## IUCN Preliminary contribution to Evidence Gathering Questionnaire for the Fitness Check of the Nature Directives

### A. General Information

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<th>Answer</th>
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<td><strong>Organisation:</strong> International Union for Conservation of Nature</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Date:</strong> 13/03/2015</td>
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<td><strong>Country (and, if applicable, region) represented:</strong> World</td>
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<td><strong>Organisation(s) represented:</strong> IUCN is the world’s oldest and largest global environmental organisation, with more than 1,200 government and NGO Members and almost 11,000 volunteer experts in some 160 countries. IUCN’s work is supported by over 1,000 staff in 45 offices and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world. Conserving biodiversity is central to the mission of IUCN. By providing the latest knowledge on conservation, we show how critical biodiversity is to addressing some of our greatest challenges: tackling climate change, achieving food security and sustaining development. IUCN's work focuses on valuing and conserving nature, ensuring effective and equitable governance of its use, and deploying nature-based solutions to global challenges in climate, food and development. IUCN supports scientific research, manages field projects all over the world, and brings governments, NGOs, the UN and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice. <a href="http://www.iucn.org/about/union/members/who_members/members_database/">http://www.iucn.org/about/union/members/who_members/members_database/</a></td>
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<td><strong>Languages spoken fluently by contact person:</strong> EN, FR</td>
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<td><strong>Language for the interview if it is not possible to conduct</strong></td>
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<td><strong>it in English</strong></td>
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| **Type of organisations you represent:** | Other  
Nature conservation organisation |
| EU authority or agency / Member State authority or agency / business or industry / educational or scientific institute / nature conservation charity / recreation / individual expert / other (please specify). |  |
| **Sector represented:** | Environment, water, agriculture, forestry, fisheries |
| environment / water / agriculture / forestry / fisheries / transport / energy / extractive industry / industry / housing and other buildings / recreation & tourism / science & education / other (please specify) |  |
| **Additional comments:** | **DISCLAIMER:**  
Considering the specific nature of the IUCN constituency, explained above, the answers to this questionnaire are not all encompassing the whole Union, neither has the Brussels Office been able to secure the full and representative input of its Union. We would appreciate that the conditionality of this contribution is clearly communicated as such when published.  
Many members and experts of IUCN have provided input through other coordination mechanisms at the national level.  
For Questions not answered it should not be concluded that IUCN has no view but no sufficient input was gathered.  
IUCN has created a REFIT Steering Committee and will continue to feed into the debate in the coming weeks and months with additional evidence based information. |
Effectiveness

S.1.1 What progress have Member States made over time towards achieving the objectives set out in the Directives and related policy documents?

Answer:
Scientific evidence has shown that the European Union Nature Directives are effective, delivering demonstrable improvements for the species they protect. They have given a significant new impetus to nature conservation in the European Member States. Many iconic species such as beavers, wolves, cranes and white-tailed eagles achieved spectacular comebacks thanks to the Directives. The designation of the Natura 2000 network, and species protection regimes established by the Directives helped bridge the gap between the need for strict protection of endangered nature and promoting sustainable use.

More implementation is still needed: “twenty-three member states are yet to complete the EC requirement for identifying and designating new Natura 2000 areas” (Crofts, 2014).


Natura 2000 network has been established and is functioning. Most of the sites have Management Plans (PZO - Plans of Conservation Activities) ready, due to EU funds. Reports on habitat and species monitoring is done regularly.

Mullins et al (2015) show that in Portugal, the Natura 2000 sites are well connected by multiple corridors for dispersal of the wood mouse as a focal species for short dispersal. (Jacinta Mullins, Fernando Ascensão, Luciana Simões, Leonardo Andrade, Margarida Santos-Reis, Carlos Fernandes 2015).

Evaluating connectivity between Natura 2000 sites within the montado agroforestry system: a case study using landscape genetics of the wood mouse (Apodemus sylvaticus), Landscape Ecology, 30(4): 609-623.

In addition to the benefits in terms of species targeted by the Directives, it is also shown that the Natura 2000 network provided benefits to non-target species, specifically in common bird populations. Indeed, common bird species not covered by the Birds Directive, are more abundant in Natura 2000 sites elsewhere in France. The Directive therefore goes beyond its objectives.


S.2 – What is the contribution of the Directives towards ensuring biodiversity? In particular to what extent are they contributing to achieving the EU Biodiversity Strategy* Objectives and Targets?

Answer:
Global studies using counterfactual metrics have demonstrated that without conservation action trends in biodiversity extinction risk would be far greater (at least one-fifth) than currently observed
Evaluation study to support the Fitness Check of the Birds and Habitats Directives

The Directives provide vital cross-border protection for nature. Thanks to the European Union Nature Directives, a transboundary site network has been established for migratory species, such as birds breeding in northern Europe and migrating to the south. Gruber, B., Evans, D., Henle, K. et al. (2012). “Mind the gap!” – How well does Natura 2000 cover species of European interest? Nature Conservation. 3: 45–63. Paul Donald et al. (2007): International Conservation Policy delivers benefits for Birds in European rope (Science 317, 810)

This study proves the efficiency of the Birds Directive comparing rate of provision of conservation measures and the response of bird populations. The results suggest that supranational conservation policy can bring measurable conservation benefits, although future assessments will require the setting of quantitative objectives and an increase in the availability of data from monitoring schemes. (Donald et al 2007)


S.3 – Which main factors (e.g. implementation by Member States, action by stakeholders) have contributed to or stood in the way of achieving the Directive’s objectives?

Answer:

In Greece, Apostolopoulou et al. 2009 argue that implementation of the Directive was “compromised by absence of conservation policy history, lack of state capacity, uncommunicated biological knowledge and lack of public participation. This strategy gap became apparent when appraising the decision making process in establishing a network of protected areas in terms of its interrelated activities. In particular, incomplete intelligence, ineffective promotion, irrational prescription and discontinued and non-independent appraisal led to a break down in implementation and to policy failure. Lack of clear goals, and divergences between stated and actual goals led to bureaucratic interpretations of conservation objectives and distortion of decision processes in favour of satisfying economic and development interests. Given the importance of Greek biodiversity and governmental failure to confront this policy hiatus, we argue for specific actions at both member state and European level and, in particular, the formulation of a conservation strategy as an official part of an integrated Greek conservation policy, and the establishment of independent institutions staffed by qualified reviewers to evaluate and monitor member states conservation policies. [Apostolopoulou, Evangelia, John D. Pantis. 2009. Conceptual gaps in the national strategy for the implementation of the European Natura 2000 conservation policy in Greece. Biological Conservation 142(1): 221–237,
One of the main constraints to the effective implementation of Art. 2 of the Habitat Directive has been the appropriate consideration of the “economic, social and cultural requirements” which in effect enable habitat and species conservation. Specific limitations to implementation have included top-down identification of species without proper consultation and level of public participation, for example in Sweden (Stenseke 2009), Ireland (Bryan 2012) and Poland (Grodzinska-Jurczak and Cent, 2011). A growing distance exists between expert knowledge mobilized within the European policy landscape and local knowledge (i.e. in Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden, see Pinto-Correia et al 2006).

S.4 - Have the Directives led to any other significant changes both positive and negative?

Answer:

There are many collateral benefits. A good example of this is the excellent scientific and technical effort made to set up a better classification of habitats and systems of evaluation of their status. Spain has produced this very valuable document: [http://www.magrama.gob.es/es/biodiversidad/temas/espacios-protegidos/red-natura-2000/m_tip_hab_esp_bases_eco_acceso_fichas.aspx](http://www.magrama.gob.es/es/biodiversidad/temas/espacios-protegidos/red-natura-2000/m_tip_hab_esp_bases_eco_acceso_fichas.aspx)

Despite pessimistic forecasts, Europe’s large carnivores are making a comeback. Chapron et al. (2014) report that sustainable populations of brown bear, Eurasian lynx, gray wolf, and wolverine persist in one-third of mainland Europe. Moreover, many individuals and populations are surviving and increasing outside protected areas set aside for wildlife conservation. Coexistence alongside humans has become possible, argue the authors, because of improved public opinion and protective legislation. [http://www.sciencemag.org/content/346/6216/1517](http://www.sciencemag.org/content/346/6216/1517)

Site designation can help conserve species not listed on the annexes as shown for birds in Latvia (Opermanis et al. 2008) and for gypsophilous plants in Spain (Martinez-Hernandez 2011). As Evans (2012:22) shows, “work towards Natura 2000 has also had other benefits, not least increased scientific study of the habitats and species listed on the annexes including habitat mapping, in some cases of entire countries as in the Czech Republic and Spain (Rivas-Martinez and Peans 2003, Hartel et al. 2009).


Efficiency

Y.1 - What are their costs and benefits (monetary and non-monetary)?

Answer:
In France, the Natura 2000 network has developed an effective balance between economy and ecology on tender for dynamic territories towards sustainable development. For example, the Natural Regional Parc of Alpilles (http://www.parc-alpilles.fr/) was created through/thanks to Natura 2000 with elected officials and common objective of Natura 2000 document was co-built with local actors. The added value is also due to the financial tool for implementation: the LIFE Nature. For example, the LIFE + Project COREXERUN (http://www.reunion-parcnational.fr/life/), to save from extinction the semi-dry forest in overseas territories at the Island of Reunion, one of the most threatened natural environments in the world, has created new job skills.

A study, conducted by academics from Cambridge University and the United States, highlights the financial worth of natural assets at a time when governments increasingly integrate biodiversity into their national accounts. "Our findings show there is a clear need for increased investment in conservation," said IUCN's Dr Matt Walpole who worked on the study on behalf of UNEP's World Conservation Monitoring Centre in Cambridge. "It is an astonishing figure that illustrates the value people place on experiencing nature". The study counts some 3.8 billion visits recorded in Europe. http://journals.plos.org/plosbiology/article?id=10.1371/journal.pbio.1002074

Relevance

R.2 - Have the Directives been adapted to technical and scientific progress?

Answer:
The Directives respond to the need to conserve biodiversity and aim to achieve Favourable Conservation Status (for species and habitats), which is in line with the current EU Biodiversity Target of halting the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services and restoring them in so far as feasible. http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0244&from=EN

IUCN will provide figures in April/May 2015 on the RL status of the species listed in the annexes of the Habitats Directive to assess the relevance of the annexes in relation to how they tackle species extinction risk. IUCN will also provide an overview of the species that are threatened in the European Red List but are not listed in the annexes of the Habitats Directive. This will present an overview of the most up to date scientific knowledge on the status of European species.

However, it is important to note that the IUCN European Red List does not provide a comprehensive picture of all the species that are threatened in Europe; so far, the following species groups have been comprehensively assessed: mammals, amphibians, reptiles, butterflies, dragonflies, freshwater fishes, freshwater molluscs, aquatic plants, marine fishes and bees. A selection of species has been assessed from the following species groups: saproxylic beetles, terrestrial molluscs and vascular plants. The assessment of all Orthoptera species (grasshoppers and crickets) is underway. http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/redlist/index_en.htm

In addition, the European Red List of Habitats will provide an assessment of the risk of collapse of all European habitats and of the habitats listed in Annex I of the Habitats Directive. The assessment will be ready in 2016. This will present an overview of the most up to date scientific knowledge on the status of European habitats.

The IUCN European Red List is not, on its own, a system for setting conservation priorities. Red List assessments simply measure the relative extinction risk faced by species (or risk of collapse faced by habitat types). To set conservation priorities, additional information must be taken into account. According to IUCN (2011), an inappropriate application of the IUCN Red List is to automatically include threatened species on legislation (e.g. lists) without considering the underlying cause of the threat and other relevant factors.
R.4 - How relevant is EU nature legislation to EU citizens and what is their level of support for it?

Answer:


Czajkowski et al. 2008 show that in the area of Białowieża Forest, Poland, "the respondents appreciated passive protection regimes, resulting in preservation of natural ecological processes. In addition, the respondents seemed to be concerned by means, and not only the results of protection programmes." The authors argue that "the respondents were concerned not only with achieving a certain biodiversity outcome but also with how this might be achieved. In other words, the way of protection itself might be an important constituent of the perceived value of an environmental protection policy. This should draw researchers' attention to the process of 'labelling' or 'selling' particular conservation programmes, in order to maximize social welfare (pg. 22). (Mikołaj Czajkowski, Małgorzata Buszko-Briggs, Nick Hanley. 2008. Valuing Changes in Forest Biodiversity. Stirling Economics Discussion Paper 2008-17).

Coherence

C.3 - Is the scope for policy integration with other policy objectives (e.g. water, floods, marine, and climate change) fully exploited?

Answer:

Regarding the Biodiversity, Water and Marine Directives, a whole seminar was devoted to this in Spain. All presentations are available in the following link: [http://www.magrama.gob.es/es/agua/formacion/Seminario_WFD-BHD.aspx](http://www.magrama.gob.es/es/agua/formacion/Seminario_WFD-BHD.aspx)

There is a project EEA on the conflict between Natura 2000 and flood control in Sandomierz. “The importance of implementing the EU directives for emerging multilevel governance in the nature conservation sector in Central and Eastern Europe, including Poland, is highlighted. In the context of Poland, the consultation program analysed appeared to be a novel and innovative step forward towards the development of a meaningful participatory approach in this region of Europe”. " Risk management in Nature 2000 sites under condition of flooding on the example of " Journal for Nature Conservation, vol. 22, Issue 2, April 2014, Pages 93–102, Joanna Centa, Małgorzata Grodzińska-Jurczaka, Agata Pietrzyk-Kaszyńska [doi:10.1016/j.jnc.2013.09.005](http://www.iucnredlist.org/documents/RL_Guidelines_Data_Use.pdf)

C.5 - How do these policies affect positively or negatively the implementation of the EU nature legislation

Answer:

According to the European Red list of species, many species are still severely threatened by agricultural practices, water pollution, urbanisation, which the ERL identified as major drivers which points to these sectoral policies not affecting the implementation of EU Nature legislation positively.

Besides the nature Directives, there are other EU policies and legislations that greatly contribute to conserving biodiversity, such as the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the EU Regulation on IAS and the Water Framework Directive, which are not subject to the current analysis.
C.9 - How do the directives complement the other actions and targets of the biodiversity strategy to reach the EU biodiversity objectives?

**Answer:**

Maes et al. 2012 argue that “a favourable conservation status provided more biodiversity and had a higher potential to supply, in particular, regulating and cultural ecosystem services than habitats in an unfavourable conservation status. This information is of utmost importance in identifying regions in which measures are likely to result in cost-effective progress towards both new biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services targets adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020”. (J. Maes, M.L. Paracchini, G. Zulian, M.B. Dunbar R. Alkemade. 2012. Synergies and trade-offs between ecosystem service supply, biodiversity, and habitat conservation status in Europe. Biological Conservation, 155:1-12)

C.10: How coherent are the directives with international and global commitments on nature and biodiversity?

**Answer:**

The Directives respond to the need to conserve biodiversity and aim to achieve Favourable Conservation Status (for species and habitats), which is in line with the CBD Strategic Plan and the 20 Aichi Targets.
**EU Added Value**

**AV.2 - What would be the likely situation in case of there having been no EU nature legislation?**

**Answer:**

From Spain, the perception is that belonging to the EU and having to comply with these directives has helped to make the environment a higher priority in the political agenda than it would have been otherwise. The example of Spain dates back to 1986, but some Eastern European countries may have a more recent experience in this regard.

*Considering the character of this question and the impossibility of providing evidence for likely situations in the past, this response is only one reflexion from our network.*