

ENEA WORKING GROUP COHESION POLICY & NATURA 2000 2007-2013

NATURA 2000, A PARTNERSHIP FOR PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT & NATURE

STATEMENT

Recognising the priority given to biodiversity in the VI Environmental Action Programme and the commitment of the European Heads of State in the European Council of March 2006 to “urge the implementation of the EU objective of halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010, notably by integrating its requirements into all relevant Lisbon agenda policies (...)”.

Recognising that the Lisbon Strategy aims at making the EU the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-driven economy in the world by 2010, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs, greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment.

Recognizing that the Structural Funds programming period 2007-2013 is a new opportunity to promote and achieve a better balance between development & conservation and to reinforce the role of EU’s biodiversity within regional and territorial cohesion.

Recognising that promotion of sustainable development implies a great commitment on the protection and conservation of EU biodiversity.

Recognising that biodiversity protection is a mean to improve quality of life and that one of the key aspect of sustainable development is the need to step up investment in human capital and skills to achieve biodiversity goals.

Recognising the outstanding importance of Natura 2000 as a network of natural and seminatural areas dedicated to ensure the conservation of Europe’s most valuable Habitats and Wildlife.

Recognising the role of the network as a driving force for the promotion of sustainable development and creation of employment in the rural world, as well as a vital resource for recreation, education and scientific understanding. Many of our valuable Habitats are the result of traditional land use and that their conservation is dependent on traditional practices and skills.

Recognising the common responsibility to ensure the protection of these precious resources for the benefit of present and future generations. Private and public initiatives must strength their links in order to promote sound projects and plans that guarantee a social development and a clear commitment on nature conservation through Rural Sustainable Development.

Recognising that the success of Natura 2000 will require the support of European citizens, especially of local people, landowners and business and their participation in

the decisions on the implementation of the conservation and management of the areas involved.

Recognising that Natura 2000 is an important contribution of the European Union to global nature conservation, and that it highlights the importance of establishing similar ecological networks in other regions and of international co-operation towards nature conservation. The conservation of nature and biodiversity is part of the commitment by the EU and its Member States as parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

Recognising and welcoming Community Decisions on the lists of Sites of Community Importance of the Natura 2000 network as a major contribution to this network and as a landmark in its development. We are looking forward to the extension of the Natura 2000 network, particularly in the 12 new Member States, most of which have submitted lists.

Recognising that the need to make progress in establishing Natura 2000 in the marine environment is a key challenge for the implementation of EU Biodiversity Policy. The marine Natura 2000 network will significantly contribute to the target of halting the loss of biodiversity in the EU and to the establishment of a Global Network of Marine Protected Areas in 2012, but also to broader marine conservation and sustainable use objectives.

Recognising that there are serious doubts that real Natura 2000 funding needs are being met through the integration approach¹ and in particular through the Cohesion Policy, and also recognising that there is an urgent need to carry out monitoring and assessment of the integration approach through the setting up of indicators, definition of thresholds and conditionality in Cohesion Policy spending.

We the European Network of Environmental Authorities encourage the EU Member States to:

- Undertake the assessment of the integration approach in the mid-term evaluation of the Operational Programmes.
- Finalise within the shortest timescales the full implementation of the Natura 2000 network and in particular in the marine environment.
- Promote awareness and understanding of Natura 2000 at all key policy sectors.
- Promote the development of partnerships involving the broad range of stakeholders in the conservation and management of Natura 2000 sites.
- Support the sharing of experience and good practice in managing the network.
- Support the sustainable use and management of Natura 2000 areas a pillar of EU sustainable development.
- Promote the role of the network in the creation of job opportunities in rural areas.
- Ensure that the needs of Natura 2000 are effectively implemented in the Cohesion Policy and recognise that these objectives require targeted resources.

¹Integration approach concept as understood in the following document:
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2004:0431:FIN:EN:PDF>