directly confronted by the conflict. His or her role can differ according to the category of conflict: from information provider, to giving advice, to designing solutions, to mediating and negotiating. His / her clear priority is to achieve successful outcomes for the nature conservation objectives, which are legally binding. He / she plays a primary role in most of the case studies. For example, case studies: 1.4 Danube Delta (RO), 4.7 Puszcza Kampinoska (PL).
- The **‘Land Manager’/ ‘Landowner’**. Farmers, foresters, landowners, are key stakeholder groups referred to in the case studies where conflicts are linked to land management issues. Often present at the origin of the conflict, they usually live on or close to the site. As “permanent” stakeholders, their support for Natura 2000 is crucial for the long-term sustainability of the Natura 2000 area. Their land management requirements must be well understood and their legitimate needs acknowledged if the favourable conservation status of Natura 2000 sites they manage is to be achieved and maintained in a sustainable way. For example, case studies: 3.1 Peelvenen (NL), 3.2 Champeigne (FR).
- The **‘Elected Official’**. Elected officials and representatives of local authorities are close to the site (for example, involved in planning, regulatory services etc.) and also are on the ‘front line’. As the responsibility of managing Natura 2000 goes beyond the site itself, a local authority, whose personnel may not have a nature conservation background, elected officials and their staff are extremely important to engage stakeholders in the Natura 2000 process. In some countries, the responsibility to lead the management planning process and stakeholder dialogue is in their hands. For example, case studies: 2.3 Etang de Manguio (FR), 4.6 Pomponrahka and 4.8 Rauvolanlahti (FI).

**Table 1 Main stakeholders**

This table provides an overview of the main stakeholders represented in the case studies contained in this report. Categories 1, 2 and 3 relate to Articles 6.1 & 6.2 and category 4 to Articles 6.3 & 6.4 of the Habitats Directive.

Sectors	Stakeholder groups	Stakeholders	Category 1: Local people & Natura 2000	Category 2: Users' expectations & Natura 2000	Category 3: Land managers & Natura 2000	Category 4: Land use & Natura 2000	Case study references
Agriculture	> Farmers > Foresters	- Association of agriculture producers - Farmers and farmers unions - Foresters	0		0	0	1.1 / 3.1 / 3.2 / 3.3 / 4.3 3.3 / 3.4
Energy	> Energy suppliers	- Biomass plant - Power station - Wind farms (electricity)	0			0	1.4 / 4.1 / 4.2
Fishery	> Fishing companies	- Fishers - Scallop dredging company			0		3.5
Environment	> Nature conservation protection	- Environment groups - Nature Conservation Organisations - Wildlife groups - i.e. Scientists / Technicians / Hydro-geologists	0	0	0	0	1.1 / 1.3 / 2.1 / 2.2 / 2.3 / 2.5 / 3.1 / 3.2 / 3.3 / 3.4 / 4.1 / 4.2 / 4.3 / 4.4 / 4.5 / 4.6 / 4.7 / 4.9
Public	> Local people	- Local people / residents - Parish and Community Councils - Private landowners	0	0	0	0	1.1 / 1.2 / 1.3 / 1.4 / 2.3 / 2.5 / 3.4 / 4.3
Public Administration	> Public Authorities	- (Environment) administration - Government agencies - Elected officials - Provinces - Municipalities - Local authorities	0	0	0	0	1.1 / 1.2 / 1.3 / 1.4 / 2.3 / 2.4 / 2.5 / 2.6 / 3.1 / 3.2 / 3.4 / 3.5 / 4.1 / 4.3 / 4.4 / 4.5 / 4.6 / 4.7 / 4.8 / 4.9
Sport	> Sportsmen	- Climbers - Hunters - Kite surfers - Bait diggers and fishermen	0	0	0		1.2 / 2.1 / 2.2 / 2.3 / 2.4 / 3.2
Transport	> Transport companies / users	- Airport - Road construction companies - Road users				0	4.3 / 4.4 / 4.6 / 4.9
Tourism	> Recreation	- Bird watchers - Festival / event visitors & organisers - Tourists and tourism companies		0			2.1 / 2.2 / 2.5 / 2.6
Urban / industrial expansion	> Construction companies	- Building companies (housing, etc.) - Investment companies	0			0	1.4 / 4.5 / 4.7 / 4.8

- The **'Local People'**. The local people, living in the area, belong to the area. Natura 2000 often requires a change of mindset, a wider perspective, not easy to embrace for those who have been living on a site for many years. Yet, the support of local people is crucial for the long-term sustainability of the Natura 2000 area. Their expectations need to be listened to and their legitimate requirements acknowledged if conflicts are to be avoided or solved. Above all, they must be meaningfully engaged in the management process.  
For example, case studies: 1.1 Ammarnasdeltat (SE), 1.3 Fenn (UK).
- The **'External Land User'**. Often use the Natura 2000 site for short periods of time and have expectations which can lead to conflicting situations: visitors, climbers, 4 wheel drivers, birders, festival participants, kite surfers, bait diggers and fishermen, etc. They are often informed and influenced by their own professional unions or associations, which may be active at either national or European levels. User interest groups and their legitimate expectations should be acknowledged if conflicts are to be avoided or solved away from the courts.  
For example, case studies: 2.2 Montserrat (ES), 2.3 Mauguio (FR), 2.5 Ehrenbürg (DE), 2.6 Ruissalon lehdot (FI), 3.5 Pembrokeshire (UK).
- The **'Local Non Governmental Organisation'**. Acting as a watchdog for the implementation of the Directives, they often act to bring conflicts to attention at national level, which have not been solved at the local level. They are often part of the solution in designing win-win solutions to solve the conflict.  
For example, case studies: 2.1 Kent (UK), 4.4 Rospuda Valley (PL).
- The **'Local administrative & technical services'**. In charge of the implementation at the local level of the regulatory framework for Natura 2000 and usually established at higher administrative levels. In charge of integrating Natura 2000 into sectorial policies through local planning documents and the delivery of local planning permits.  
For example, case studies: 1.1 Ammarnasdeltat (SE), 4.6 Pomponrahka and 4.8 Rauvolanlahti (FI).

## 6.2.2 Regional, national level stakeholders

- The **'Professional unions or land-users associations'**. Represent the local stakeholders through their professional unions or associations. They may have their own agenda and positions "for or against Natura 2000" at the national level. Usually, the persons involved 'go between' different levels: from local to national, national to local. They are influential in shaping opinions of local people, able to spread positive or negative messages, become active supporters or active opponents. Their role is very important in resolving the conflict: they can either become mediators for Natura 2000 and provide innovative ideas or the conflict can evolve in another direction: from legal threats at the local level to court action at the national or European level.  
For example, case studies: 3.1 Peelvenen (NL), 3.3 Morvan and 3.4 Mont Beuvray (FR), Rovigo (I).
- The **'Outside Developer'**. Typically come from sectors, which have specific interests and may be involved in projects requiring planning consent. Key is that they come from or reflect another perspective than that of the nature conservation sector; they will often need to learn why it is necessary to preserve the integrity of the site. Their willingness to understand the objectives of Natura 2000 can lead to the design of innovative solutions.  
For example, case studies: 4.1 South Humber and 4.2 Fifth of Forth (UK), 4.3 Naardermeer (NL), 4.5 Krkonose (CZ).
- The **'National nature conservation NGO'**. Acting as a watchdog for the legal implementation of the Directives, they can bring conflicts to the attention of national or European levels, which have not been solved at the local level. They act to bring attention to and focus on issues impacting on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites, the definition of Natura 2000 conservation objectives or conservation measures. In countries where they are involved in the definition of Natura 2000 conservation objectives within management plans and in the implementation of conservation measures, their early involvement can contribute to avoiding conflicts at a later stage.  
For example, case studies: 3.2 Champeigne (FR), 4.4 Rospuda Valley (PL), 4.9 Saltholm Island (DK).
- The **'Public Authorities'**. Usually located at a more remote 'headquarters', are representatives of the national government who work to put in place regulatory, compensatory frameworks and the formal procedures to be followed. They play a key role in designing information / communication / participation and professional training strategies, which can enable potential conflicts to be anticipated and Natura 2000 to be integrated in other sectors of society. They can be viewed as having the keys to solve many conflicts by, for example, securing inputs from other ministries, financial support for Natura 2000 implementation or in helping to negotiate solutions to conflicts. They often formally approve Management Plans, the conservation objectives and the conservation measures implementing the plan, vital for reporting to the European Commission.

For example, case studies: 2.6 Ruissalon lehdot (FI), 3.1 Peelvenen (NL), 4.5 Krkonose (CZ).

- The **'Independent External Mediator'**. Often a specialist, called in for a short period of time, when there is a risk that conflicts may escalate into threats escalating into a crisis situation. As an outsider, his / her remoteness from the area is important as he / she needs to be perceived as a neutral person. His / her inter-personal and communication skills are crucial to bring opponents back to the negotiating table. He / she helps new solutions to emerge.  
For example, case studies: 1.2 Bendola and 3.2 Champagne (FR).
- The **'Social Scientist'**. The social scientist has a specific role to play for Natura 2000. As the management process is essentially also a social process, he / she is involved to identify and analyse the origin of a conflict, propose tools to address issues, to understand the position of the different stakeholders for or against Natura 2000, and to monitor progress along a time scale: they usually work on a longer timescale than the external mediator, and will develop an understanding of the management process.  
For example, case studies: 2.2 Montserrat (ES), 2.3 Mauguio (FR).
- The **'Training organisation' & 'Supporting Foundation'**. Not directly involved in the conflicts, but present in the background, offering training support, approaches or programmes to resolve conflicts - for example, the Mutual Gains Approach (NL) and l'Atelier Technique des Espaces Naturels (FR). Also supporting schemes for conflict resolutions, such as those available from Fondation de France (FR), which influence the way stakeholder dialogue and conflicts are managed by Natura 2000 managers, mediators, public authorities and local technical and administrative departments. They contribute to shaping an open vision for stakeholder dialogue, by providing personal stakeholder development opportunities and technical support through guidance documents, websites, etc.  
For example, case studies: 3.1 Peelvenen (NL), 3.2 Champagne (FR).
- The **'Media'**. Include local and national newspapers, radio and television stations and can play an important role in shaping opinions. In some countries, there are strategies to manage how Natura 2000 is featured or appears in the media, which involve regular analysis of press articles and media events related to Natura 2000.  
For example, case studies: 4.3 Naardermeer (NL), 4.4 Rospuda Valley (PL).
- The **'Communication Specialist / 'Public Personality'**. Called upon by supporters of Natura 2000, they can play an influential role in shaping public opinion and attracting attention to a wide public campaign.  
For example, case studies: 2.5 Ehrenbürg und Katzenköpfe (DE), 4.3 Naardermeer (NL).

## 6.2.3 European level stakeholders

- The **'European nature conservation professional network'**. European networks of land managers for nature conservation, such as Eurosite and the EUROPARC Federation. NGOs in their own right, these networks positively influence their constituencies of members in delivering Natura 2000 at the local level by providing training programmes and awareness of the European dimension of Natura 2000. They promote good practice in managing Natura 2000 sites, encourage land managers to work together with others in defining conservation measures which will achieve Natura 2000 conservation objectives. For example, Eurosite led the Natura Networking Programme, implemented in partnership with the EUROPARC Federation and the European Landowners' Organisation, on behalf of the European Commission.
- The **'European land users professional network'**. Typically comes from sectors, which have specific interests, such as in transport, harbours, farming, forestry sectors, etc, and need to integrate biodiversity and Natura 2000 in designing and implementing their plans and projects. Understanding the meaning of the articles of the Habitats and Birds Directives and transferring this understanding and good practice examples to their constituency is a priority. [An excellent example of the advice and guidance material produced to cover sectoral interests is the recent (February 2010) draft guidance document on 'Non-energy Extractive Industries and Natura 2000']. They are able to support lobbying actions at national and European levels, including through the European Parliament. The European Commission considers them as key stakeholders in delivering Natura 2000.  
For example, case studies: 2.4 Po delta, Rovigo (IT), 3.3 Nord Morvan (FR).
- The **'European nature conservation non governmental organisation' (NGO)**. Acting as a 'watchdog' for and proponent of the implementation of the nature Directives, NGOs bring to the attention of the European Commission / DG Environment conflicts which have failed to be solved at the national level. They advise and influence their national members and shape the direction and ways in which conflicts can be solved, either by court action at national or European levels or

through negotiation. They are able to support lobbying actions at national and European levels, including through the European Parliament. The European Commission considers them as key stakeholders in delivering Natura 2000. For example, case study: 4.4 Rospuda Valley (PL).

- The **'European Commission' (EC)**. Being notified of conflicts not solved either at the local level or the national level, the Directorate for the Environment follows formal procedures to address complaints arriving on its desk. Through its many dedicated Natura 2000 working groups, it shapes the policy framework within which national governments implement Natura 2000 and essential funding programmes where stakeholders are encouraged to work together and integrate Natura 2000 into other sectors of society: for example, through the Life Programme, the EC helps to solve emerging conflicts by financing innovative programmes at the local level. In contact with all Natura 2000 stakeholders at national and also local levels, the EC utilises and develops key resources to oversee and support an essential knowledge base of science, expertise, experience and opinion, vital to all stakeholders. For example, case studies: 3.4 Mont Beuvray (FR), 4.4 Rospuda Valley (PL), 4.9 Saltholm Island (DK).
- The **'European Court of Justice'**. Involved in Natura 2000 conflicts, ultimately as a point of last recourse when all efforts on specific cases at the other levels have failed. In addition, the Court provides a wealth of case law to assist interpretation and implementation of the articles of the Directives. For example, case studies: 4.4 Rospuda Valley (PL), 4.9 Saltholm Island (DK).

As the Natura 2000 process is a joint effort of the EU, national governments, regional and local authorities, nature conservation organisations and professionals, the case studies demonstrate that the process of implementing the European nature directives at the local level is a demanding exercise for all of the stakeholders involved. However, implementation, especially in conflict situations, places specific and exacting demands on the skills and competencies of the Natura 2000 manager in particular. A process of change is involved, which requires all stakeholders to together find ways to work and reconcile (often competing) objectives so that the main objectives of the legislation can be adhered to.

### 6.3 Stakeholders spectrum

The stakeholders involved in the conflicts described in the case studies can be placed on a spectrum according to three main criteria:

- **Their physical proximity to or their distance/remoteness from the Natura 2000 site where the conflict has emerged.** Living or working close to the site or far from it, stakeholders are engaged in the conflict from either a local or national perspective and sometimes a European perspective. The solution to the conflict can involve a series of iterative consultations between the local, national and European levels, which also, in many cases, explains the complexity of the process to find solutions, the time scales involved and the difficulties to be addressed.
- **Their resistance to the changes induced by Natura 2000, from 'benign apathy' to 'extreme resistance'.** Understanding the position of each stakeholder group 'for' or 'against' Natura 2000 and the reasons behind those positions is essential to the management process required to address conflicts: the positions taken by stakeholders can then be analysed throughout the management process and monitored, for example through a 'Before and After' approach. (See also section 8.2)
- **Their conflict tactics and responses, from passive reactions to extreme violence.** Groups are highly dynamic social systems: understanding how stakeholder groups relate with each other brings an awareness of different and shared perceptions. Equally, failure to understand this can result in the views and opinions of a stakeholder group being misrepresented and the wrong tactics used to counter, defuse or address a conflict being developed and applied – this will always be costly in terms of wasted resources. Discord among groups can even lead to stakeholders shifting their position and transferring between groups. All of this means that any conflict situation can be multi-faceted and fluid. Understanding which conflict tactics are used will always help to decide the appropriate responses to deal with conflicts. (See also section 8.3)

The case studies presented in this report for Task 2, according to the four categories identified, describe local people, land managers, land users, project developers and many other stakeholders, often located in remote areas far from Brussels. They are key players involved in a process of change, which, in many cases, takes them beyond their usual environment or their usual perspective. Local citizens and different sectors of society are asked to embrace nature conservation objectives elaborated at the European level, which are to be implemented within different levels in the decision-making process. At all levels, this process of change often implies a radical change of culture, or even a paradigm shift, requiring new structures of decision, new procedures

and innovations. The case studies illustrate vividly that it takes time, skill, education, courage and creativity to build understanding and trust amongst stakeholders so that they can adhere to and support - through their activities - the main purpose of the nature directives as a new legislation for our common European heritage.



Rauvolanlahti, Finland (see case study 4.8)  
Credit: Tomi Hangisto

## 7 Analysis of case study groups

Here, the case studies are analysed collectively within each category as previously identified according to the primary causes of the conflict – each section provides an analysis of the questionnaires per category along with a summary of the issues, the specific primary cause of the conflict, the conflict tactics used, the conflict management approaches developed and applied in response to the various conflict tactics, the role of the Natura 2000 manager and key questions raised by the case studies.

### 7.1 Category 1: Local people and Natura 2000

#### Category 1 case studies

Nr.	Country	Region / site	Conflict involves:
1.1	Sweden	Ammarnasdeltat	Objection to meadow re-creation & management
1.2	France	Bendola	Access & use of the future Natura 2000 site
1.3	United Kingdom	Fenn's, Whixall, Bettisfield	Opposition to the felling of invasive pine forest
1.4	Romania	Danube Delta / Tulcea	Anticipating restrictions for future development

#### Summary overview

- The main objections to meadow re-creation and management of the Amarnas delta (SE) are solved through communicating the benefits of managing adequately the Natura 2000 areas.
- In Bendola (FR), the conflict about access and use of the future Natura 2000 site is solved through the intervention of a professional mediator: an intensive, short term mediation helps two opposing groups of local people to get out of a crisis situation by recognizing each others needs and by finding together an acceptable & appropriate solution for all parties.
- The opposition to the felling of invasive pine forest (UK), remains in spite of all the communication efforts made by the nature conservation professionals. A win-win situation is not reached but the lessons learnt are critical.
- In the Danube delta (RO), potential conflicts are anticipated especially in villages included in the perimeter of the Natura 2000 area. A communication strategy is under development based on the demonstration of the potential advantages and benefits of Natura 2000.

#### Primary cause of the conflict

The conflicts described in these case studies relate to the perception that local stakeholders have on future development of the Natura 2000 area, for example in terms of its access, management or uses. Stakeholders usually disagree with what is proposed. These case studies illustrate conflicts, which are mainly related to articles 6.1 and 6.2 of the Habitats Directive.

#### Conflict tactics

The case studies in this category exhibit all stages of conflict, from benign apathy to more extreme reactions, such as the destruction of equipment. Natura 2000 is sometimes used as trigger, either bringing already existing long-standing issues to a head, or creating new tensions. Natura 2000, rather than being the substance of the conflict, becomes a scapegoat. When the conflict is not identified and adequately handled, a situation of crisis follows.

#### Conflict management approaches

- Communication approach: communicating the benefits of Natura 2000 areas;
- Show by example approach;
- Crisis management approach through mediation and innovative solutions;
- Personal contact approach;
- Demonstrating the strength of support and need for the venture;
- Anticipating conflicts: design approach.

## Role of the Natura 2000 manager in these case studies

The primary role of the Natura 2000 manager is to respond pro-actively to a conflict situation (or potential conflict situation) and ensure that the views and opinions of local people are listened to, problems (misunderstandings or genuine concerns) are addressed and that a responsible management strategy is developed in consultation with stakeholders. Often, most concerns can be addressed and problems averted through building effective working relationships with local people living on or working within a Natura 2000 site: key elements here are to enter into dialogue, ensure facts are understood (by both sides) and propose mutually agreeable solutions wherever possible.

In many cases, the perceptions of local people are seldom reality - features of the conflict or potential conflict can include simple mis-givings, mis-understandings or mis-conceptions. The most important thing is to acknowledge the views and opinions of local people - they matter and require to be sensitively and tactfully addressed. From the site manager's perspective, once seen in context, the causes of conflict can be understood, discussed and mutually agreeable solutions created, within clearly communicated parameters of what is or is not negotiable in or around the Natura 2000 site. Of course, even with the most effective and thoughtful communication process, it may not be possible to fully engage all local people in all cases - opposition (or even hostility) may remain, whatever actions a Natura 2000 manager takes. However, effective relationship building, involving good dialogue, will certainly help to ensure better chances of on-site success.

### Questions raised / Lessons learned

- Need to clarify what is negotiable and what is not negotiable;
- Need to identify and negotiate potential compromises;
- Define and be clear about how far the European designation can be used as an argument to impose nature conservation management and choices;
- Be solution focused and not problem focused;
- Prepare a strategy in order to anticipate conflicts;
- Win-win situations may not always be reached but the lessons learned are critical;
- Be prepared: you cannot bring ardent opposition round no matter what you try.

**Key words:** Information, education, communication, awareness, negotiation, mediation.

## 7.2 Category 2: Users' expectations and Natura 2000

### Category 2 case studies

Nr.	Country	Region / site	Conflict involves:
2.1	United Kingdom	Thanet Coast & Sandwich Bay	Suspected disturbance of marine birds habitats
2.2	Spain	Muntanya de Montserrat	Impact of mass tourism
2.3	France	Etang de Mauguio	Opposition of local stakeholders to the Natura 2000 perimeter
2.4	Italy	Po delta, Rovigo	Land users feel excluded in stakeholder process
2.5	Germany	Ehrenbürg und Katzenköpfe	Impact of traditional music festival
2.6	Finland	Ruissalon lehdot	International rock festival

### Summary overview

- The multiple use of a bay in South East England leads to speculation of disturbance of marine bird habitats without evidence. Determining the carrying capacity of the bay, a stakeholder dialogue and a forum will help rebuild confidence.
- In Catalunya, climbers in Montserrat are unaware of their impact on the fauna and flora. A participatory process allows for better understanding, zoning & protection of the sensitive areas.
- In Southern France, a coalition of elected officials and land users oppose the designation of the perimeter of the Natura 2000 area, creating a crisis situation.
- In Northern Italy, the representatives of local stakeholders (hunters, farmers...) feel excluded from the stakeholder involvement process.

- In Finland and Germany, major popular music festivals held for short periods of time significantly impact on the Natura 2000 sites. Negotiation with the festivals organisers, joint site visits inspections 'before' and 'after' the events and demonstration of the benefits of Natura 2000, contribute to solving the conflict.

### **Primary cause of the conflict**

The conflicts described in these six case studies are linked to different expectations from a variety of land users of the Natura 2000 areas; either, users fear that the Natura 2000 designation will no longer allow them to pursue their activity, or have limited awareness of the impact of their activities on the quality of the Natura 2000 area.

### **Conflict tactics**

Either begin apathy, or active reaction such as legal action. Unaware of the impact of their activities (mass tourism), stakeholders are not directly involved in the process at first, the conflict is handled by their representatives. With different opinions on the impact of activities on the future of the Natura 2000 sites, land users or NGOs take an active role in developing the conflict: they speculate with little concrete evidence of impact, they challenge the information presented to them, they refuse to get involved in the participatory process, they take legal action against the perimeter of the Natura 2000 area.

### **Conflict management approaches**

- Creating new ways to build dialogue through a mediation process;
- Delivering reliable information, science based, understandable with good communication tools;
- Participatory approach: looking for solutions together;
- Leading by example: study visits to other Natura 2000 areas where similar problem has been solved;
- Monitoring stakeholder positions "Before and After".

### **Role of the Natura 2000 manager in these case studies**

The role of the Natura 2000 manager is to ensure that conflict and its successful resolution is not about winners and losers. As in the previous category, perception may not be reality. The Natura 2000 manager helps land users coming from other sectors of society to respect and integrate the objectives of Natura 2000 in their activities.

### **Questions raised / Lessons learned**

- Transform a critical situation into a positive contribution through awareness-raising;
- Be solution focused and not problem focused;
- Engage the most active opponents and recognise their potential contribution;
- Work with stakeholders to define and mutually agree the key role they can play in the management planning process;
- Pro-actively involve stakeholders to communicate and educate their peers and increase positive awareness.

**Key words: Perception is seldom reality. No winners, no losers. Science based information. Monitoring. Before and After.**

## 7.3 Category 3: Land managers and Natura 2000

### Category 3 case studies

Nr.	Country	Region / site	Conflict involves:
3.1	Netherlands	Peelvennen	Impact of nitrate deposition on sphagnum
3.2	France	Champeigne	Opposition to designation & attached regulations
3.3	France	Morvan / Bauges	Farmers fear constraints to be imposed
3.4	France	Mont Beuvray	Foresters object during participatory process
3.5	United Kingdom	Pembrokeshire Marine	Scallop dredging within Milford Haven Waterway

### Summary overview

- In the south of the Netherlands, the impact of outside sources of air pollution on Natura 2000 vegetation is addressed through a multi-stakeholder bottom-up approach and the design, acceptance and financial support of new technological solutions and drastic measures requiring confirmation by the national government.
- In a large scale farming area in the centre of France, the strong opposition of local land managers to the designation and farming management regulations is dealt with through a crisis mediation process: this is followed by a longer period of stakeholder dialogue with a bottom-up approach requiring confirmation by national authorities.
- In the mountains of Morvan (centre of France), farmers fear a loss of control and autonomy in their traditional land management practices. The conflict is resolved when direct negotiations at the local level are held away from wider national conflicts and subsequently through the design of clear performance standards they can identify with.
- In Mont Beuvray (FR), compensatory forestry measures are not very attractive and are unstable, but fiscal measures are available. Natura 2000 facilitators address difficult and conflicting issues head-on through transparency and participation into training programmes designed by foresters for foresters. Their objective is to encourage foresters to access fiscal opportunities and agree conservation measures by signing a voluntary 'charter'.
- In West Wales (UK), a very sensitive marine habitat is threatened by scallop dredging. Voluntary exclusion was attempted without success due to lack of better access controls and discussions with stakeholders. A statutory exclusion zone has finally been agreed.

### Primary cause of the conflict

The nature conservation features of these Natura 2000 areas depend upon the daily decisions of land managers involved in farming, forestry or other activities. The definition of the different types of measures needed to achieve or maintain the favourable conservation status, their implementation, the appropriate payment of the services fulfilled by land managers can become a major source of conflict. Voluntary agreements are preferred but not always possible to achieve. The national Natura 2000 framework is critically tested at the Natura 2000 local site level.

### Conflict tactics

All stages from benign apathy to extreme reactions. These different tactics can be used in a different order. For instance, benign apathy may follow physical disturbance of the habitat to be protected, or physical threats to people involved in the negotiation, or refusing to seat at the table of negotiation.

### Conflict management approaches

- Early involvement of land managers in the dialogue process;
- Transparency on difficulties to be solved;
- Compensatory measures (fiscal and financial incentives);
- Design with stakeholders details of management measures;
- Voluntary agreements (codes of conduct, charter...);
- Give responsibility to land managers through performance standards;
- Offer new technological solutions.

## Role of the Natura 2000 manager

The role of the Natura 2000 manager is to actively engage with a great number and variety of stakeholders (landowners and land managers, fishermen, statutory agencies, etc). Their primary function is to ensure that stakeholders “buy-in” to proposed solutions, including through voluntary support, so that the objectives of the Natura 2000 designation can be delivered together. Working within a Natura 2000 national framework, they play an essential role between the different levels of decision-making. They are placed in the middle, “trying to make it work”. Often they are caught between the need to build relationships with many stakeholders – which is time demanding - and the demands of (more remote) bureaucracy. They need to be accepted by local landowners and land managers. Their communication skills are essential, in particular within difficult situations. They take visible steps to show they are keen to learn and understand the way stakeholders manage their land and their legitimate needs. They act as a key resource person, negotiating voluntary agreements and offering practical support for delivering Natura 2000 conservation objectives.

### Questions raised / Lessons learned

- Issues linked to land management measures need to be designed with the active involvement of stakeholders and adequate compensation approved by the national government.
- Decisions made by land managers and those made by public authorities may follow different timeframes, which can be incompatible. For instance, formal budgetary responses can arrive too late compared to the yearly schedule of farming practices. Therefore, improved timing to streamline decision-making processes helps.
- Voluntary agreements require “full buy-in” by stakeholders, follow-up and monitoring. Building trust, credibility and confidence with stakeholders require time and regularity.
- Innovative solutions designed to empower local stakeholders are to be encouraged and promoted.

The nature conservation features of Natura 2000 areas depend often largely upon the daily decisions of many land managers involved in farming, forestry or other activities, either impacting directly on the Natura 2000 areas themselves, or indirectly coming from the outside, for example through air or water pollution. Land management practices can be successfully maintained, modified and regulated to deliver Natura 2000 conservation objectives, usually financially supported through compensation schemes and agri-environment measures. Some times, when there is an incompatibility between activities, drastic measures may become necessary, such as buying the land or asking land managers not to intensify their activities or move to other places where this is possible. The communication skills and personal attitudes of the nature conservation professionals are key for their acceptance by land managers at the local level.

**Key words:** local acceptance, early involvement, resource persons, transparency, voluntary agreements, performance standards, technological solutions.

## 7.4 Category 4: Land use and Natura 2000

### Category 4 case studies

Nr.	Country	Region / site	Conflict involves:
4.1	United Kingdom	South Humber Bank	A new biomass / bioethanol facility
4.2	United Kingdom	Fifth of Forth	Extension of the operating life of a power station
4.3	Netherlands	Naardermeer	A new motorway next to the Natura 2000 site
4.4.	Poland	Rospuda Valley	A new road corridor: Via Baltica
4.5.	Czech Republic	Krkonoše Mountains	Ski resort development on meadows
4.6	Finland	Pomponrahka	Expansion of Turku airport on the adjacent bog
4.7	Poland	Puszcza Kampinowska	Overlapping nature protection regulations
4.8	Finland	Rauvolanlahti	New residential areas next to wetland area
4.9	Denmark	Saltholm Island	A bridge placed near a bird roosting area

## Summary overview

- In the UK, the design of a biomass / ethanol facility, which would result in the loss of a very important mudflat feeding and roosting area, is revised during the planning application procedure on the basis of the formal scientific Assessment of Adverse Effect on the Integrity of the site (AEOI). The reduced footprint of the facility and the proposed mitigation conditions will no longer have an adverse effect on the integrity of the site.
- In Scotland, the extension of the operating life of a power station is also dealt with through the normal provisions of the planning system (Appropriate Assessment): through early engagement, alternative solutions are found and a major unsolved conflict avoided.
- In the Netherlands, the conflict around a motorway planned by the government is solved after a major media campaign led by a national NGO attracts massive public support. Lobbying activities and the negotiation of a wider alternative bringing profit for everyone involved are key to the conflict resolution.
- In Poland, the construction of a major international highway corridor, which would damage key Natura 2000 sites, is stopped by a coalition of NGOs bringing the case to the attention of the European authorities. A new environmental assessment is carried out, an alternative route is decided by the Polish government after a compromise is found through a 'Round Table' process.
- In the mountains of the Czech republic, meadows are under threat of destruction by developers. A strategy of information and involvement of local planning authorities is designed to protect the most valuable areas based on the scientific assessment of their natural values and actual conditions.
- In Finland, the construction of the road threatening the integrity of a bog adjacent to the airport is stopped through court action. Can an alternative solution be found or will an exception be made to the applicable rules?
- In Denmark, the proposed route for a fixed link between Sweden and Denmark is strongly opposed. An artificial island, now an important ground for water birds, was created as part of the infrastructure.

## Primary cause of the conflict

In these case studies, conflicts stem from development proposals related to land use, either on the Natura 2000 site itself, or within its proximity: the integrity of the Natura 2000 areas is the main issue to be dealt with. Land uses, which are not compatible with the functions delivered by the ecosystems, even when located outside the Natura 2000 area, risk destroying its major habitats / species. Outsiders to the local Natura 2000 area and external forces – acting at national or international levels - are the main drivers of the conflict.

## Conflict management approaches

These situations can lead to conflicts either with the administration or with non-governmental organisations. Most of the conflicts are handled either through normal administrative planning procedures or legal procedures within the national context. When this resolution at the national level through normal procedures is not possible, the situation may become exceptional: the only way to protect the integrity of major Natura 2000 sites is to have the conflicts solved through a massive media campaign or through litigation at the European level.

- Planning procedures;
- Designing alternative solutions;
- Negotiating mitigation measures;
- Designing wider win-win solutions;
- Organising mass campaigns;
- Calling upon public opinion;
- Lobbying activities at multiple levels;
- Litigation;
- Acting at the European level and through the European Court of Justice;
- International Expert Panel.

## Role of the Natura 2000 manager

The nature conservation professional acts as an advisor to the planning authorities and the elected officials. These case studies demonstrate how the Natura 2000 facilitator will help other sectors of society to integrate the objectives of Natura 2000 and find a solution, which preserves the integrity of the Natura 2000 site.

There is not any *a priori* (pre-judged) prohibition of new activities or developments within Natura 2000 sites. These need to be judged on a case by case basis. There is a clear procedure in the Habitats Directive for assessment and subsequent decisions relating to development proposals that are likely to have an impact on designated sites.

From 'MEMO on Commission strategy to protect Europe's most important wildlife areas – frequently asked questions about NATURA 2000'. EC DG Environment, 2003.  
Available on the European Commission website [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index_en.htm)



## Questions raised / Lessons learned

- Determining the appropriate level and structure to resolve conflicts arising from international projects going much beyond the local level is critical - containment and effective dialogue are key;
- Determining what is of public overriding interest is critical;
- Promoting the integration of Natura 2000 within multi-sectoral approaches is essential;
- Deciding what is and what is not negotiable is critical.

Reconciling economic and environmental priorities is difficult and often the underlying trigger in land use based conflicts. Compromise is almost inevitable to achieve the best possible nature conservation outcome. In practical, pragmatic terms, a negotiated solution is perhaps the most realistic outcome. It is possible to design projects minimizing their impacts on nature. While some nature conservation professionals and non governmental organisations may not view this as a “win”, that position begs the question – what would the alternative be? At all times though, the intent of the legislative framework and adherence to the Habitats Directive are essential factors. The terms and conditions of the Directive’s articles must always be applied.

**Key words:** appropriate planning procedures, alternative solutions, mitigation measures, negotiation, win-win solutions, mass campaign, lobbying activities, public opinion, compensatory measures, litigation, European level, European Court of Justice.

## 8 Approaches to conflict resolution

As discussed in Chapter 6, stakeholders and the interaction between them are key to understanding how conflicts arise and how they can be resolved. Within the context of achieving gains for nature and implementing Natura 2000, the Natura 2000 manager is a central figure. His or her actions are crucial in relation to conflict – an effective Natura 2000 manager will deal proactively with conflict, often preventing it from arising or escalating to become a threat to their site; he or she can act as a facilitator, bringing divergent opinions and priorities and perspectives together; alternatively, he or she can also mediate between parties to achieve more positive outcomes than could have been achieved without any intervention. By the same token though, a poor, ill-prepared or ill-equipped Natura 2000 manager can exacerbate or even cause conflict, either through their actions or inaction.

In this chapter, information is drawn out from the case studies to help the Natura 2000 manager understand the reactions of the main stakeholders he/she is involved with, so that he/she can adjust his/her conflict management approach accordingly. The main phases, which develop during a conflicting situation, are introduced. Then stakeholders are placed on a spectrum of resistance and conflicts tactics. This is followed by an analysis of how the authors of the case studies responded to manage the conflict: a distinction is made between the methods used in a conflict which has developed gradually and the methods used in managing a crisis situation within a specific phase of the conflict. Two simple methods used to analyse and present the evolving positions of the stakeholders are then introduced. Finally, the fundamental skills the Natura 2000 manager should develop to use these methods and appropriate tools are summarised.

### 8.1 Phases of conflicts

The following different phases discernable in conflict management are evidenced in the case studies:

- Conflict anticipation;
- Conflict acknowledgment;
- Conflict positioning of stakeholders;
- Coalition forming at local, regional, national, European levels;
- Formation of formal or informal co-operation structures;
- Power struggle which can lead to crisis (Natura 2000 manager becomes a player);
- Compromise / Designing solutions;
- Formalising decision;
- Communicating results;
- Follow-up / Monitoring.

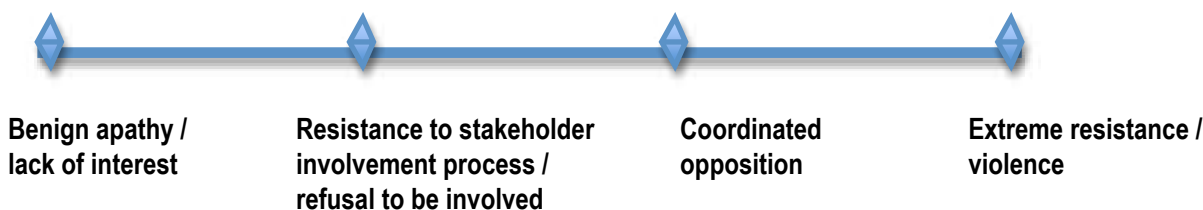
These phases are not always sequential but they are identifiable stages in a conflict situation. Conflict can be anticipated as related in case studies 1.4 Danube Delta (RO) and 4.7 Puszca Kampinoska (PL). Conflict acknowledgment usually happens when one of the parties refuses to co-operate and in some cases takes legal action. For example, case studies 1.2 Bendola (FR), 4.4. Rospuda Valley (PL). In most case studies coalition forming – between those who agree or oppose the measure – has taken place. For example case studies, 1.3 Bettisfields Moss (UK), 3.2 Champagne (FR), or 4.3 Naardermeer (NL). In many of the case studies, local working groups or commissions were created and round table meetings or workshops were held to establish co-operation and ‘talk things over’ (formation of formal or informal co-operation structures). Power struggle is replaced by searching for a compromise and designing solutions together. Also in several of the case studies, when the conflict is resolved - parties affirmed their co-operation through a ‘formal decision’ – for instance in Étang de Manguio (FR) they formally approve the management plan (DOCOB) – or, in case study 3.1 Peelvenen (NL) a policy memorandum is developed together. Communicating results, follow-up and monitoring are important phases to complete the process. For example, case studies 2.3 Étang de Manguio (FR) and 4.4 Rospuda Valley (PL).

Recognising these phases helps determine what appropriate actions and tactics can be most usefully deployed.

### 8.2 Spectrum of resistance and conflict tactics

At the same time, social dynamics and human behaviour are essential parts in the initiation, development, management and resolution of the conflicts described in the case studies. Similar to territorial or land use conflicts, the case studies illustrate that conflicts in Natura 2000 areas require good communication between stakeholders to build trust and gain respect: these are pre-requisites to achieve practical and understandable solutions in conflict situations.

Of course, each case study reveals that there are different starting points, which reflect variable circumstances and degrees of complexity. However, it is possible to place stakeholders along a 'spectrum of resistance', where their position is plotted in terms of their attitude (or stance) to Natura 2000. We can see that the attitudes of stakeholders can vary from and up to:



Stakeholders' attitudes and their actions vary: their conflict tactics range from passive reactions to progressively extreme or escalated actions – the range evidenced in the case studies includes:

- Lack of interest;
- Refusal to attend and be involved in the proposed stakeholder dialogue process;
- Unstable or unreliable participation in the stakeholder dialogue process;
- Actions challenging or denying the content of the stakeholder dialogue process;
- Coordinated opposition & time wasting tactics;
- Verbal threats;
- Damaging property & equipment;
- Physical violence.

Plotting stakeholders' attitudes in this way, with reference to their actions, helps to better understand how to respond to different conflict situations.

### 8.3 Responses to resistance and conflict tactics

The case studies reveal that there are various and variable methods, which can be applied in response to resistance and conflict tactics. There are common methods and tools used in a typical stakeholder dialogue process, which differ according to the situation and the level of resistance to Natura 2000: just as stakeholders' attitudes can vary from benign apathy to more extreme and direct actions in a conflict situation, equally, the best methods and tools to be applied to the management of a crisis, will vary. The main objectives of the Natura 2000 manager and public stakeholders are to anticipate, de-fuse and deal with the conflict by communicating what Natura 2000 is, why it is important and how it can benefit a site: there is a need to demonstrate that stakeholders' fears are not founded, or if they are, to be able to compensate for required changes. The critical point is that stakeholders must be positively and proactively engaged in the implementation of the legislation.

#### 8.3.1 Common methods used to anticipate, avoid or manage a conflict situation

The most common methods used to anticipate or manage a conflict can be grouped as follows:

- Information giving
  - o Interpretation: exhibitions, site visits;
  - o Leaflets, newsletters;
  - o Use of the media & mass campaigns;
  - o Inquiries;
  - o Public meetings;
  - o Face to face meetings.
- Information gathering
  - o Face to face meetings;
  - o Workshops & participating in stakeholder training events;
  - o Surveys;
  - o Gathering local knowledge;
  - o Field visits;
  - o Scientific research.

- Consultation and reporting
  - o Topic groups;
  - o Written consultation;
  - o Availability of reports on Natura 2000 websites.
- Shared decision-making & dialogue
  - o Facilitator enabling dialogue between stakeholders;
  - o Round table discussions;
  - o Involving people in practical conservation tasks;
  - o Designing innovative measures;
  - o Independent consultant.

Each method requires different skills, energies and resources, depending on the context of the conflict, its scale and the range of stakeholders represented. Different conflict resolution tactics will be required at different stages: also, often, different stakeholder groups will vary in terms of their degree of opposition (and therefore can be plotted at different levels in the 'spectrum of resistance') and this requires skilful application of various management techniques using perhaps several at the same time – for example, there may be simultaneously a public information campaign going on and a need for externally mediated meetings with specific stakeholder groups. Of course, as stated, this depends on different circumstances and places a very important emphasis, often, on the Natura 2000 manager who will be in a position to read the situation and make judgement calls about what stage the conflict is at, how multi-faceted it is, what conflict tactics different stakeholders are using (or are likely to use), and what methods of approaches should be applied to resolve the situation. Building upon the experience gained through the case studies, the following sections in this chapter elaborate on these points.

### 8.3.2 Methods & tools used in crisis management

When the conflict is situated at the extreme end of the spectrum, with strong resistance, threats and coordinated opposition, for example, there is a need for radical change. The authorities in charge of the Natura 2000 areas should respond strongly, dependant on the situation: for example, where trust has dissolved or where positions have become entrenched, one useful conflict response tactic is to engage a professional mediator to create a favourable context – here it can be possible to:

- Ensure people can express their fears;
- Depersonalise the debate and calm the situation;
- Maintain a neutral position;
- Identify and isolate divisive opponents / meet parties separately;
- Listen to expectations and take questions by stakeholder group;
- Identify potential local mediators with local credibility;
- Harness support from positive stakeholders;
- Understand opponents.

Using an independent, objective mediator can achieve dramatic results even in the most dire of conflict situations: their expertise can be employed to ensure mutual recognition of legitimate needs, including that:

- Different stakeholder groups acknowledge the legitimacy of the needs expressed by others;
- Stakeholders commit to a return to dialogue;
- Negotiable and non negotiable objectives are clearly identified;
- Rules to ensure transparency are agreed.

Once the main crisis is over, and when stakeholders can again sit together around the same table in a neutral place, the methods and tools commonly used by mediators and / or facilitators are to:

- Gather opponents around a common theme - techniques can include:
  - o Encouraging stakeholders to take a wider view, brainstorming together;
  - o Using simple and easily understood communication tools (such as GIS);
  - o Communicating the benefits of Natura 2000;
  - o Making sure nobody feels that they are loosing;
  - o Demonstrating benefits by examples;
  - o Visiting an existing similar Natura 2000 area;
  - o Demonstrating results through a sample area.

- Design and choose solutions together according to a democratic process following clear rules, for example, in order to:
  - o Encourage the creative capacity of the group through collective brainstorming;
  - o Confirm a proposal through an action plan with steps and a timeframe;
  - o Define means to monitor results;
  - o Ensure approval by appropriate authorities.

***“To succeed, as a mediator I need credibility in order to be accepted by local people. The support of the local officials and their confidence in the process is extremely important. Coming from the outside is an advantage because local people cannot refer to past situations; for instance by saying: ‘your parents did this or that in this area’. As an outsider, I can act in a different manner than the long-term persons working here, do things local people may have difficulty to do in a time of crisis. For instance, I can visit individually at their home the strongest opponents, listen to their fears, encourage them to express their needs.” - Contributor to case study 3.2***

### **8.3.3 Fundamental skills of Natura 2000 managers for conflict resolution**

In summary, the successful application of these methods and tools by the Natura 2000 manager will depend essentially upon the development of the following core skills:

- Communication, including listening;
- Diplomacy;
- Negotiation;
- Mediation;
- And a well-honed range of practical management skills, such as:
  - Budgeting;
  - Planning;
  - Dealing with the press;
  - Action planning and progress monitoring;
  - Evaluation;
  - Etc.

These skills are fundamental, not only for conflict resolution, but also for the successful implementation of Natura 2000. Many site managers are professional nature conservation specialists in a given field of ecology. Their knowledge and expertise is essential: but equally important and too often over-looked or under-valued are their core management skills. These must be developed and continuously updated in order to enable them to perform their duties effectively.

As presented in the report of Task 1 section 4.4.2, conflicts between people can be viewed as stemming from (1) differences of opinion, (2) a disagreement about a solution to a specific problem or (3) lack of mutual trust between the parties. The case studies illustrate these situations of conflicts. An on-going dialogue between the individuals concerned, where building or re-building trust is the priority, is most effective to approach and manage conflicts. In some cases, it is important to depersonalise the situation, so that stakeholders see the bigger picture of the Natura 2000 network with both its challenges and opportunities. In other cases, it is better to personalise the situation, by meeting the stakeholders and discuss their worries and views and look for solutions and compromises together. Shared decision-making is critical: as one of the case studies states, “You need full buy-in from the stakeholders for voluntary solutions to work”.

## 9 Conflict management approaches & stakeholder involvement

For a sustainable future we need to find ways to maintain Europe's biodiversity, while respecting economic, cultural and social values. This needs to be a joint effort between the various stakeholders at European, national, regional and local level. For a lot of local stakeholders, the European Commission seems far away. Stakeholders need to be involved in the implementation of Natura 2000 and committed and encouraged to find solutions to potential conflicting interests together. If stakeholders are not involved and not informed about the process of Natura 2000 implementation, conflicts arise more easily.

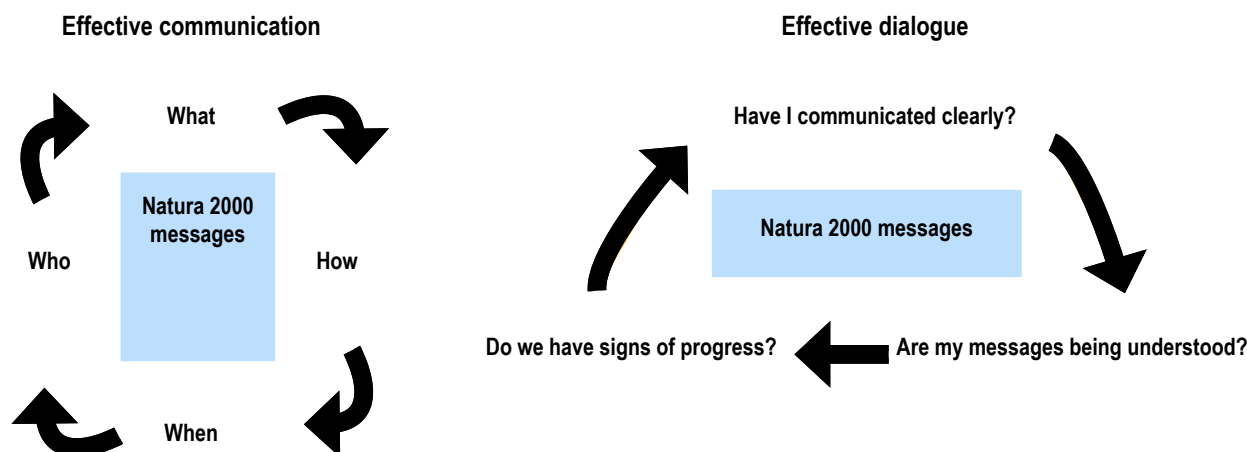
Member States have the responsibility not only to identify the areas, which need special attention to protect the vulnerable habitats and species that live there, but also to maintain or restore their favourable conservation status and to report back their results to the European Commission. Each Member State has to develop its own implementation process from the national to the local levels, including a strategy for communicating Natura 2000 through information, consultation and shared decision-making.

This chapter summarises some useful approaches for conflict management, stakeholder involvement and also techniques which could be considered when disputes go too far. It is not our intention to detail these approaches: we refer the reader to further reading in Chapter 11, including references in the French language.

### 9.1 Effective communication and dialogue

If Natura 2000 is to be communicated effectively, good communication requires first and foremost a willingness to listen, to try to understand others' points of view. Problems need to be openly discussed in order to explore whether solutions can be identified. It is an on-going process, which should be supported by regular communication expressions, like leaflets, mailings and public meetings to keep stakeholders informed and discussions going. A good working relationship between stakeholders and building of trust through open and honest exchanges of views and opinions can be vital success factors. An approach, which genuinely seeks to share information and engage people and their opinions, is more likely to yield positive results.

Clear information, good communication, real consultation and shared decision-making are the best tools to manage and solve conflicts. However, these are just tools: the way they are used will determine the success of the conflict resolution. Effective communication and effective dialogue are processes:



The approach to the timing and content of communication campaigns is critical, if stakeholders are to feel that they are genuinely included and that their views and opinions matter. The messages conveyed, the language used and the methods employed are equally important factors of success – for example, there is no point talking in jargon or inaccessible terms when addressing a hostile, confused or even genuinely concerned public.

## 9.2 Mutual Gains approach (MGA)

The Mutual Gains Approach to negotiation is a process model, based on experimental findings and hundreds of real-world cases, that lays out four steps for negotiating better outcomes while protecting relationships and reputation. A central tenet of the model, and the robust theory that underlies it, is that a vast majority of negotiations in the real world involve parties who have more than one goal or concern in mind and more than one issue that can be addressed in the agreement they reach. The model allows parties to improve their chances of creating an agreement superior to existing alternatives. MGA is not the same as “Win-Win” (the idea that all parties must, or will, feel delighted at the end of the negotiation) and does not focus on “being nice” or “finding common ground.” Rather, it emphasizes careful analysis and good process management.

The four steps followed in the Mutual Gains Approach model<sup>1</sup> are:

- |    |                    |  |
|----|--------------------|--|
| 1. | Preparation        | Prepare by understanding interests and alternatives.                         |
| 2. | Value Creation     | Create value by inventing without committing.                                |
| 3. | Value Distribution | At some point in a negotiation, parties have to decide on a final agreement. |
| 4. | Follow Through     | Follow through by imagining future challenges and their solutions.           |

## 9.3 Stakeholder Dialogue

*“Stakeholder Dialogue” has become a key technique for finding solutions to the complex challenges of sustainable development. The intention of stakeholder dialogue is in its essence dialogic: to get people from different walks of life and different perspectives on an issue together into a result-oriented conversation. In high quality stakeholder dialogues differences, even conflicts, hold the potential for innovative solutions and the achievement of goals that ultimately benefit all.*

Collective Leadership Institute <http://www.collectiveleadership.com>

## 9.4 When disputes go too far

Effective Dispute Resolution avoids the inflexibility, which accompanies litigation or arbitration. A number of specific approaches, including mediation, focus on enabling parties to achieve a better or similar result while minimising direct and indirect costs.

**Mediation**, as demonstrated in a few case studies, is one of the approaches to dispute resolution, which is increasing in popularity for use in environmental cases where conflict has arisen. It aims to replace confrontation with principled negotiation. A third party neutral person (or organisation) actively assists the disputing parties to work towards a negotiated agreement. The disputing parties stay in control, and the approach is flexible, with nothing imposed, and the option for either party to withdraw at any time. It avoids unwelcome publicity, and is therefore almost risk-free. The majority of settlements are reached at, or shortly after, mediation, making this a speedy process.

The other main approaches are: (1) Adjudication, (2) Conciliation, (3) Expert determination and (4) Independent intervention.

**(1) Adjudication** is an approach making use of a third party ‘neutral’, contracted to make a summary, binding decision without recourse to the Law;

**(2) Conciliation** is similar to mediation except that the mediator is active in putting forward the terms of the settlement;

**(3) Expert determination.** When a case is determined by a third party expert there is no right of appeal and all parties agree to be bound by the decision;

**(4) With independent intervention** the neutral third party (or parties) play a much more active role in facilitating, for example negotiations, discussions, consensus building, relationships and problem-solving.

The benefits of all effective dispute resolution techniques are that they are speedy, cost-effective and confidential. The parties retain control, there is usually a forward-looking commercial focus, and language and procedure are more acceptable to business than in a formal litigation.

<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from “[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutual\\_Gains\\_Approach](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutual_Gains_Approach)”

*Tell me, I may listen.  
Teach me, I may remember.  
Involve me, I will do it.*

Chinese Proverb



Almenara wetland, Valencia, Spain

## 10 Case studies: Conflict resolution for Natura 2000

The following case studies are grouped in four categories as outlined in Chapter 4. Although some case studies could appear in more than one category, they are distinguished according to the main types of stakeholders involved and with reference to the primary causes of conflicts - the case studies describe conflicts where Natura 2000 is:

- (1) Challenged by local people;
- (2) Opposed by land-users who have different expectations;
- (3) Disputed by land managers; and,
- (4) Threatened by other proposed land uses.

In each case study, we have kept the style of the contributor, but summarised a 'key message' in the titles, which we feel is useful to the reader. These twenty-four case studies enable a series of key recommendations to be made: these lessons learned are not only useful for actors at the local level in learning about best practice in the implementation and management of Natura 2000, but also of direct interest to those involved at national and European levels.

### Lessons learned from category 1 case studies

- Communicate the benefits;
- Beware, the devil's in the detail;
- Show by example;
- Identify & anticipate potential conflicts.

### Lessons learned from category 2 case studies

- Build up positive relationships;
- Involve people - it's a participatory process;
- Work in small efficient groups;
- Make stakeholders' input matter;
- The Natura 2000 site manager: a jack of all trades;
- Make sure everyone understands what is at stake.

### Lessons learned from category 3 case studies

- Use the best technology;
- Conflict is not necessarily a bad thing;
- Maintain transparency, maintain relationships;
- Be a resource person - easy to reach, positive and reliable;
- Each site & conflict is specific - you need full buy-in to succeed.

### Lessons learned from category 4 case studies

- Reduce the footprint & adjust timing of planned work;
- Early engagement & a full dialogue;
- Involve the media & public figures;
- Ensure political will & respect of EU legislation at all levels;
- Make consistent decisions based on transparent & clear rules;
- Communicate factually what is at stake;
- Anticipate how to deal with overlapping regulations;
- What seems good may still be harmful;
- It is possible to reconcile transport and environment and minimise impacts on Natura 2000.

## 'Communicate the benefits'

Country: Sweden  
Site / location: SCI Ammarnasdeltat (SE0810443) - Ammarnas delta  
Contact: Jonas Grahn, County Administration of Västerbotten  
Jonas.Grahn@lansstyrelsen.se



# 1.1

**Primary cause of the conflict:**  
Objection to meadow recreation and management

**Category:**  
Local people and Natura 2000

### The conflict:

Objection to the implementation (re-introduction) of meadow management practices and recreation of meadow habitats.

### Conflict description / background:

The Ammarnas delta is an area with meadows near the Vindelfjällen mountains in the western part of the county of Västerbotten. It was formerly very important for hay-making, indeed, the delta was an important reason that the small village of Ammarnas was established in the 19th century (this part of Sweden was colonized for permanent settlements rather late).

During the 1950s and 1960s, the meadows were mostly abandoned. Their value for migrative birds diminished - for example the endangered Lesser White-fronted goose, which used to rest here during the spring, waiting for the snow to disappear up in the mountains.

During the 1990s, the delta was designated as a SCI and, in cooperation with WWF, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and farmers along the Vindelälven river (which starts in the Vindelfjällen and flows through the delta), the county administrative board of Västerbotten has succeeded to increase the management of the meadows. Now, most of the delta is grazed by cattle or mowed, preserving the alluvial meadows in good condition and allowing the birds to find plenty of food. You can buy the meat from the cattle in, for example, the town of Umeå.

At first, many of the landowners in the nearby village of Ammarnas were negative about proposals and related activities, but now most stakeholders think it looks much better when the meadows are managed.

### Was it possible to transform the conflict into a win-win situation?

Yes!

### Describe the most useful measures used to deal with the conflict:

The provision of information to those potentially affected, encouraging and supporting local participation, and communicating the positive effects on the landscape, for example, increasing the value of the area for tourism and recreation - thereby generating increased revenue for local businesses.

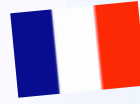
### From your experience, what guidelines can you advise for dealing with conflict in Natura 2000 sites?

Be transparent and communicate your plans - involve stakeholders and other interested parties whenever possible and as early in the process as possible.

### Your recommendations to make the Natura 2000 network more effective in involving stakeholders at the local level, and shift stakeholder opposition to participation and cooperation ?

Communicate the benefits and advantages of Natura 2000 and make Natura 2000 a process of participation.

## **'Beware, the devil's in the detail'**



Country: **France**  
Site / location: **Bendola, FR9302005 (SCI) Saorge, Alpes Maritimes**  
Contact: **Robert Douillet**, Consultant, Mediator and Advisor for Natura 2000  
rdouillet@geyser.asso.fr

# 1.2

**Primary cause of the conflict:**  
Stakeholder groups disagree on the access and use of a proposed Natura 2000 site

**Category:**  
Local people and Natura 2000

### **The conflict:**

Two stakeholder groups disagree on the future access and use of a proposed Natura 2000 site close to the border between France and Italy.

### **Conflict description / background:**

Located in a remote valley in the mountains of the South-East of France, the site is hardly accessible. The simplest solution is to travel through Italy. This site was proposed for designation as a Natura 2000 site. A Steering Committee was to be established in the coming months. Working as a Natura 2000 support person at the regional level, I was asked to solve a conflict between two populations living in the same village:

"Long-term local residents", many of them hunters, desired to give a motorized access to the mountain in front of the village, in order to be able to renovate more easily traditional buildings located on a former alpine meadow and also to be able to hunt more easily;

"New residents", living in the area for less than 20 years, were found to be often ecologically minded and a bit folksy. They opposed the motorized access, because of the potential impact of noise, visual impact, impact on biodiversity on this future Natura 2000 area, threatening to take legal action. They worried that the new access would link this remote valley to a wider network of dirt paths accessible to 4 wheel drive vehicles, which had been developed on the Italian side.

For many years the two populations were at war and did not speak to each other, new residents taking the place of older residents, within the village but also in the surrounding land. Relationships were violent and finally everyone was suffering. In fact, these are two different cultures, or micro-societies, living in complete opposition to each other.

The new residents called upon the French administration (Agricultural services: DDA) to oppose the project of the long-term residents to give motorized access to the mountain, referring to and using the Natura 2000 legislation as the basis for their opposition. The agricultural services sent an expert to study the impact of the road, who concluded that the construction of the road was technically and legally feasible. But the new residents allowed uncertainty to persist on possible legal action.

It was therefore necessary to find locally an agreement.

### **Was it possible to transform the conflict into a win-win situation?**

Yes, the administrative services (agriculture and environment) together called upon me as an external consultant to try to start a mediation process. I met the parties separately to understand their expectations, their needs, their breathing space. Then, in the town hall, together with the local authorities, we met with 3 representatives of each group, plus the representative of agricultural services and myself in a 3+3+3+1+1 format.

A first agreement emerged on the possibility to build a motorized access, but this access would be limited to small agricultural chain tractors, and therefore would not be accessible to 4 wheel drive. The path would be narrow, with a double bend.

We met for a second time the parties, separately, before another meeting with all stakeholders, following the same format: 3+3+3+1+1. Again the meeting was held in the town hall, a neutral place, to put the finishing touches on the agreement.

The draft agreement was signed. The Agricultural services took charge of its implementation with the construction works starting 2 weeks following the signature of the agreement. The conflict was solved thanks to an agreement, which involved a technical solution obtained through a mediation process.

### **Describe the most useful measures used to deal with the conflict:**

Sufficient amount of time allotted to the scheme: preliminary meetings (to set up trust), then meetings in the town hall, a neutral location.

For the meetings with the parties: neutral position of elected officials, the mediator and the representative of the government.

Appropriate facilitation and mediation techniques.

Sharing a common interest: starting with a reconciliation process in order to let the Natura 2000 approach to succeed locally and to be able to be involved in the process in a serene manner.

### **From your experience, what guidelines can you advise for dealing with conflict in Natura 2000 sites?**

My personal experience is described in a small guidance booklet « Dans la peau d'un animateur », designed to help those in charge of facilitating the development of Natura 2000 management plans. There, I tell my story on what I learnt as a Natura 2000 facilitator. From my personal experience, I develop five key ideas on how important it is to:

- Gather opponents around a common theme;
- Encourage the creative capacity of the group through collective brainstorming;
- Choose solutions together, according to a democratic process following clear rules;
- Go beyond tensions and reach common ground;
- Use mediation techniques to facilitate or deter the exchange of ideas, such as a table plan;
- Develop personal contacts so that opponents feel their concerns are listened to and their mutual needs recognised.

### **Suggestions for further reading:**

Dans la peau d'un animateur. Petit guide d'aide à l'animation.

Disponible: [www.paca.ecologie.gouv.fr/plugins/.../File/.../aventura2000PACA.pdf](http://www.paca.ecologie.gouv.fr/plugins/.../File/.../aventura2000PACA.pdf)

<http://www.fondation-de-france.com/Outils/Mediatheque/Librairie/Guide-pratique-du-dialogue-territorial>

#### **Fondation de France**

Numerous training resources on stakeholder dialogue, conflict resolution and mediation (including training programmes, events, bibliography) are available within a dedicated website, financed by Fondation de France:

[www.comedie.org](http://www.comedie.org)

It includes two detailed Natura 2000 case studies: Iles du Frioul, Marseille; Farmers and conservationists in La Piège.

[http://www.comedie.org/pdf/etude\\_piege.pdf](http://www.comedie.org/pdf/etude_piege.pdf)

## 'Show by example'



Country: **United Kingdom**  
Site / location: **Fenn's, Whixall, Bettisfield, Wem & Cadney Mosses SAC**  
Contact: **Dr Joan L Daniels**, Senior Reserve Manager, Natural England  
Fenn's, Whixall & Bettisfield Mosses NNR  
joan.daniels@naturalengland.org.uk

# 1.3

**Primary cause of the conflict:**  
Opposition to the felling of  
invasive pine forest

**Category:**  
Local people and Natura 2000

### The conflict:

Opposition to the felling of 50ha of invasive pine forest on Bettisfield Moss NNR and part of the Natura 2000 SAC in 1998.

### Conflict description / background:

In 1994, we told local people about our proposals to clear this very important raised bog habitat. Bettisfield Community Council invited English Nature to hold a meeting in Bettisfield Village Hall to explain works on the Moss. The clearance programme was outlined.

Initial low-key volunteer task clearances raised no opposition, but in 1999 when the installation of timber extraction roads began, the SORE (Save Our Rural Environment Group) was formed to oppose the work, whipped up by two local hydrogeologists who felt that the felling might affect water quantities passing their land. They both had recently opposed Natural England and the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) when their land had been added into the SAC in 1994.

A petition was raised against the work, letters were written to a local Member of Parliament, time-wasting tactics used by other groups were employed, and a large public meeting was called by SORE to get local people to protest about the clearance. However many conservationists attended. Eventually it was agreed to leave a backdrop of trees around the Moss. A meeting was also held with Whixall Parish Council about the planned clearance.

In 2000 and 2001, more meetings were held with Parish and Community Councils and English residents to explain progress on the work. Conflict began as soon as the operation became 'visible', when timber was stacked near the road to be moved. The machines were repeatedly broken into, and contractors equipment stolen.

Importantly we had solicited the help and support of the agencies that could actually stop the work.

### Was it possible to transform the conflict into a win-win situation?

To a very limited degree.

### What was tried, but did not work?

- Public meetings with the opposition group, guided walks for them.
- Providing scientific information to show them that they were wrong in their claims.

### Describe the most useful measures used to deal with the conflict:

- Persistence and pressing that, whilst individual concerns would be considered, European law meant that we had no option but to carry out the work. (Insistence that obligations had to be met.)
- Using scientific data to show that opposition claims were unfounded and getting support from all the different wildlife groups to contradict their inaccurate claims about the effect of the felling.
- Preparing one sample area early so people can see what the site would look like after the work.

- We tried to identify what was really important to the people and found compromises such as leaving a marginal fringe of pines so what they looked out onto from their homes would remain unchanged.
- Acquiring alternative access so we would not have to take timber through the opposing community.
- We generated a new and vocal groundswell of support for the Moss by lots of interpretive events, newsletters involving local interests, asking Moss supporters to come to opposition meetings etc.
- We involved the government agencies that regulate the work to support the scheme.
- Finding older local people who knew the area in the kind of management/state you want to introduce/achieve.

### **From your experience, what guidelines can you advise for dealing with conflict in Natura 2000 sites?**

- You cannot bring ardent opposition round no matter what you try.
- You can defuse a lot of worries in less ardent people in opposition groups with information about exactly what will happen during the operation.
- Formulate tactics for tackling and involving main opposition and supporting stakeholders.
- Try to demonstrate what the site will be like afterwards by preparing a sample area.
- Start with slow but constant management if need be, chipping away at the job.
- Make small compromises but stick to your guns (do not change your goals).

### **Your recommendations to make the Natura 2000 network more effective in involving stakeholders at the local level?**

- Early engagement in stakeholder planning and very clear definitions about what is negotiable and what is not.
- More emphasis on involvement of supporting stakeholders so individuals can not be so easily targeted.

### **Your recommendations for shifting stakeholder opposition to participation and cooperation?**

- Clear identification of their real concerns and identification of small compromises/avoidance tactics.
- Demonstration of the strength of support/need for the venture.



Felling work on  
Bettisfield Moss NNR

## 'Identify & anticipate potential conflicts'

Country: Romania  
Site / location: Danube Delta / Tulcea District  
Contact: Grigore Baboianu,  
Governor, Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority  
gbaboianu@ddbba.ro



# 1.4

**Primary cause of the conflict:**  
Limited conflict at this time -  
focus on prevention of conflict

**Category:**  
Local people and Natura 2000

### The conflict:

Bearing in mind that the implementation of the Natura 2000 network is at an early stage in the Danube Delta and across the country, we cannot say, for the moment, that there are real conflicts on this issue. However, there are some aspects of concern relating to the future management of the areas designated as Natura 2000 sites.

### Conflict description / background:

The situation in the Danube Delta region cannot be described as a real conflict, but we consider that the following described situations could be developed as future conflicts:

Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve was designated as a whole, Natura 2000 site. That means that all the local communities (villages and Sulina town) are included in the Natura 2000 site as well. The inclusion of the villages and Sulina town inside the Natura 2000 site created a discomfort of the local people because they need to ask for Natura 2000 Permit in building the houses and pensions, small hotels or other small economic enterprises. One of the most important issue in the area is the development of the wind farms for electricity that are considered to affect the migration routes of the migratory birds.

In the Tulcea district, about 80% of the total area was declared Natura 2000 site, and the local communities are not very enthusiastic with this, blaming the authorities that there will be too many rules and restrictions on developing economic activities of the communities.

### Was it possible to transform the conflict into a win-win situation?

It was and it is still necessary to continue the awareness raising activity in view to convince the local authority in the villages "affected" by Natura 2000 designation about the advantages of the Natura 2000 sites for the local communities, in terms of the new and specific opportunities for local development.

### Describe the most useful measures used to deal with the conflict:

As we presented that the existing situation could be considered as potential of conflict, the measures that might be used are more preventative ones and these include the development of the awareness, information and demonstration activities, in view to convince the local communities about the advantages of being part of / included in Natura 2000 sites.

### Your recommendations to make the Natura 2000 network more effective in involving stakeholders at the local level, and for shifting stakeholder opposition to participation and cooperation?

It is very important that there is better preparation in advance of designating sites:

- Develop a pilot to demonstrate the advantages, in terms of using the Natura 2000 sites as attractions for tourist activities, financial support for preserving the existing situation of habitats, etc.
- Meeting with local communities.
- Scientific studies to establish more accurate borders and the value of the sites.

## **'Build up positive relationships'**

Country: United Kingdom  
Site / location: Thanet Coast SAC  
Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA  
Kent, South-East England  
Contact: Ingrid Chudleigh, Natural England  
Ingrid.Chudleigh@naturalengland.org.uk



# 2.1

**Primary cause of the conflict:**  
Suspected disturbance of marine bird habitats

**Category:**  
Users' expectations and Natura 2000

### **The conflict:**

Disturbance issues related to a certain bay designated as a European marine site of importance. This bay is important for over-wintering birds, but also has a diverse array of activities ranging from bait digging to kite surfing. There has been concern over the carrying capacity of the bay in relation to what activities it can support without causing disturbance to the birds.

### **Conflict description / background:**

The conflict involved several different users of the bay. The main users included bird watchers, bait diggers and kite surfers. The conflict has developed over time through a general perception that the activities occurring in the bay were disturbing the bird populations using the area for feeding and roosting. This conflict has largely been based around speculation with very little concrete evidence of disturbance occurring. As a result of this, we have set up a study to look specifically at the carrying capacity of the bay and to determine if the bird populations are in a poor condition as a result of the multiple use of the bay. This study followed a series of targeted workshops with stakeholder groups, which further highlighted the need for a dedicated study to look into the issue.

### **Was it possible to transform the conflict into a win-win situation?**

We are at the very early stages of the study, so we are unable to confirm any win-win situations yet.

### **Describe the most useful measures used to deal with the conflict:**

As a pre-cursor to the actual study, we found that the one-to one workshops with stakeholder groups worked very well.

### **From your experience, what guidelines can you advise for dealing with conflict in Natura 2000 sites?**

If possible, try to take an informal approach first and build up positive relationships with your stakeholders.

### **Your recommendations to make the Natura 2000 network more effective in involving stakeholders at the local level?**

Involve them in developing the management schemes for the site and set up a stakeholder group for the site. Following this, you need to ensure that there is a regular forum for them to present their ideas in.

### **Your recommendations for shifting stakeholder opposition to participation and cooperation?**

This takes time, but by involving stakeholders in decision making at the earliest possible stage will help build confidence in the process.

## **'Involve people - it's a participatory process'**



Country: **Spain**  
Site / location: **Muntanya de Montserrat, Catalonia**  
Contact: **Xavier Ariño**, Scientific Advisor of Federació Entitats Excursionistes de Catalunya (Catalonian Mountaineering and Climbing Federation)  
xavier.arino@uab.cat

# 2.2

**Primary cause of the conflict:**  
Mass tourism

**Category:**  
Users' expectations and  
Natura 2000

### **The conflict:**

The main conflict is probably related to mass tourism, I have focused my research studying the impact of climbing on some species of flora and fauna. It is a very specific impact on some sensitive species.

### **Conflict description / background:**

The impact of climbing on natural protected areas has become a serious conflict in the two last decades, with the increasing popularity of outdoor activities and the effect of mass media (promoting the region for tourism and recreation etc.). Frequently, climbers may be unaware that cliffs support a unique flora or fauna and equally unaware of the impacts of rock climbing on these communities.

### **Was it possible to transform the conflict into a win-win situation?**

This is a key point: nobody should have the feeling that "they are the losers". There is no doubt that this is difficult process, but we have to face it by means of a participative process. A commission composed of climbers, scientists and natural park managers, was created to analyze and to discuss the conflict. From this commission, some climbing regulations and advice were provided for the climbing community.

### **Describe the most useful measures used to deal with the conflict:**

The first phase saw an extensive inventory of all the climbing routes. After this, we designed a theoretical index to classify every climbing route - this index indicates the frequency of use of climbing routes, categorising a range of routes from 'frequently used' to those 'infrequently climbed'. Using this index a map of the climbing areas in the natural park was produced, indicating high and low levels of climbing activity per route. This map is a very useful management tool and very helpful in the decision-making process for climbing bans and regulatory measures.

### **From your experience, what guidelines can you advise for dealing with conflict in Natura 2000 sites, to make the Natura 2000 network more effective in involving stakeholders at the local level, and shift stakeholder opposition to participation and cooperation?**

In my view, there are three points:

- The sense of Natura 2000 should be explained very well to the local population, especially those who can be potentially affected.
- It is very important to carry out scientific studies with participation of local representatives, to evaluate the application and development of new measures to ensure respect of the ecological values.
- It is essential to involve people in the participatory process, creating commissions, taking into account their opinions and implementing the results of this process together.

## 'Work in small efficient groups'

Country: France  
Site / location: FR9101408 SIC  
FR9112017 SPA  
Étang de Mauguio, Languedoc-Roussillon  
Contact: Eve Le Pommelet  
Chargée de mission Natura 2000, Syndicat Mixte du Bassin de l'Or  
smgeo@wanadoo.fr / elepommelet@symbo.fr



# 2.3

**Primary cause of the conflict:**  
Opposition of local stakeholders to the Natura 2000 perimeter

**Category:**  
Users' expectations and Natura 2000

### The conflict:

The precise definition of the Natura 2000 site perimeter. Local stakeholders - elected officials, land users, professionals - considered that the limits were imposed by government officials.

### Conflict description / background:

In 2005, « Étang de Mauguio » was already proposed to be integrated into the Natura 2000 network to implement both nature directives: Habitats and Birds. Four separate local authorities, ten hunting organisations, one group of local authorities and one group of land owners took legal action to proceed with the annulment of the decision concerning the perimeter. Main reasons for legal action: incoherence of the perimeter and lack of previous specific inventory.

Within this context, after long negotiations and the promise of financial support to be given by the government, elected local officials decided to assume their responsibility and develop the strategic planning document (called DOCOB) for the future management of Community important habitats and species. Rather than leaving this responsibility to the government public administration, the process was led by the local formal structure called « Syndicat Mixte de Gestion de l'Étang de l'Or » (SMGEO)<sup>1</sup>.

The conflict continued throughout the first phase of strategic planning, until « dialogue and negotiation meetings » were organised with representatives of the key stakeholders (hunters associations, farmers, fisher folks, etc.). Key stakeholders were involved in working groups, allowing achieving a consensual planning document.

To develop and lead this dialogue, the pilot programme « Actions de connaissance, de suivi et de médiation environnementale sur la chasse et Natura 2000 en Languedoc-Roussillon » (2006 – 2008) was set-up with the support of the regional Directorate for the environment (DIREN Languedoc-Roussillon) and the Regional Council Languedoc-Roussillon. The dialogue was facilitated by the Regional Hunters Federation (Languedoc-Roussillon), with the collaboration at the site level of the Department Hunting Federation (Hérault). A mediator was therefore leading the first meetings of the hunting working group.

All together the development of the plan (DOCOB) took 2 years. 33 meetings were organised, accounting for a total of 760 participants, out of which 32% were elected officials, 34% were « technicians » against 34 % as « land users ». The conflicting issue was systematically addressed during these different meetings.

### Was it possible to transform the conflict into a win-win situation?

Yes, the management plan - DOCOB des sites Natura 2000 "Étang de Mauguio" – has been approved with unanimity on 18 December 2008.

The negotiation process has been reviewed and evaluated within the framework of a special study done in March 2009 by SupAgro<sup>2</sup> in collaboration with SMGEO: the dialogue strategy, leading to the approval of the DOCOB, was perceived by the different stakeholders as well adapted and pertinent to the situation. During the first phase, stakeholders did not feel involved in the project since they considered the proposal was imposed by the Government (notification in 2006 of a Special Protection Area).

<sup>1</sup> Local structure gathering Department of Hérault and 12 municipalities neighbouring the étang de l'Or. Recently, it evolved into a broader structure including all the 31 municipalities from the watershed, the Syndicat Mixte du Bassin de l'Or (SYMBO).

<sup>2</sup> Ecole Nationale d'Ingénieurs Agronomes

The process of dialogue allowed addressing the conflicting situation and the stakeholders to become involved in the definition of the objectives for the DOCOB plan.

## **Describe the most useful measures used to deal with the conflict:**

- Involvement of local stakeholders at the very beginning of the development of the management plan (Diagnostics): knowledge sharing, recognition of competencies, acknowledgement of local stakeholders, self-appropriation of the project objectives.
- Facilitation of small working groups (by professional categories): understanding common (collective) motivations.
- Thematic workshops (i.e. water management): opened to a broader audience, identification of common issues and/or confronting issues – understanding what is at stake.
- Leading meetings focusing on dialogue, based on information sent ahead of the meeting (results, documents for approval...); dialogue to be continued after the meeting for remaining questions and personal concerns.
- Individual meetings focusing on listening: understanding personal motivations, identifying persons with a demobilising influence.
- Instant communication of results of dialogue and negotiation, in particular by systematically publishing the meeting minutes on the Natura 2000 website: agreed action points, with emphasis on the involvement of local stakeholders.
- Facilitating the dialogue between stakeholders (meetings, individual contacts...), giving preference to multi-partiality rather than neutrality.
- Adapting the dialogue according to the stakeholders (harmonisation of the specific vocabulary used by both government officials and local stakeholders, agreeing on common terms of reference) and adjusting deadlines (appropriation of the process, timeline for reflexion).

## **From your experience, what guidelines can you advise for dealing with conflict in Natura 2000 sites?**

- Identification of the Natura 2000 site key stakeholders, their involvement but also their legitimacy vis-à-vis their peers and their capacity to transfer information (local facilitators);
- Setting up small groups involving specific stakeholders (i.e. hunters, farmers, etc.) in order to engage into an efficient dialogue including their concerns;
- Individual meetings with the most reluctant (divisive) stakeholders to understand their motivations and confront them with other stakeholders;
- Encourage positive stakeholders, in favour of the project, to express themselves and/or set up exchanges between Natura 2000 sites for the exchange of experience;
- Use didactic & communication tools (maps) easily understood by everyone;
- Through a specific individual and collective dialogue, ensure the identification and acknowledgement of everyone's interest and look for a compromise, make sure that the conservation of biodiversity is perceived as a common interest.

## **Your recommendations to make the Natura 2000 network more effective in involving stakeholders at the local level?**

- Information & involvement of local stakeholders at the onset of the project (the best is before the delimitation of the Natura 2000 perimeter).
- Work with stakeholders committed to the cause, who are available and whose legitimacy is acknowledged by the most reluctant groups. They can play a positive role as local mediators.
- Enhance and improve the information and communication related to the Natura 2000 project at national (not sufficiently done in France) and European levels.

## **Suggestions for further reading:**

### **Evaluation of the stakeholders involvement process:**

[[http://www.etang-de-l-or.com/uploads/file/Animation%20DOCOB/Rapport%20eval\\_concert\\_docob-0309.pdf](http://www.etang-de-l-or.com/uploads/file/Animation%20DOCOB/Rapport%20eval_concert_docob-0309.pdf)]

**Instant communication of results on the dedicated website:** [[http://www.etang-de-l-or.com/archives\\_docob.htm](http://www.etang-de-l-or.com/archives_docob.htm)];

**Analysis of the Communication / process:** [[http://www.etang-de-l-or.com/uploads/file/Validation%20DOCOB/DOCOB\\_TOME%20II\\_br.pdf](http://www.etang-de-l-or.com/uploads/file/Validation%20DOCOB/DOCOB_TOME%20II_br.pdf)]

**Press article:** [[http://www.etang-de-l-or.com/index.php?page=archives\\_docob#PRESSE](http://www.etang-de-l-or.com/index.php?page=archives_docob#PRESSE)]

## **'Make stakeholders' input matter'**

Country: **Italy**  
Site / location: **Delta river PO, Rovigo (IT327001; IT3270023).**  
Contact: **Ferdinando Ranzanici**  
ANUU MIGRATORISTI / FACE ITALY Representative;  
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**Carnacina Lorenzo**  
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# 2.4

**Primary cause of the conflict:**  
Lack of involvement of hunters organisation in the Natura 2000 network implementations

**Category:**  
Users' expectations and Natura 2000

### **The conflict:**

FACE Italy is not involved in dealing with a specific Natura 2000 site and it monitors the Natura 2000 network at National level. We think that the most important aspect and base of conflict on Natura 2000 management is the fact that we have been involved very little in the Natura 2000 network implementation by institutions.

### **Conflict description / background:**

The Veneto region contains some of the most important wetland areas in Natura 2000 network in Italy. Veneto Region government prepared the "Piano Faunistico Venatorio" missing direct involvement of local institutions and organizations (Hunters, Farmers and Fishers). Specific regulations has been put in place in direct conflict with the hunting activity (for examples some rules have been extended to all territory without taking into adequate consideration biodiversity of the different sites of the territory).

**Was tried and did not work?** The local hunting organizations proposed themselves as a point of reference for institutions and proposed to give technical support and suggestions but there has not been adequate involvement.

**What was not tried, but might have been an alternative or better solution?** More direct contacts with institutions.

### **Describe the most useful measures used to deal with the conflict:**

Communicate - communicate the potential of the "hunting organizations" for the management Natura 2000 site by site.

### **From your experience, what guidelines can you advise for dealing with conflict in Natura 2000 sites?**

Meetings among institutions, local organizations and associations (Hunters, Farmers and Fishers) are useful to communicate and deal with conflicts.

### **Your recommendations to make the Natura 2000 network more effective in involving stakeholders at the local level?**

Communication on the importance of sharing information and experiences as well as communication on the importance of cooperation for the management, in respect of the local traditions.

### **Your recommendations for shifting stakeholder opposition to participation and cooperation?**

To recognise the role and importance of the different stakeholders for the management of the territory, due to the specific experience and tradition that they have since they have been present on the sites for a long time.

## 'The Natura 2000 site manager: a jack of all trades'



Country: **Germany**  
Site / location: **FFH-site: Ehrenbürg und Katzenköpfe (number: 6233-372)**  
**SPA: Felsen- und Hangwälder in der Fränkischen Schweiz (number: 6233-471)**  
**Naturschutzgebiet Ehrenbürg (German nature protection area)**  
Contact: **Andreas Niedling**  
Gebietsbetreuer (area manager) Landkreis Forchheim  
Andreas.Niedling@lra-fo.de  
Landschaftspflegeverband (landcare association) Forchheim e. V. \*

# 2.5

**Primary cause of the conflict:**  
An annual feast taking place on a table mountain in a nature protection area

**Category:**  
Users' expectations and Natura 2000

### The conflict:

An annual feast called "Walberlafest", which takes place on a significant table mountain in a nature protection area in the German region "Fränkische Schweiz" (Franconian Switzerland) in Northern Bavaria.

### Conflict description / background:

The "Walberlafest" has taken place for more than 200 years. It has a long tradition and is an important part of the regional culture. The location of the feast is a prominent hill, which is both a popular destination for recreation and a protected natural area. Dry grasslands, rocks, bushes and endemic species like *Hieracium harzianum* are valuable elements of the natural area.

The feast is very popular and attracts thousands of visitors each year. The mass of people coming to the mountain causes damage to the landscape. In the last decades the infrastructure of the feast (i.e. electricity and motorisation) developed, leading to increasing damages to the area. As a result, the feast is now controlled by official regulations of the administrations.

This however does not alter the fact that the economic interests of the community and the interests of nature protection organisations and the rural district office to minimize damage are poles apart on some issues.

The conflict is defused by regular 'round table' meetings. The different stakeholders with conflicting interests, including organisations, administrations and the community, are invited to these meetings. During the meetings, which take place annually or more often if required, problems and interests are demonstrated and solutions and compromises are sought.

The organiser and moderator of the round table is the Area Manager (in German: "Gebietsbetreuer"). The Area Manager is a permanent contact person for the different stakeholders and interest groups in the region (property owners, farmers, administrations, schools, interested citizens, organisations, etc.) who mediates between them.

The Bavaria region counts 34 Area Managers who work in 31 regions with valuable landscapes. Many of these regions include Natura 2000 sites. Insufficient information is often the reason for problems. Therefore the Area Managers bring stakeholders together, inform about facts, identify different interests and requirements and help to find solutions and compromises.

The main activities of the Area Managers are to:

- Show the uniqueness and richness of the nature and landscape in the region;
- Promote sympathy and understanding for nature protection;
- Be a neutral and permanent contact person in the region;
- Organise and moderate the communication between stakeholders;
- Ensure appropriate environmental education;
- Be a Public Relations person;
- Monitor Natura 2000 habitats and species, document and report developments;
- Welcome and direct visitors;
- Initiate and support voluntary activities.

## **Describe the most useful measures used to deal with the conflict:**

- Regular 'round table' meetings with all the stakeholders;
- Joint discussions (on problems) instead of challenging each other through the press;
- Joint inspection of the location before and after the event, enabling the identification and resolution of problems in the area, by for example bordering sensitive areas;
- Involvement of a neutral contact person who organises and moderates activities ("Gebietsbetreuer").

## **From your experience, what guidelines can you advise for dealing with conflict in Natura 2000 sites?**

It is very important to talk to each other and discuss problems together. See the useful measures stated above.

## **Your recommendations to make the Natura 2000 network more effective in involving stakeholders at the local level and to shift stakeholder opposition to participation and cooperation:**

Show sustainable economic advantages and benefits of Natura 2000, i.e.

- Economic profit from tourism;
- Intact nature brings quality of life and offers possibilities for recreational activities;
- Possibilities to make use of financial support programmes.

The professional support of Natura 2000 sites by Area Managers is not possible without adequate financing. Funds to cover personnel costs for qualified staff need to be provided. The European Union requires the member states to implement Natura 2000 and provides funds to participate in these costs, to be matched by member states. The Area Managers in Bavaria are a successful example how the Structural Funds (European Social Fund - ESF) can be used for the professional management of Natura 2000 sites. The financing option is unfortunately used too seldom.

- \* Andreas Niedling from the Landschaftspflegeverband Forchheim is the contact person for this specific example of the mountain feast. For further similar examples about the area managers in Bavaria, please contact the DVL:

Deutscher Verband für Landschaftspflege e. V. (DVL)  
(German Association for Land Care – the umbrella organisation of all the land care associations in Germany)  
info@dvl.de  
www.landschaftspflegeverband.de

## **'Make sure everyone understands what is at stake'**

Country: Finland  
Site / location: Ruissalon lehdot, FI0200060  
Contact: PhD Kari Karhu  
Planner, City of Turku  
kari.karhu@turku.fi



# 2.6

**Primary cause of the conflict:**  
International rock festival

**Category:**  
Users' expectations and  
Natura 2000

### **The conflict:**

The annual rock festival held at Ruissalon lehdot (Europe's most North-Eastern oak forest) which attracts upwards of 92,000 visitors each year for three days.

### **Conflict description / background:**

The main stakeholders were the company arranging the festival, the real estate department of the city, the city council promoting culture, and of course the festival goers. The history of the festival dates back into the 1960s, hence the attitude towards Natura 2000 area as a 'newcomer' is understandable. On the other hand, the event has developed from a one-day-one-night event to a three-day-five-night festival. The festival has grown from being a large picnic, to what is now 'Ruisrock' - a huge event with fast-food and beverage services.

### **Was it possible to transform the conflict into a win-win situation?**

To a very small degree.

### **What was tried, but did not work?**

We have tried to, primarily, move the festival from the protected island to a nearby fair area, or, secondarily, to move it to late summer (after avian breeding period). We can only negotiate with the company and the real estate department and make proposals for environmental rules applying the festival to the environmental board of the city. It has (according to the city council) clearly preferred cultural values (including the fact that Turku is, together with Tallin, The European Capital of Culture in 2011) over nature-related ones even after two (weak) resolutions from the administrative court.

### **Describe the most useful measures used to deal with the conflict:**

Publicity, although public opinion is strongly divided. Careful preparation of the proposed rules so that they are fully based on national laws and community directives.

## From your experience, what guidelines can you advise for dealing with conflict in Natura 2000 sites?

Appropriate publicity and communication of the issue and what is at stake and a general understanding and appropriate implementation of law.

Communicating shortcomings of the environmental actions of developers and land users, contributing to a greater understanding of their potential for reducing environmental impacts.

In addition to an interesting program from year to year, a large part of Ruisrock's popularity lies on the environment. Where else can you listen to top national and international bands and enjoy simultaneously beach life and the vicinity of one of the nation's most celebrated Natura 2000 site, Ruissalon lehdot? The festival area is nowadays about five times larger than shown here.

Ruisrock

Credit: Hannu Waher



## 'Use the best technology'



Country: **Netherlands**  
Site / location: **Groote Peel, NL1000025**  
**Deurnsche Peel & Mariapeel NL1000027**  
**Peelvenen, Provincie Noord-Brabant**  
Contact: **Edwin Wieman, Provincie Noord-Brabant, Directie Ecologie**  
**ewieman@brabant.nl**

# 3.1

**Primary cause of the conflict:**  
Excessive Nitrate-deposition  
in Natura 2000 area

**Category:**  
Land managers and  
Natura 2000

### The conflict:

The most important conflict in the Natura 2000 site called "Peelvenen", one of the 21 Nature 2000 areas within the Province of Noord-Brabant, is how to deal with Nitrate-deposition, coming especially from the agricultural sector (regional, national and EU), in combination with the deposition from other sources like industry and traffic. In Peelvenen, the N-deposition is many times too high to achieve the conservation goals of the sphagnum vegetations of the Peelvenen.

### Conflict description / background:

The "De Peel" region, is the region of the Netherlands where 40% of intensive farming is concentrated (mainly pig and poultry farming), resulting in a large effect of N-deposition on the Natura 2000 habitats of "De Peel". Therefore this region is taken as an example for the search for a method and solution for the N-deposition problem in the Natura 2000 network.

The province of North-Brabant has invited the most important stakeholders in a Mutual Gains Approach (MGA) gathered in a working committee. The participants to this MGA are: Province of North-Brabant, Province of Limburg, ZLTO and LLTB (Farming Organisations of Southern Netherlands), three nature organizations (Staatsbosbeheer, Vereniging Natuurmonumenten, Brabants Landschap), environmental organizations (Brabantse and Limburgse Milieufederatie) and the organization of municipalities (VNG).

With this working committee, a policy memorandum has been developed with all stakeholders, according to the MGA approach. It is aiming at a substantial reduction of the N-deposition coming from agriculture and other sources. The memorandum has been approved by all parties on 29 September 2009.

### Was it possible to transform the conflict into a win-win situation?

If the agreed policy memorandum can be finally legally implemented, the result will be a win-win situation, benefiting both nature and farmers. This will depend on decisions by the Minister of Agriculture and the Parliament on the adaptation of the Natuurbeschermingswet 1998 (Nature Protection Law) with respect to Natura 2000. This decision is expected by the end of the year 2009.

The implementation of the agreed policy memorandum is therefore now depending on the final decisions taken at the level of the national government.

### Describe the most useful measures used to deal with the conflict:

In the case of nitrate deposition and its impact on the Natura 2000 areas, the most useful measures are:

- Investing in clean air technology in intensive farming;
- Relocation of the farms with a peak load of deposition > 200 mol N/ha/year on the Natura 2000 habitats of Natura 2000 sites;
- Forming a N-deposition balance bank\*;
- Forming of LOG's (Areas for Development of Agriculture) for the large scale intensive farms.

## From your experience, what guidelines can you advise for dealing with conflict in Natura 2000 sites?

The Mutual Gains Approach (MGA) in the Natura 2000 process involving all stakeholders of the Natura 2000 site in developing the Natura 2000 Management Plan.

### Your recommendations to make the Natura 2000 network more effective in involving stakeholders at the local level?

- Organize the process bottom up according to the Mutual Gains Approach in order to reach agreement at local/regional level.
- Form a working committee with experts and stakeholders for each Natura 2000 Management Plan.
- Appoint an independent chairperson for this working committee.
- Appoint a project manager for each Natura 2000 Management Plan.
- Organize a working budget for each Natura 2000 Management Plan.
- Organize a virtual office for the exchange of information during the process.
- Communicate with the region by website.
- Organize public information meetings during the process.

#### \* Nitrate Deposition bank

A N-deposition bank is an administrative instrument which will be used for exchanging nitrogen deposition between farmers who (will) stop farming and farmers who want to enlarge their business. This instrument is designed to stop the increase of the total amount of nitrogen deposition on Natura 2000 sites which are sensitive to an overload of nitrogen. There are specific rules to use this 'bank'. One of these rules is that it is obligatory to use this bank if you want to enlarge your business and your present nitrogen deposition reaches a maximum deposition ceiling.



Working with stakeholders

## **'Conflict is not necessarily a bad thing'**



Country: **France**  
Site / location: **Champeigne, FR2410022 SPA**  
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Médiation, conseil en concertation territoriale  
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# 3.2

**Primary cause of the conflict:**  
Opposition of local land users to the Natura 2000 perimeter

**Category:**  
Land managers and  
Natura 2000

### **The conflict:**

Local farmers and hunters reject the formal Natura 2000 designation of their land by the government.

### **Conflict description / background:**

In 2006, in a large scale cereal farming region located in the centre of France, a local authority had to deal with the designation of a Natura 2000 site and the strict opposition of local farmers and hunters. Previously, in 2002, farmers and hunters had succeeded in opposing the designation of a Natura 2000 area. Although they were aware of biodiversity issues as they were involved already in managing their land with special measures in favor of *Tetrax tetrax*, they were rejecting by principle a "top-down" designation with new regulations on their farming practices without adequate compensation. Along with the farmers, local hunters feared that their rights might no longer be taken into consideration. So they made an alliance with the farmers. In April 2006, after the usual formal consultation process, the site was formerly designated by the government but rejected by the local farmers. The local authority decided to appoint a professional mediator to come out of this conflicting situation.

### **Was it possible to transform the conflict into a win-win situation?**

Yes. An intense mediation process was engaged, which lasted six months. First, an informal local "dialogue" group was created and chaired by the mayor. Meetings were attended by elected officials, representatives of NGOs and professionals. The first meeting was very difficult with clear negatively perceived opinions: farmers are responsible for the decline of bird populations, nature conservationists want to sanctuarise the area. Altogether, three meetings were organized, which played a key role in solving the conflict. In parallel, farmers were meeting together on their own with the mediator: their attachment to their natural heritage, to *Tetrax tetrax* in particular, was clearly expressed, but also their deep opposition to a system perceived as limiting common sense decision making in farming practices; they did not reject new regulations for nature as long as these would be compatible with farming and hunting. Strict confrontation was considered by the opposing groups, although everyone feared such a confrontation. A special meeting with representatives of the opposing groups concerned was convened in a neutral meeting place. At the end of this confrontational meeting, the date for a new meeting was agreed, as a symbol of the willingness to engage into a dialogue. A visit to a near-by *Tetrax tetrax* Natura 2000 area, where compensation measures were already in place, facilitated the process of acceptance by the farmers. The Natura 2000 formal management planning process was initiated under the presidency of the personality accepted by everyone, the mayor who started the mediation process.

In the following 2 years, an intense process of stakeholder involvement was organized. Farmers, hunters, NGO were part of the formal Steering Committee, along with the authorities representing the Ministry of Agriculture. The mediator was asked to remain with the group and to help develop the Management Plan. This became very useful as many threats developed:

1. New agri-environmental measures 2007-2012 (AEM) were not as flexible as expected, and the environment was in evolution.
2. Set asides were cancelled in 2007, threatening the measures favourable to *Tetrax tetrax*.
3. Commodity prices were going up rapidly, threatening the AEM as a sufficient incentive for farmers.
4. Balloons regularly landed on nesting areas during the nesting season.
5. Wind mills were being considered.

Agri-environmental measures were chosen as the best tool to develop the project with farmers. But the national system in place was not flexible enough to satisfy the adaptability of technical measures at the local level, close to the ground. When an implementation difficulty occurred, local farmers wished to work as a small technical group in confidence to find the best practical solutions for the birds and the habitats, be flexible in its application and variability. Also a major issue was that the financial compensation was to be acceptable to the farmers. These decisions had to be agreed at the national level, with the acceptance of the EU level. The representative of the Agriculture Minister received a proposal, agreed with the principle of flexibility of the measures but confirmed that the Ministry is the final decision-maker. A further misunderstanding arose: can a decision be local or does it have to be taken by the top? Further clarification did arise: the decision can be local but it is the duty of the national level to check its legal validity. This principle was finally accepted by the local stakeholders.

In December 2008, the Document d'Objectifs was approved by the Préfet. The principle of the power given to the local technical group to define precisely how to adjust Agri-environmental measures at the local level is now possible in France in all Natura 2000 areas. The technical & financial measures proposed are accepted. The principle of a special technical group with the responsibility to address emerging issues is also agreed: the monitoring and sustainable management of the conflict is ensured. Other emerging issues are now tackled at the higher level (county) with the help of BirdLife partner: Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux.

In 2008, 24 singing males Tetrax tetrax are observed and farmers are signing up to voluntary agri-environmental measures. The development of agri-environmental measures on 200 000 ha are now under discussion.

### **Describe the most useful measures used to deal with the conflict:**

- Stakeholder involvement delivers creativity and motivation.
- Flexible agri-environmental measures are the key to success.
- The State needs to confirm its commitment through the delivery of the promised programme.

### **From your experience, what guidelines can you advise for dealing with conflict in Natura 2000 sites?**

Calling a third person as a facilitator is essential to:

- Create and maintain respect for each person.
- Help identify the roles of stakeholders (private and public) in their capacity to take decisions.
- Ensure everyone can contribute and not just sit in a receiving capacity.
- Make sure that what has to be said is effectively said.
- Build together a common "memory" and ensure nothing said is lost.

### **Your recommendations to make the Natura 2000 network more effective in involving stakeholders at the local level?**

- Do not be afraid of conflicting situations. This is better than a hidden conflict.
- A mediator can take risk and dare taking actions that elected officials or civil servants cannot.
- Acknowledge existing favorable conservation practices by local stakeholders.
- Acknowledge that biodiversity is not appreciated by everyone in the same way.
- Ensure that solutions designed at the local level do not lag on and that decisions are really taken.
- Ensure that the promised money is effectively available in time.

#### **Fondation de France**

Managing our environment together: prevent or solve environmental conflicts, 2010 call for projects. Deadline: 10 April 2010

A programme to improve the dialogue between local groups and encourage concerted action to manage natural areas.

Aware of the difficulty to preserve natural areas and involve local stakeholders through dialogue, the Fondation de France has supported for the last ten years programmes to prevent or solve environmental conflicts. For instance, each year the Fondation finances methodological and training projects where a consultant is selected to help design the participatory process, act as a facilitator during public meetings, or manage the mediation process in case of conflict, train stakeholders in order to guarantee equivalent skills and know-how, organise study visits to similar areas and meet other organisations for an exchange of experience.

<http://www.fondationdefrance.org/Nos-Aides/Vous-etes-un-organisme/Environnement/Environnement-et-citoyennete/Environnement-et-citoyennete>

## **'Maintain transparency, maintain relationships'**

Country: France  
Site / location: Nord Morvan, FR2600992 SCI  
Parc Régional des Bauges et du Morvan  
Contact: Aline Corbeaux  
Chargée de missions gestion des espaces naturels remarquables  
aline.corbeaux@parcdumorvan.org



# 3.3

**Primary cause of the conflict:**  
Local farmers fear constraints will be imposed in managing meadows

**Category:**  
Land managers and  
Natura 2000

### **The conflict:**

A reluctance of farmers fearing so called 'constraints' supposed to be imposed by the designation of farms located within Natura 2000 areas. At the end of the 90s, there was a joint lobbying action, along with foresters, to reduce the perimeter of Natura 2000 areas before their notification to the European Commission.

### **Conflict description / background:**

The most important protagonists of the conflict were local representatives of farmers unions participating in the steering committees in charge of the development of Natura 2000 management plans. The conflict was based on the vague fear that farming practices would be imposed, or even that farming would be forbidden on Natura 2000 areas. The conflict was easily overcome by informing farmers of the contractual strategy France had chosen to implement Natura 2000, by making the link with an environmental programme well known by farmers in which they were already involved: agri-environmental contracts. At that time, agri-environmental contracts were more interesting financially when located on Natura 2000 areas. One of our preferred arguments was that we were not going to ask them more than to continue the farming practices, which had allowed them to keep habitats in a favourable state of conservation, justifying the site designation. The conflict resolved itself as soon as we entered into negotiation at the local level, away from wider conflicts at the national level.

### **Was it possible to transform the conflict into a win-win situation?**

Yes, the extensive management practices proposed in the contracts were already very close to the farmers' traditional management practices. But for them, the proposal was perceived as a loss of their sense of initiative and a submission to external controls rather than bringing important changes in their management practices. For us, it was a guaranteed maintenance of the existing situation.

### **Describe the most useful measures used to deal with the conflict:**

Farmers located in Natura 2000 sites were offered specific technical support so that they would not miss the opportunity to benefit from these Natura 2000 contracts, which on these not very productive meadows were, and are even more to-day, quite interesting financially. Contracts were first proposed during collective meetings, often with the support of the farming advisory services (using their lists), then during individual meetings on the farms.

This partnership with the farming professional advisory services was possible to set-up thanks to a former work together within the framework of the promotion of sustainable development in farming.

More recently, the regional park has set-up a new system for contracts, based on a commitment to results (performance standards) and no longer based on a list of management practices. This new system gives directly a value to biodiversity on the farmer's plot of land, which in turn facilitates the acceptance of the objectives of the agri-environmental measure by the farmer. The facilitator can better succeed to explain the environmental approach for the plot of land, to give the farmer a sense of responsibility and to promote his role and work. To condition the eligibility of the areas to the results obtained gives a better guarantee to these commitments beyond the contractual 5 years contractual time frame as any disturbance due to more intensive management practices or due to abandonment, jeopardises directly the future eligibility of the plot.

## **From your experience, what guidelines can you advise for dealing with conflict in Natura 2000 sites?**

- For each Natura 2000 site, have a 'reference' facilitator (contact person) who can become known and accepted by the farming advisory services, so that a relationship based on trust can be developed. To be known personally (bilateral relationships) and locally gives an opportunity for questions to be asked, avoiding therefore what is left unsaid and further misunderstandings.
- Be always transparent on all aspects of Natura 2000, even the most restrictive, while distinguishing what is linked to existing regulation from what is specifically relevant to the approach.
- Be able to listen and understand the real economic & technical constraints of land managers, in order to be able to intervene upstream during project design and to be perceived as a facilitator and mediator rather than being bossy or controlling.
- Not to deny the difficulties and the administrative burden of the programme and propose solutions to adjust to it.
- Lean upon the existing professional organisations (farmers unions, farmers advisory services), in particular to organise collective meetings.
- Involve elected officials, in particular the mayors of parishes who are intermediaries who cannot be ignored and the first persons to whom questions are raised.
- Do not give up when farmers develop collective negative reactions; they can change their point of view through bilateral meetings. Visit farmers directly on their farms.

## **Your recommendations to make the Natura 2000 network more effective in involving stakeholders at the local level?**

- Involve stakeholders as early as possible while designing specific agri-environmental measures.
- Gather their technical recommendation; understand what is doable and acceptable by farmers.

## **'Be a resource person - easy to reach, positive and reliable'**



Country: **France**  
Site / location: **Massif Forestier du Mont Beuvray, FR26009616 SCI Hétraie Montagnarde du Haut Morvan**  
Contact: **Aline Corbeaux**, Chargée de missions gestion des espaces naturels remarquables Parc Régional du Morvan  
aline.corbeaux@parcdumorvan.org

# 3.4

**Primary cause of the conflict:**  
Foresters object during the participatory process of the management plan

**Category:**  
Land managers and Natura 2000

### **The conflict:**

The most important opposition was first to the designation of Natura 2000 sites. The conflict with private forestry landowners and their representatives developed during the formal consultation process, within the steering committees established to develop Natura 2000 management plans .

### **Conflict description / background:**

The protagonists were the unions of private landowners and the regional centre for forest property (financed by public money). At first, it was a frontal refusal. Then the content of the management plans on all issues concerning forests (not on habitats maps) was regularly challenged.

- Natura 2000 contracts in forestry habitats are not very attractive for landowners. Even more, the instability of the national ground rules up to a recent period, made the participatory process much more difficult. To be noted in particular:
- The impossibility to sign contracts because of the lack of formal regulations, or to sign a voluntary code of conduct in managing Natura 2000 areas – “la Charte” \*- because the designation of the sites were not yet formally confirmed by the European Commission.
- Forestry habitats eligible for Natura 2000 financial support are limited to unproductive habitats (often small areas) which imply the impossibility to exploit the wood. For instance, the impossibility to sell conifers located nearby streams was a very important deadlock.

### **Was it possible to transform the conflict into a win-win situation?**

Partially...

A first attempt to propose the possibility to sell the wood by deducting the profit from the amount of the Natura 2000 contracts was not successful as it implied that the ecological management requirements after the cutting of the trees, included into the contract, could be financed by the benefit made by the forester, a proposal which was not at all attractive...

### **Describe the most useful measures used to deal with the conflict:**

Mainly, it was necessary to develop a trustful relationship with foresters. As Natura 2000 facilitators, we did this by:

- Constantly being clear and transparent on all aspects of the documents under preparation and issues we were discussing together, even the most negative and difficult issues to address. When we would not know the answer to questions, we would tell them clearly and invite them to look together for solutions.
- Involving them in working groups, defining with them the methodology to assess the conservation status of forest habitats and proposing technical solutions for its improvement.
- Participating in forestry technical training programme, designed for foresters by foresters. This direct involvement in foresters activities, gave us a better understanding of different points of view. It was also a good opportunity for contacts and informal exchanges in the field.
- Getting involved in training programmes proposed by forestry professional organisations.

## From your experience, what guidelines can you advise for dealing with conflict in Natura 2000 sites?

- Appointing a Natura 2000 facilitator on each site who can be known and recognised by forestry representatives, in order to develop a relationship based on trust.
- Be a resource person, easy to reach, positive and available, offering technical support on biodiversity issues. For example, reviewing awareness and communication papers on behalf of the forestry organisation, providing data on the localisation of habitats, providing photographs ...
- Be always transparent on all aspects of Natura 2000, even the most restrictive, while distinguishing what is linked to existing regulation from what is specifically relevant to the approach.
- Do not deny the difficulties and the administrative burden of the programme but propose practical solutions to adjust to the situation.
- Be able to listen and understand the real economic & technical constraints of land managers, in order to be able to intervene upstream during project design and to be perceived as a facilitator and mediator rather than being bossy or controlling.
- Not to hesitate to go in the field and find a practical technical solution together with the forester, without going through a formal administrative process. As an example, the Regional Park developed a collective approach to design a practical and efficient solution for stream crossings: we designed « crossing kits » which were made available after demonstration workshops.
- Lean upon the existing professional organisations (farmers unions, farmers advisory services), in particular to organise collective meetings.
- Organise a platform for dialogue where resistance, fears, questions can be expressed... as a precondition to cooperation.

## Your recommendations to make the Natura 2000 network more effective in involving stakeholders at the local level?

- Involve stakeholders as early as possible while designing specific agri-environmental measures.
- Develop a local network of contacts.

\* La Charte Natura 2000 is part of the Natura 2000 Management Plan and is a voluntary agreement. Its signatories are committed to manage their land according to the objectives of Natura 2000 without signing a formal contractual agreement. They can benefit from specific fiscal advantages and can access specific public support. La Charte Natura 2000 is a tool easily understood by all, clear and simple.

Participating in training programmes is a useful opportunity for informal contacts in the field.

Credit: Parc Régional du Morvan



## **'Each site & conflict is specific - you need full buy-in to succeed'**



Country: **United Kingdom**  
Site / location: **Pembrokeshire Marine SAC**  
Contact: **Andrea McConnell**, Team Leader Pembrokeshire,  
Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)  
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# 3.5

**Primary cause of the conflict:**  
Scallop dredging within Milford Haven Waterway

**Category:**  
Land managers and  
Natura 2000

### **The conflict:**

This was not the most important conflict and is relatively small scale, but it involved scallop dredging within a small area of the Milford Haven Waterway in West Wales, which lies within the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC. The scallop dredging was potentially taking place over a very sensitive maerl bed habitat, which is a component of the Estuary SAC feature.

### **Conflict description / background:**

A local scallop dredging vessel had been spotted within this very vulnerable habitat. The scallop dredger was asked to voluntarily stop fishing in the area due its nature conservation interest, which he did. However, there was no exclusion area in place, either voluntary or statutory, that would have informed the local fishing fleet of the importance of this area. CCW proposed the establishment of a statutory exclusion area, and discussions were held between us (CCW), WAG, the local fisheries committee and fishing community representatives. A voluntary exclusion area was agreed in principle, with the detailed boundary to be drawn up by the fishing reps. The first map produced did not include the whole of the maerl bed, so CCW suggested that the voluntary area should be made larger. There was some further discussions regarding this issue, and in the meantime, the scallop dredging threat increased due to closure of scallop beds elsewhere. There was also a further incursion into the maerl beds by a scallop dredger. This, combined with further pressure from CCW for a statutory exclusion area, resulted in a suggestion from WAG that the Sea fisheries committee should impose a statutory exclusion zone to protect the vulnerable maerl bed. This was agreed, and then put in place on January 2009.

### **Was it possible to transform the conflict into a win-win situation?**

Not really.

### **What was tried, but did not work?**

Voluntary exclusion was attempted, but this would only have worked on a local basis and had to have full cooperation of all the fishermen. Further incursion resulted and there was the threat of more dredge vessels fishing the area when scallop dredging was stopped elsewhere.

### **Describe the most useful measures used to deal with the conflict:**

Voluntary measures such as those first suggested could potentially work where there are better access controls, better policing, and where time and effort can be spent on introducing the concept and on further discussions with stakeholders. You need full buy-in from the stakeholders for this to work. This is not always possible in the marine environment, and in our opinion, in this particular case, the vulnerability of the maerl habitat to even one dredging pass (it is extremely slow-growing and vulnerable to physical disturbance and smothering).

## **From your experience, what guidelines can you advise for dealing with conflict in Natura 2000 sites?**

I would suggest that there is no generic advice that can be provided – each site and each type of conflict needs to be examined separately and potential options for dealing with the problem should be considered on a site by site basis – what might work on certain sites and in certain situations wouldn't necessarily be right elsewhere and for other situations. This is particularly the case when dealing with the marine environment. There is often a reluctance to impose statutory measures, often related to quite legitimate resource concerns. A good working relationship with regulators will always be of benefit, and again with stakeholders, so that where statutory measures are put in place there is a good level of understanding as to the reasons for imposing these measures.

## **Your recommendations to make the Natura 2000 network more effective in involving stakeholders at the local level?**

This will always help, but can be immensely time – consuming, and sometimes the costs benefits might be difficult to see! We have also found that there is not always a good level of engagement, and those that do get involved are often “campaigners”.... It is important to make things relevant to the stakeholders, to allow them to see the benefits of the site and engaging with its management.

## **Your recommendations for shifting stakeholder opposition to participation and cooperation?**

Awareness raising has to be the focus, and trying to achieve a level of understanding amongst stakeholders that allows them to make better informed judgements. Again, making the site relevant to the stakeholder will help in that aspiration.

## **'Reduce the footprint & adjust timing of planned work'**



Country: **United Kingdom**  
Site / location: **South Humber bank SPA/cSAC**  
Contact: **Bernard Fleming**  
Natural England  
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# 4.1

**Primary cause of the conflict:**  
A planned new biomass / bioethanol facility adjacent to a very important mudflat feeding area

**Category:**  
Land use and Natura 2000

### **The conflict:**

A planned new biomass / bioethanol facility adjacent to Humber SPA, Ramsar and cSAC would result in loss of a feeding and roosting area.

### **Conflict description / background:**

A developer submitted a planning application to the local planning authority for a new biomass / bioethanol facility outside, but adjacent to a very important mudflat feeding area (Humber SPA, Ramsar and cSAC). Farmland adjacent to the estuary often supports large numbers of feeding and roosting SPA birds. The development had the potential to result in direct and indirect loss of areas used by birds.

The local planning authority undertook a so-called Appropriate Assessment of effects against conservation objectives: an Assessment of adverse effect on the integrity of the site (AEOI). Such an assessment requires detailed and case specific information and is based only on scientific considerations. The developer provided the information. The local planning authority was obliged to seek the advice of a nature conservation agency, Natural England in this case.

A bird survey showed that the location was used by a large number of SPA birds for inland feeding and high tide roost: up to 3,600 Golden plover, 2200 Lapwing, and 71 Curlew. The development would result in loss of this feeding / roosting area adjacent to a very important mudflat feeding area. Natural England therefore advised that the plan would have an adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA and Ramsar site.

### **Was it possible to transform the conflict into a win-win situation?**

Yes, that is the likely outcome. Discussions between Natural England, the planning authority and the developer resulted in revised proposals. The result of the discussions was a very large reduction in the footprint of the development. In addition, the facility is to be located to the rear of the site away from the main bird areas. Ornithological advice confirms that, subject to beneficial management, the remaining area should continue to support the bird numbers and species present. Furthermore, mitigation is required to prevent that the noise from the construction work will disturb birds in the remaining field area. Therefore, the construction work needs to be timed carefully.

On the basis of the revised proposals (smaller footprint), and mitigation conditions on timing of works, screening, and management of the remaining area for birds etc – it is likely that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of Humber SPA and Ramsar.

### **Describe the most useful measures used to deal with the conflict:**

Discussions between Natural England, the planning authority and the developer of the biomass / bioethanol facility.

## **'Early engagement & a full dialogue'**

Country: **United Kingdom**  
Site / location: **Firth of Forth SPA**  
Contact: **Graham Neville**  
Operations North DSU Manager, Scottish Natural Heritage  
graham.neville@snh.gov.uk



# 4.2

**Primary cause of the conflict:**  
Extension of the operating life  
of a power station

**Category:**  
Land use and Natura 2000

### **The conflict:**

Extension of the operating life of the Longannet Power Station in Fife, Scotland, which sits adjacent to the Firth of Forth SPA.

### **Conflict description / background:**

Scottish Power, the owners / operators of the power station, are extending the life of the power station but require additional area to deposit the fly-ash, a waste product from the power station operation. It currently is deposited into Torry Bay reclamation area within the Firth of Forth. Scottish Power had thought of extending the Torry Bay reclamation area into the Firth of Forth SPA with a significant loss of intertidal habitat. Early discussion with Scottish Natural Heritage allowed Scottish Power to be clear about the process that would be required - Appropriate Assessment - and its likely conclusion, i.e. that it might not be possible to conclude that the integrity of the SPA would not be adversely affected. In these circumstances the proposal could only be approved if there were no alternative solutions and for imperative reasons of over-riding public interests, in which case compensatory measures would be required. Once Scottish Power were aware of this, other alternatives emerged and solutions were found, which allowed both the development and the protection of the site. It a very good example of what can be achieved through early and proactive engagement.

### **Was it possible to transform the conflict into a win-win situation?**

Yes – the development could go ahead and the site integrity was protected.

### **Describe the most useful measures used to deal with the conflict:**

### **From your experience, what guidelines can you advise for dealing with conflict in Natura 2000 sites?**

Early engagement with the developer (stakeholder/s) and a full dialogue to explore alternative solutions.

### **Your recommendations to make the Natura 2000 network more effective in involving stakeholders at the local level and shifting stakeholder opposition to participation and cooperation?**

Early engagement.

## 'Involve the media & public figures'

Country: **Netherlands**  
Site / location: **Naardermeer, NL2000012 (SPA)**  
**Naardermeer, NL3000061 (SCI)**  
Contact: **Gradus Lemmen**, Local Manager, Naardermeer  
g.lemmen@natuurmonumenten.nl



# 4.3

**Primary cause of the conflict:**  
A motorway planned on the outskirts of a Natura 2000 site

**Category:**  
Land use and Natura 2000

### Conflict description / background:

The plan to build a motorway at the outskirts of the Natura 2000 site threatens the site and leads to a major conflict. Natuurmonumenten has set up a successful massive communication programme on a national scale. The Dutch government had to withdraw this plan.

The Ministry of Transport developed a study to connect two existing motorways with a new motorway. Two alternatives were proposed: one, supported by the traffic lobby, was affecting the Natura 2000 site; the second was to upgrade the capacity of existing connections. When things were getting serious Natuurmonumenten started a huge programme, focusing on:

- Cooperation with other (local) pressure groups;
- Political lobby, both locally and nationally;
- Well planned and well managed media campaign.

### Was it possible to transform the conflict into a win-win situation?

Because this motorway was planned in the national scheme for new motorways, we knew this plan was coming. About 2000, we created a coalition with the provinces Noord-Holland and Flevoland, the cities of Amsterdam and Almere and other regional and local authorities. This coalition produced a proposal to enhance the connection between Almere and Amsterdam by enlarging the existing motorways. This proposal was supported by a lot of accompanying measurements. This programme is called "Groene Uitweg" (Green way out). In spite of this study, the Ministry of Transport started from scratch with the process to connect the two motorways through the Naardermeer, a Natura 2000 area.

By bringing together local groups, municipalities, provinces and other stakeholders, we managed to succeed and presented a programme, quite similar to the Groene Uitweg, which was adopted by the national government. This programme will not only solve traffic problems, but also problems of air quality in the suburbs of Amsterdam, problems that farmers have and it will provide a better quality for landscape and nature. Because this programme does not focus only on the transportation issue, but takes a comprehensive view at the region and at the issues connected with transportation, altogether we achieved a better position for all kind of problems in the area.

The media offensive provided a climate that made it impossible for the Government to choose the solution that would affect the Natura 2000 site.

### Describe the most useful measures used to deal with the conflict:

Cooperation with other groups and stakeholders in the region, using mutual gain techniques.

Good media approach. We used a houseboat on the lake, welcoming each day a different well-known personality, as an ambassador, to attract press coverage. Our guests contributed to a diary on the internet. This generated a lot of media attention: over 900 media exposures in two months.

Intensive lobbying. This was possible only because we had the appropriate network developed all ready.

## From your experience, what guidelines can you advise for dealing with conflict in Natura 2000 sites?

Most of these conflicts exist as a kind of “one line war” in the media. You better be sure that you win that one.

To do so, don't lie but bring in some statements with strong emotion. Of course, we always want to speak about the background of the matter itself. But now days, the public and the politicians are keen to listen to emotional statements and your carefully built images of reality.

Important is to keep our independency from other groups. As site-manager and a large membership-based organisation we must have our own position.

## Your recommendations to make the Natura 2000 network more effective in involving stakeholders at the local level?

- Organize a network for discussing these matters at an early stage, not at an excited stage, and set your goals together.
- Enlarge the matter that you are discussing to provide profit for everybody involved.

## Suggestions for further reading:

<http://www.nos.nl/nosjournaal/artikelen/2006/6/20/Naardermeer.html> (site of news television net)

<http://www.platformtegenaa6a9.nl/> (site by civil pressure group)

[http://www.rijkswaterstaat.nl/wegen/plannen\\_en\\_projecten/a\\_wegen/a9/planstudie\\_schiphol\\_amsterdam\\_almere/index.aspx](http://www.rijkswaterstaat.nl/wegen/plannen_en_projecten/a_wegen/a9/planstudie_schiphol_amsterdam_almere/index.aspx) (Site ministry of transport)

<http://dewandeling.kro.nl/200601/30naardermeer.aspx> (TV program KRO)

Gradus Lemmen,  
local manager Naardermeer



From the houseboat “De Flark”  
different well-known personali-  
ties attracted each day media  
coverage.



## **'Ensure political will & respect of EU legislation at all levels'**

Country: **Poland**  
Site / location: **Ostoja Augustowska, PLH200005 (SCI)**  
**Puszcza Augustowska, PLB200002 (SPA)**  
**Rospuda Valley**, Biebrza Marshes, Knyszyn Primeval Forest, Augustow Primeval Forest  
Contact: **Malgorzata Górska**, Important Birds Area Casework Officer, OTOP (BirdLife in Poland)  
malgorzata.gorska@otop.org.pl , <http://www.otop.org.pl/viabaltica>



# 4.4

**Primary cause of the conflict:**  
Opposition to the construction of the international road corridor 'Via Baltica' through the protected sites

**Category:**  
Land use and Natura 2000

### **The conflict:**

Key Natura 2000 sites in North-East Poland were under threat from damage by a series of road projects connected to the First Pan-European Transport Corridor 'Via Baltica'.

### **Conflict description / background:**

The international road corridor 'Via Baltica' will link Helsinki to Warsaw via Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The corridor upgrade was started as a series of separate individual projects rather than being planned in a strategic way. When the individual projects were being planned, the obligations of the EU nature directives were not being properly taken into account.

BirdLife has been working on the 'Via Baltica' case since 2002. OTOP (BirdLife in Poland) has worked together with the Polish Green Network (PZS, Bankwatch in Poland), WWF and with support from other Polish NGOs, to bring the case to the attention of the Bern Convention – which as a result in 2003 adopted a strong recommendation that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) should be carried out to inform the decision on the route for the Via Baltica and minimise as far as possible damage to important nature sites. OTOP's work has been supported by RSPB (BirdLife in the United Kingdom).

In early 2006, a coalition of Polish NGOs (OTOP-PZS-WWF) submitted a complaint to the European Commission about very serious concerns that planning for seven road projects in North-east Poland, including Augustow Bypass, did not comply with the requirements of EU nature laws. The Commission investigated the case and, when it was unable to resolve it through informal contact with Poland, in December 2006 opened legal proceedings sending Poland a 'first written warning' about eight road projects – new roads, bypasses and upgrades all linked to the Via Baltica corridor. When Poland failed to provide a satisfactory response and in February 2007 gave contractors the green light for forest clearance work for the Augustow and Wasilkow Bypasses the Commission sent Poland a 'final written warning'. Unfortunately, Poland remained unmoved and construction work on the two projects continued. In response in March 2007, the Commission referred the case to the European Court of Justice (ECJ) and asked for an urgent order to stop damage, which would be caused by part of the project (a compensatory programme affecting another Natura 2000 site). An order was made in April 2007 – the first time such an order was made to protect a Natura 2000 site from imminent damage by development – a new precedent!

Since submission of the complaint, BirdLife has played a key role in providing the Commission with information about developments in the case in Poland, including through submission of numerous formal updates to the complaint. As well as bringing the case to the attention of the Commission, BirdLife has worked to raise the profile of the case with Members of the European Parliament – through submission of a Petition to the European Parliament's Petitions Committee in 2006, participation in the Petitions Committee meetings in Brussels and MEP visits to Poland, MEP briefings – and with the media. Other actions taken by the Polish NGOs in the case were meetings with the officials, participating in planning processes, taking national court cases.

In October 2007 there was a change of Polish Government and the new Environment and Infrastructure Ministers established a 'Round Table' to seek a compromise solution for Augustow Bypass threatening the Rospuda Valley, in which the Polish NGOs participated.

The year of 2007 was famous for wide and active support for saving the Rospuda Valley presented by society, scientists, media, artists, celebrities, etc. - more than 150.000 signatures were collected by a petition to the Polish President asking for the route of Augustow Bypass to be changed to avoid damage to this unique site. For three weeks in cold February a tent camp of Rospuda Valley defenders was set up on the site where the planned road construction would enter the Valley.

As an outcome of the Round Table a new environmental assessment was carried out looking at three different routes – two going around rather than through the valley. Based on the results of this new study, in March 2009 the Polish Prime Minister announced that his Government would avoid building a highway through the Rospuda Valley Natura 2000 site. Instead, they would solve the traffic problems by building the road on an alternative route that avoids the Natura 2000 site. The Road Agency then prepared a new application for the administrative permits for the alternative route out of the Natura 2000 site. The new environmental consent for construction of the Augustow Bypass was issued at the end of 2009.

After some years, following the lasting Strategic Environmental Assessment process (recommended by the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention in 2003), the route of the whole Polish section of the Via Baltica corridor was changed by the Polish Government in October 2009. The new route bypasses most of the key Natura 2000 sites in NE Poland.

## Was it possible to transform the conflicting situation into a win-win situation?

In October 2007 there was a change of Polish Government and the new Environment and Infrastructure Ministers established a 'Round Table' to seek a compromise solution for Augustow Bypass, in which the Polish NGOs participated. As an outcome of the Round Table a new environmental assessment was carried out looking at three different routes – two going around rather than through the Rospuda Valley.

Based on the results of this new study, in March 2009 the Polish Prime Minister announced that his Government would avoid building a highway through the Rospuda Valley Natura 2000 site. Instead, the traffic problems will be solved by building the road on an alternative route that avoids the Rospuda Valley.

In April 2009, the European Commission closed its legal case against Poland on the Rospuda Valley. The Road Agency (investor) has prepared a new application to receive the administrative permits for the alternative route out of the Natura 2000 site. The new environmental consent for construction of the Augustow Bypass along the alternative route was issued at the end of 2009.

## What was tried but did not work

See above in the conflict description

## Describe the most useful measures used to deal with the conflict:

- Bringing the case to the attention of the Bern Convention;
- Bringing the case to the attention of the European Commission;
- Raising the profile of the case with Members of the European Parliament;
- Participating in the EP Petitions Committee meetings in Brussels and MEP visits to Poland, and preparing MEP briefings;
- Taking actions on national level – meeting officials, participating in planning processes, participating in public consultations, taking national court cases;
- Participating in the 'Round Table' meetings to seek a compromise solution;
- Communicating the case to the wider public by media work.

Winter camp of Rospuda Valley defenders

Credit: OTOP



## **From your experience, what guidelines can you advise for dealing with conflict in Natura 2000 sites?**

- The legal requirements for the protection of Natura 2000 sites are not a subject for any negotiation – they are LAW binding in all member states;
- The knowledge and understanding of Natura 2000 management rules is usually far from a satisfactory level, even among the decision-makers. Increasing the knowledge and awareness on this legislation is crucial and necessary;
- Good conflict analysis (by independent social science expert) and discussion led by a mediator may be useful;
- There is a need for political will and respect for EU legislation as well as increasing awareness and support for Natura 2000 management rules by the society.

### **Suggestions for further reading:**

[http://www.otop.org.pl/kat\\_41\\_378\\_379\\_717/ENGLISH.html](http://www.otop.org.pl/kat_41_378_379_717/ENGLISH.html)

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/casework/details.asp?id=tcm:9-228488>

[http://www.birdlife.org/eu/EU\\_policy/Birds\\_Habitats\\_Directives/casework\\_via\\_baltica.html](http://www.birdlife.org/eu/EU_policy/Birds_Habitats_Directives/casework_via_baltica.html)

<http://www.viabalticainfo.org/-en->

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/566&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

## **'Make consistent decisions based on transparent & clear rules'**



Country: **Czech Republic**  
Site / location: **Krkonoše Mountains SCI, Krkonoše Mountains National Park**  
Contact: **Stanislav Brezina**, Natura 2000 Coordinator, The Krkonoše Mountains National Park, sbrezina@krap.cz

# 4.5

**Primary cause of the conflict:**  
Ski resort development on mezophilous meadows

**Category:**  
Land use and Natura 2000

### **The conflict:**

Building construction and protection of mezophilous meadows [Species-rich *Nardus* grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas and submountain areas, in continental Europe, Extensive hay meadows of the plain to submontane levels, Mountain hay meadows]

### **Conflict description / background:**

There is a conflict between the aims of the staff of the Krkonoše Mts. National Park Administration, which is responsible for protection of the meadows in the SCI Krkonoše Mountains, and the aims of builders who, through construction, irreversibly destroy the meadows with heavy degradation to the meadows surrounding. Most often the stakeholders are non-locals with no emotional relationship to the Krkonoše landscape. They build accommodation facilities there because the SCI is one of the most attractive ski resorts in the Czech Republic. It is not possible to prohibit all the building activities in the SCI because most of the building construction projects to be located on the meadows are too small in comparison with the total area of the protected meadows: usually less than 0,01%. As a result, between the years 2005-2008, the building construction destroyed more than 1 % of the meadows in the SCI.

Therefore we are now beginning to use the concept "limiting meadow transformation". We set up different limits and zone the meadows into 9 categories: (1) three categories according to their natural value and (2) another three categories according to their up-to-date quality (I-IX). This was done in collaboration with the experts from the Institute of Botany of Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. The meadows with the highest natural value and up-to-date quality are subject to the most strict limitations in term of management / development / transformation. More specifically we have allowed construction on meadows with the lowest natural value and quality on an area which is 20 times larger than the meadows with the highest natural value and up-to-date quality. We set up independent limits for each of the municipality in the SCI. This is because we would like each of the municipalities to be fully responsible for planning the development in its surroundings. Now we discuss the concept with the opponents and we are going to communicate it with the municipalities and other stakeholders.

House-building in the surroundings of the ski resort Pec pod Sněžkou in the Krkonoše Mts. National Park.



The main cause of the conflict is the difference of appreciation by two different groups of the values of the meadows justifying the designation of the Natura 2000 site. Nature conservationists value them for their natural value whereas the non-local stakeholders value them as a means for short-term economic profit.

The conflict is intensive mainly because the ski-resorts and municipalities are all involved in the SCI Krkonoše Mountains as a whole and there is little space left in their surroundings without any object of protection.

The conflict has not cooled down so far because of the absence of clear rules on the reduction of area of the meadows.

## **Was it possible to transform the conflicting situation into a win-win situation?**

We do not know yet. It will depend on the success of communicating the concept with the public. Our main targets are:

- The representatives of the municipalities in the SCI Krkonoše. We would like first to convince them about the reliability of the ecosystem approach in nature protection. So far, they are accustomed to the concept of endangered species. Secondly, we would like to show that there is a strong relationship between the diversity of species in the meadows and the localisation of their area at the landscape level. We would like them to understand that the smaller and more isolated the meadows are, the less plant and animal species they can host. Thirdly, we would like to convince them that “soft” types of tourism, which are more considerate to the meadows (like agro-tourism), are more profitable in the long-term for the local people than investment into the development of the ski resorts by outsiders;
- The experts in Environmental impact assessment, who are to test whether the method we propose can be used in practice.

## **Describe the most useful measures used to deal with the conflict:**

We used the experience and knowledge of many experts to classify the natural values of different types of meadows.

We monitor through statistics all the investment ventures in the SCI since the year 2004 according to the type of venture, its localization, the area and quality of the injured meadows which are objects of protection.

## **From your experience, what guidelines can you advise for dealing with conflict in Natura 2000 sites?**

- The consistent decision making based on transparent and clear rules;
- The effective communication of our aims with the public.

## **Your recommendations to make the Natura 2000 network more effective in involving stakeholders at the local level, and for shifting stakeholder opposition to participation and cooperation?**

- To support activities which are considerate to the environment (such as extensive agriculture) and not allow activities which are related to hard forms of tourism (such as downhill skiing);
- To convince the stakeholders about the long term economical benefits of being considerate to the environment.



A mountain hay meadow near Jestřabí in the Krkonoše Mountains National Park.

## **'Communicate factually what is at stake'**

Country: **Finland**  
Site / location: **Pomponrahka (bog), FI0200061 SCI**  
Contact: **PhD Kari Karhu**  
Planner, City of Turku  
kari.karhu@turku.fi



# 4.6

**Primary cause of the conflict:**  
Expansion of Turku Airport on the adjacent bog

**Category:**  
Land use and Natura 2000

### **The conflict:**

The expansion of Turku Airport in the proximity of Pomponrahka (bog site).

### **Conflict description / background:**

The airport is being developed, e.g. a new road is needed. The airport was, unfortunately, built partially on a bog, whose remaining parts belong to Natura 2000. Stakeholders include the City of Turku, neighboring cities, Turku airport and the aviation administration. When Finland joined the EU, the remaining bog (already a national nature protection area) was first included as a biological entity to Natura 2000 but the parties named above appealed from decision of the government to the supreme administrative court. So did local environmentalists who won and stopped plans for a road splitting the bog into unnatural halves. Now, the road is planned so that it follows the runway as close as possible, but it still intrudes into the Natura 2000 site. It is quite likely that the project is considered so vital to society that an exception will be made to the applicable rules.

### **Was it possible to transform the conflict into a win-win situation?**

In a way, yes, since the new road seems not to drain the bog or cover any important habitats.

### **Describe the most useful measures used to deal with the conflict:**

Publicity. Strict adherence to facts, both biological (a bog is a hydrological unit that cannot be split) and juridical (habitats directive conforms such thinking).

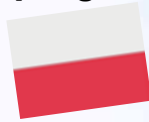
### **From your experience, what guidelines can you advise for dealing with conflict in Natura 2000 sites?**

Appropriate publicity and communication of the issue and what is at stake and a general understanding and appropriate implementation of law.

Communicating shortcomings of the environmental actions of developers and land users, contributing to a greater understanding of their potential for reducing environmental impacts.

## 'Anticipate how to deal with overlapping regulations'

Country: **Poland**  
Site / location: **Natura 2000 Site PLC 140001 Puszcza Kampinowska C**  
Contact: **Jan Danylow, Natura 2000 Specialist, Kampinos National Park**  
[danylow@kampinoski-pn.gov.pl](mailto:danylow@kampinoski-pn.gov.pl)



# 4.7

**Primary cause of the conflict:**  
Overlapping nature protection regulations

**Category:**  
Land use and Natura 2000

### Potential conflict:

An investment located in an area of two overlapping nature protection areas can cause a complicated situation in the decision making process because different regulations apply on the same piece of land and different governing bodies need to be consulted.

### Description / background of potential conflict:

According to the current nature protection law, the Director of Kampinos National Park is the supervisor of the Natura 2000 Site PLC 140001 Puszcza Kampinowska, the borders of which overlap with those of the park. Since according to Polish law a national park is the highest form of nature protection, which results in much stronger restrictions for investments, spatial planning and land use than on a Natura 2000 site, we have not yet come upon a conflict situation connected to the implementation and functioning of this site. It is most likely that such situations will occur in connection to the giving of administrative decisions, but such actions, even when a Natura 2000 site overlaps with a national park, lay within the competency of the Regional Director of Environmental Protection.

The situation with overlapping areas of a National Park and Natura 2000 site is quite complicated and the forms of cooperation between the Director of the National Park and Regional Director of Environmental Protection are not described in any law act. If anyone should plan an investment on such an area of two overlapping nature protections forms they must ask the opinion of the Director of the National Park (in respect of the influence of the planned investment on the park) and the opinion of the Regional Director of Nature Protection (in respect of the influence of the planned investment on the Natura 2000 site). These two opinions may of course not be coherent and in such a case the investor is forced to appeal either to the Minister of the Environment (superior of the National Park) or General Director of Nature Protection (superior of the Regional Director of Nature Protection).

## **'What seems good may still be harmful'**

Country: Finland  
Site / location: Rauvolanlahti (wetland sites)  
Contact: PhD Kari Karhu  
Planner, City of Turku  
kari.karhu@turku.fi



# 4.8

**Primary cause of the conflict:**  
Development of residential areas next to a wetland

**Category:**  
Land use and Natura 2000

### **The conflict:**

The development of new residential areas next to Rauvolanlahti (wetland area).

### **Conflict description / background:**

There are strong pressures to offer quality plots for one-family houses, since Turku is surrounded by smaller cities that have such resources and, therefore, attract good tax payers. Stakeholders include the real estate department and the city planning department. It has been very difficult to explain why there should be a buffer zone between a Natura site and residential areas. Our experience is that the width of a buffer should exceed the typical length of a dog walk.

### **Was it possible to transform the conflict into a win-win situation?**

Colleagues at the city planning department begin to understand the principle but decision-makers don't - with some exceptions, of course.

### **What was tried, but did not work?**

A continuous buffer zone was proposed when the general city plan was out for comments. Some critical areas were though omitted. Later, they were not even covered by detailed city plans. Instead, they are now subjects for exceptional procedures. One area is currently reserved for an entrepreneur for presenting a plan for zero-energy one-family houses.

### **What additional measures might have worked?**

Someone should have appealed from the general plan to the administrative court. We, a city organ, are not, however, a possible actor.

### **Describe the most useful measures used to deal with the conflict:**

We have tried to explain to the prospective constructor that environmental friendliness is not a monolith. What seems good from one point of view (energy saving) may still be harmful (building next to a wetland).

### **From your experience, what guidelines can you advise for dealing with conflict in Natura 2000 sites?**

Appropriate publicity and communication of the issue and what is at stake and a general understanding and appropriate implementation of law.

Communicating shortcomings of the environmental actions of developers and land users, contributing to a greater understanding of their potential for reducing environmental impacts.

## **'It is possible to reconcile transport and environment and minimise impacts on Natura 2000'**



Country: **Denmark**  
Site / location: **F110 / DK002X110 - Saltholm Island and surrounding sea**  
Contact: **Thomas Vikström, DOF / BirdLife Denmark, IBA Coordinator**  
thomas.vikstroem@dof.dk

# 4.9

**Primary cause of the conflict:**  
A bridge placed near a bird roosting area

**Category:**  
Land use and Natura 2000

### **The conflict:**

The Øresund fixed link between Denmark and Sweden was placed in the shallow coastal waters inside the IBA 110, just south of Saltholm Island with thousands of breeding and roosting water birds.

### **Conflict description / background:**

Dansk Ornitologisk Forening (DOF) took the case to the European Court of Justice, but lost it. As to the main cause of the conflict, see above.

In 1991, the Danish and Swedish governments signed an agreement to establish a fixed link across the Øresund. The agreement was ratified by the two countries' parliaments in August of the same year. Øresundskonsortiet, a joint venture between A/S Øresund and Svensk-Danska Broförbindelsen SVEDAB AB, constructed the permanent link between Sweden and Denmark. The project comprises a 16.4km (10-mile) link between Copenhagen and Malmö consisting of a tunnel, a bridge and an artificial island.

The artificial island of Peberholm was built in order to transfer the traffic from the immersed tunnel up onto the approach bridge. Peberholm is approx. 4km long and mainly made up of dredged material from the Øresund seabed. A total of 1.6 million m<sup>3</sup> of stone and 7.5 million m<sup>3</sup> of sand and dredged material were required for its completion.

### **Was it possible to transform the conflict into a win-win situation?**

Today, the situation in fact looks as a win-win-situation with many breeding birds, e.g. little tern, at the artificial Peberholm island created as a part of the Øresund link project. And the Eiders and seals don't seem to have decreased in the area, at least not because of the bridge.

### **Describe the most useful measures used to deal with the conflict:**

The most important mitigation was that the fixed link was not placed directly at Saltholm Island (as originally planned) but south of it. Secondly, the creation of Peberholm island should be mentioned.

### **From your experience, what guidelines can you advise for dealing with conflict in Natura 2000 sites?**

I would always (and still!) advise to not accept any plans or projects in Natura 2000 sites. At least for the reason that if you protest loud enough, at least some mitigations might be undertaken. Another example is the new dike in the Wadden Sea in 1980, where the protests did not prohibit the dike, but at last resulted in the creation of a new, large nature area behind the dike.

### **Your recommendations to make the Natura 2000 network more effective in involving stakeholders at the local level and shifting stakeholder opposition to participation and cooperation?**

Most often I recommend *not* to involve local stakeholders too much, at least not in Denmark, where you have to centralize decisions to have any chance to protect nature!

OK, then: to involve them as early as possible, or rather, to take your time to educate them through pro-Natura messages.

# 11 Conclusions and recommendations

This report demonstrates that the process of implementing the European nature directives at the local level can become a very demanding exercise for all stakeholders involved. Essentially, this is a process of change requiring a joint effort to find together ways so that everyone can adhere to the main objectives of the European legislation. This process of change depends also upon the way each Member State has decided to implement the nature directives, according to, for example, its own social context, history of nature conservation, relationships with landowners, land users and land managers, density of population, and culture.

Our conclusions are followed by recommendations targeted at the organisations carrying responsibility for the effective implementation of Natura 2000 at the local, national and European levels.

## 11.1 Conclusions: the importance of conflict resolution to implementing Natura 2000

The Natura 2000 network of sites is supported by a robust and proven regulatory framework for decision-making about activities, which affect the integrity of the protected habitats and species. Other sectors working with environmental assets can find this regulation restrictive, disproportionate, unreasonable and, ultimately, an obstacle to progress which has to be overcome. Environmental regulation is too often presented and perceived as an imposition. Decisions about the selection and designation of protected areas are open to challenge.

With experience gathered to date, it is important that those working for the benefit of the Natura 2000 network of protected areas make every effort to build positive political will in Governments, key economic sectors, amongst other agencies and organisations with which they engage and, most of all, with local communities and people. There are benefits to be had by working with the grain of a clear regulatory framework, and these benefits need to be explicit to economic interests, Governments and communities. By using a range of tools to address the interaction of others with protected areas, it should be possible to work positively towards shared solutions, which benefit the environment, other sectors and local communities. Visible successes would generate cross-sector support for the regulatory framework and, consequently, engage effort and finance to the benefit of the protected areas themselves.

The vast Natura 2000 network is well defined now in terms of the designation of sites, but its effective conservation still faces a long list of obstacles: increasing threats to conservation targets, including, for example, the uncertain effects of climate change; the lack of a pan-European set of practical quality standards, shared terminology, efficient tools for site management to meaningfully share experience and communicate best practices; an inward looking attitude of some organisations, and a general shortage of site managers trained in participatory and adaptive approaches. As a network, effective management of Natura 2000 sites is, at best, patchy and successes and approaches are rarely described and inadequately shared. On top of that, specifically in relation to conflict situations, there are a host of other practical issues, which inhibit the implementation of Natura 2000 – for example: inadequate understanding, participation and channels for decision-making, which involve local stakeholders; lack of adequate competencies and access to training to equip site managers in particular with the skills they need to do their job well; pressure on funding and available resources, especially given that conflicts require significant effort and (often) on-going attention.

To realise the full potential of the Natura 2000 network and develop meaningful responses to climate change and halting biodiversity loss, effective implementation of Natura 2000 is essential. Natura 2000 requires and deserves to be managed as a national and European network, as well as at individual site level - this implies managing the areas around, between and beyond Natura 2000 sites, as well as the ecological connection between sites. Unaddressed, conflict is a major barrier to implementation of Natura 2000 at site level and, therefore, inhibits the purpose and full potential of the Natura 2000 being fully developed and/ or realised: the implementation of Natura 2000 as a functioning ecological network is not achieved and the network of sites is insufficiently enabled to contribute to EU policy objectives such as climate change, rural development and other legislative tools such as the Water Framework Directives. At the broader scale of European development, Natura 2000 can be seen as an important and largely under exploited tool for EU sustainable development priorities.

## 11.2 Recommendations

In formulating these recommendations, we target the organisations carrying responsibility for the effective implementation of Natura 2000 at the local, national and European levels. In doing this, our intention is not to exclude any stakeholder group, but we anticipate that the majority of readers will be directly involved, one-way or another, in the implementation of Natura 2000. In making the recommendations, we openly acknowledge the challenges.

We aim to particularly support and promote the work of the organisations (and their staff) charged with direct responsibility for implementation of Natura 2000: we do so by praising excellence, as evidenced in the collected case studies and the best practices they demonstrate, to encourage learning in support of the implementation of Natura 2000.

On the basis of the case studies in this report and also in order to achieve the ultimate goal of supporting the implementation of Natura 2000 on individual designated sites as well as across the network, there are several clear areas where we can learn from best practice. The following recommendations have different audiences and so are split into local, national and European levels. In addition, specific key recommendations are provided, which apply at all levels. All recommendations relate directly to improving best practice in dealing with conflicts in the implementation and management of the Natura 2000 network.

### 11.2.1 Recommendations at the local / site level

- Encourage local stakeholders to understand the pan-European nature and dimension of the Natura 2000 network and to see these important sites in a wider, vitally important context;
- Promote and secure the direct involvement of land managers, land-owners and local non-governmental organisations as allies in the delivery of nature conservation objectives;
- Discourage inward-looking attitudes of organisations and stakeholders - take a wider view to address difficult issues and also realise the potential to contribute to practical responses to conflicts elsewhere. Your experiences (both positive and negative) are valuable – be prepared to share your experience with others to stimulate learning and achieve more, more effectively;
- Be inclusive: encourage and support multi-stakeholder learning opportunities;
- Be flexible and respond to the needs of different stakeholder groups in different ways;
- Think practically - for example, have meetings in the evenings, provide child-care and local transport - demonstrate your willingness to maximise attendance and positively engage people;
- Think carefully about how to communicate what Natura 2000 is, what it involves and why it is important – for example, listen to understand others' points of view, be clear about objectives and use appropriate language to describe them, and regularly check to ensure messages are being understood;
- Identify key staff for Natura 2000. Invest in their training so that they become skilled communication managers, equipped with practical skills they require, for example, in diplomacy, negotiation, project management. There is a general shortage of Natura 2000 managers skilled in participatory and adaptive approaches;
- Recognise when it is necessary to seek external help – for example, be open to the advantages that can be secured by an external independent mediator.
- Although not compulsory, we strongly recommend to use the Management Plan as an effective tool for the management of a Natura 2000 site. As a process involving all stakeholders, the management plan can refer to the communication strategy and the stakeholder strategy.

## 11.2.2 Recommendations at the national level

It is difficult to propose recommendations at national level, because implementation of Natura 2000 is country specific – conflict solutions implemented at national level reflect the preferred ways of working within different national administrations. However, there are different lessons to be learned, and these are expressed in the following recommendations.

- Acknowledge that conflicts linked to Natura 2000 are normal: they exist because of the very nature of the European dimension of the network. It is the absence of conflicts, which is unusual;
- Break down barriers and view Natura 2000 as a key piece of legislation, which when implemented and integrated in policy legislation in other sectors, can bring economic, ecological and social benefits. Policy barriers can be avoided and do not need to arise if attention is given to improve inter-dependencies and cross-references.
- Encourage a paradigm-shift within national administrative structures, especially so that Natura 2000 is fully integrated within the national policies of other ministries and sectors of society. This will create a more robust framework within which Natura 2000 can be implemented, which will also help to avoid conflicts arising, creating or building in schisms upon which conflicts thrive;
- Identify within national Natura 2000 frameworks existing or potential sources of conflicts, whether linked to financial, technical, legal, regulatory or governance issues. For instance, the appointment of a Natura 2000 national coordinator can help the integration of Natura 2000 at all levels within the society;
- For the management of Natura 2000 sites, create an appropriate national framework including, in particular, a clear communication and financial strategy for Natura 2000. Support, encourage and develop training programmes - appropriate investments in ensuring organisations are staffed with people with key skills are ultimately cost-effective as it avoids wasted resources and will help to generate greater benefits for nature;
- Develop a shared vision on the importance of involving stakeholders in decision making for the management of Natura 2000 area. Develop support in the wider society for Natura 2000 through annual communication and awareness campaigns targeted to multiple stakeholders, including local authorities. For example, a national Natura 2000 award, such as <http://grandsprix.n2000.fr/>;
- Provide practical support and encourage the primary causes of conflicts to be proactively identified and addressed. For example, create or support schemes, which stimulate discussion based on 'on the ground experience' and exchange on lessons learned;
- Integrate within the Natura 2000 national framework the principle of crisis management by encouraging regional authorities to be ready for action when necessary;
- For the design of plans and projects, ensure that the implementation requirements of EU environmental legislation (Birds, Habitats and Water Framework Directives, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)) are always considered as an integral component, so that potential conflicts with Natura 2000 sites are identified at a strategic level and projects become designed in a sustainable way, avoiding the risk of court challenges, higher costs and delays.

## 11.2.3 Recommendations at the European level

The absence of European Programmes, which enable European conservation organisations to act as 'ambassadors' for Natura 2000 remains a major challenge to be met. Nature conservation professionals fulfil an irreplaceable role with reference to the wider consistency involved in Natura 2000. Therefore, our main recommendations here are to support their work, all over Europe, by developing a wider view on dealing with conflicts and Natura 2000.

- Encourage countries at an earlier stage of implementation of Natura 2000 to accept conflicts as a risk and an opportunity to develop win-win situations by involving the administrations in charge of Natura 2000 in visiting programmes in other countries with more years of experience;

- Support and promote efforts with different sectors to address potential international conflicts at strategic level, audit / impact assessment level (for example, cross-borders, harbours / airports / major transport network), etc;
- Encourage European training programmes and the exchange of experience on conflict management / stakeholder dialogue for Natura 2000. Stimulate site-to-site, peer-to-peer and international learning by encouraging and enabling a wide participation of professionals and trainers from countries at different stages in the implementation of Natura 2000;
- Make guidance material available in different languages on conflict management / communication skills / stakeholder dialogue, so that it is accessible to as many people as possible. Complement this with accessible communication and promotional materials to market Natura 2000, build public awareness and ensure people, organisations in other sectors and diverse stakeholders are enabled to “buy-in”;
- Promote and reward good initiatives with a European-level recognition system for local Natura 2000 managers, elected officials, mediators and other stakeholders who have been able to transform a conflicting situation into a win-win situation. Bring their work to the attention of colleagues across Europe. For instance, within the existing Natura 2000 award, endorse them with a title such as “Natura 2000 ambassadors”, such as had been previously proposed or developed in different programmes.

## 11.2.4 Key recommendations at all levels

Key Recommendations at all levels:

- Conflict in Natura 2000 sites is not necessarily a bad thing: recognising and being open to the possibility of conflicts is a positive step in the Natura 2000 management process. Conflict avoidance, either by imposing Natura 2000 or ignoring the views and opinions of stakeholders is not in compliance with the EU Directives. As a strategy, that is not successful: conflicts and issues will still require to be addressed and will come up later;
- Encourage and support development of greater awareness about Natura 2000, especially in view of its relevance for local people, local authorities, and given the need to ensure in particular its integration in economic sectors;
- Involve relevant stakeholders early in the process which enables them to participate. Actively try to understand their position thus enabling the process of finding acceptable solutions and avoiding misunderstandings;
- New jobs require new skills. Natura 2000 requires a new perspective for all stakeholders involved. Address the professional development and career opportunities of Natura 2000 coordinators, site managers, offering them training opportunities with the objective to improve their communication, negotiation and conflict management skills: for example, encourage them to be involved with their European counterparts through the design of, and participation in, European programmes;
- There is a need to recognise the role of national non-governmental organisations and their capacity to motivate public opinion. With the support of NGOs from other countries, they can become a source of positive ideas so that conflicts at the European level are avoided and money saved at the national level, achieving gains for Natura 2000 and society;
- Support the development of mechanisms for knowledge exchange between Natura 2000 practitioners and representatives of different stakeholder groups. Their practical skills can be useful to other practitioners in other sectors. Networks are a key, useful, but currently underexploited resource here;
- For the management of Natura 2000 sites, create a regulatory and institutional framework, which is coherent with sectorial policies. Ensure adequate financing dedicated to the management of Natura 2000 sites by different types of stakeholders.

With this report, our hope is that the full potential of the Natura 2000 as a real, living, European network can be developed, where conflicts are better identifiable, manageable and capable of being more fully resolved. This requires well-trained and well-equipped Natura 2000 managers, who play a key role as facilitators, negotiators, mediators, able to work positively and productively with all stakeholders. This will ensure not only that individual sites are better managed but also that, cumulatively, through an improved quality of management, conflicts can be more successfully resolved and Europe-wide responses to critical issues, such as climate change and improved connectivity between protected areas can be fostered through the European network of Natura 2000 sites. Together we will be able to build a real European Natura 2000 network of sites, people and organisations with the objective to halt the loss of biodiversity and potentially restore it before 2020!

## 12 Suggestions for continued reading on Natura 2000

The Internet is the best resource for learning more about Natura 2000 and keeping up-to-date with the latest European and national developments. This section provides an overview of some of the online resources dedicated to Natura 2000. It is by no means a complete list of all available websites and web pages, so you are encouraged to do a little browsing of your own.

### European Commission Natura 2000 content

The official online home of Natura 2000. This subsection of the Commission's DG Environment website includes a comprehensive collection of background information on Natura 2000. Content includes lists of protected areas by Member State, the 'Natura 2000 Barometer' providing an overview of the progress made in establishing the Natura 2000 network, guidance for protection, management and financing of Natura 2000, and links to databases and GIS data.

Natura 2000 at the European Commission's website: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index_en.htm)  
Public Natura 2000 viewer: <http://natura2000.eea.europa.eu/#>

### natura.org

This website is maintained by Eurosite, it contains a wealth of examples of good practice local level communication and implementation of Natura 2000. More than 150 case studies have been collected for this website, each of them compiled by managers of Natura 2000 sites - they provide a useful reference for modes and means of communicating the importance of Natura 2000 to stakeholders for the purpose of generating support for the appropriate implementation of site management plans and the sustainable use of sites. These case studies were collected by Eurosite, on behalf of the European Commission, for the projects 'The Natura Network Initiative' and 'The Natura 2000 Networking Programme'. Each case study includes the contact details of at least one member of the Natura 2000 site's management team - these details have been made available for those who wish to make direct contact with experienced Natura 2000 managers for advice and continued networking.

natura.org: <http://www.natura.org>

### Other suggestions

This report has been produced as part of project delivered on behalf of the European Commission by Alterra, the European Centre for Nature Conservation (ECNC) and Eurosite. Each organisation is active in guiding and supporting the application of best practice for natural site management in Europe, consequently their respective websites offer frequently updated news, information and resources of value to Natura 2000 site managers, stakeholders and academics.

Alterra: <http://www.alterra.wur.nl/UK/>  
ECNC: <http://www.ecnc.org>  
Eurosite: <http://www.eurosite.org>

Likewise, many pan-European organisations involved in nature and biodiversity conservation - either directly, or through cross-cutting issues - feature Natura 2000 related content. Particularly useful websites include:



BirdLife: <http://www.birdlife.org>  
Buglife: <http://www.buglife.org.uk>  
ELO: <http://www.elo.org>  
EUOPARC Federation: <http://www.euoparc.org>  
European Environmental Bureau: <http://www.eeb.org>  
EUCC the Coastal Union: <http://www.eucc.nl>  
FACE: <http://www.face-europe.org>  
IUCN pan-Europe: <http://www.iucn.org/europe>  
Planta Europa: <http://www.plantaeuropa.org>  
Plantlife: <http://www.plantlife.org.uk>  
WWF European Policy Office: <http://www.panda.org/epo>

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- |                      |                         |
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