



NATURA 2000 ITALIA

INFORMA

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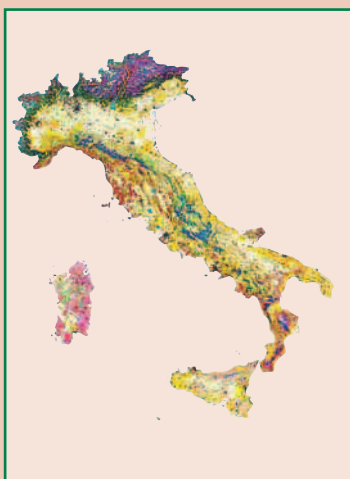
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Good practices for the management of Natura 2000 sites and resolution of conflicts

Most of the sites in the Natura 2000 network include areas, terrestrial or marine, which are normally used for purposes other than nature conservation, where may also insist agro-forestry-pastoral, commercial fishing, recreational or other productive activities of varied nature.

The balanced management of such sites is one of the major challenges for Natura 2000 plan it is indeed complicated to find a way to combine management measures, which are essential for the maintenance of habitats and species of Community interest in a favourable conservation status, with land uses and production activities existing in those areas.

To find viable solutions and to develop sustainable management practices is essential

to understand mechanisms and reasons of arising conflicts; they usually are of two different categories. It is rather complex to find a way to balance between management measures, necessary to maintain a sound habitat's conservation status and a satisfactory population level of species of Union interest, with other land uses and productive activities located in those areas. In order to find out practical solutions and to develop sustainable management practices, it is of pivotal importance to fully understand mechanisms and arising potential conflicts. They are normally falling in two major categories. In the first case the effective management of the site, with important challenges in order to balance "nature" needs with human activities, has the need to investigate innovative management solutions, in the

latter the real management measures put in place in the area. In this last case often problems arise because the landowners and / or so-called stakeholders fear of having, or have actually, very little influence on how a Natura 2000 site will be managed and therefore the feel excluded from the planning process and / or effective management of these areas.

In many years of management activities of Natura 2000 sites several publications have been produced, putting the emphasis on the aspects listed below, considered relevant in conflict resolution.

Communication.

In the management of Natura 2000 sites must be identified a management structure that ensures the participation of key stakeholders and interested parties in site's management

decisions. Since the early stages is essential the involvement and the dialogue based on an analysis of the needs of stakeholders. It should be also made a diverse communication strategy based on the needs and interests of different target groups.

Actual availability of funds. By the time management actions are proposed it should be certain the availability of sufficient financial incentives - targeted but flexible - to support the proposed measures or to change the practices commonly used.

Simplification of administrative procedures. The granting of permission and funding to stakeholders for management in Natura 2000 areas should follow simple, fast and efficient procedures, with clear guidelines and measures of well-balanced support.



Necessity of investing in knowledge and innovative practices. To assess the effects on biodiversity of different activities that are carried out at a site and in order to develop good management and / or identify effective mitigation measures is necessary to have last updated knowledge on the conservation status and ecological requirements of the habitats and species actually present in the area. It is also necessary to invest in innovation in order to have the chance to adopt intervention methods that reduce negative interactions with the natural environment as much as possible, and to develop technologies or innovative practices that are able to catch up with problems encountered. Below are the details of the main publications and guidelines realized referring to the topic "Natura 2000 and resolution of conflicts", all downloadable from the net:

- Bouwma. I.M., R. van Apeldoorn, D.A. Kamphorst, 2010. Current practices in solving multiple use issues of Natura 2000 sites: Conflict management strategies and participatory approaches. Alterra, Wageningen, the Netherlands.
- Alterra, Wageningen, the Netherlands, ECNC, 2010. 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
- ECNC, 2010. Summary Workshop Report Conflict management in the Natura 2000 network.
- Alterra, Wageningen, the Netherlands, ECNC, 2010. Natura 2000 - Addressing conflicts and promoting benefits. European Commission
- LIFE Focus / LIFE-Nature: communicating with stakeholders and the general public - Best practice examples for Natura 2000
- Community Environment and Silverback, 2014. COMMUNICATING NATURA 2000. Manual for Public Administrations. Project Life Farenait.

The implementation of the Natura 2000 network is not yet fully realized in our country, but many regions have recently made significant progress, and it is essential that people with managerial responsibility are provided with expertise, time and resources to carry out this work in a flexible and transparent way; efforts and investment put in place will produce significant results (including economic) and lead to more sustainable results for Natura 2000 and for society in general. ■

Managing Natura 2000: good practices of Life projects

Natura 2000 network is now well established throughout the European Union. There are over 27,000 sites included in the network of Community importance areas, for a total of over one million square kilometers. This is an area equivalent to 18% of the entire territory of the EU, which represents a significant contribution in achieving the objectives set by the EU in relation to the European Strategy for Biodiversity towards 2020. In order to more and more make clear the important role of this huge network of protected areas, on May 21, 2014 was celebrated the *European Day for Natura 2000* in all EU member states (see. <http://www.natura2000day.eu>). May 21 is indeed a very significant date for the environment in the EU: on this day, 22 years ago, Habitats Directive was approved, and with it (in conjunction with the implementation of the Birds Directive) an ambitious project was launched, the only one of this kind in the global network of protected areas across the continent. Just as unique is the simultaneous creation of a financial instrument aimed at the implementation of these directives, as well as providing practical support to all member countries of the Union, to allow the system to grow and to be effective. This tool is now well known to insiders, it is cal-



led LIFE. Not by chance LIFE had also the leading role at the peak of the Natura 2000 European day, the *European Natura 2000 Award*: an award established this year by the European Commission in order to underline the efforts of all who worked to ensure the management of this network of protected areas. The same initiative of a European day for Natura 2000 was launched just last year as part of a LIFE Information and Communication project. This is the Spanish project *Activa Red Natura 2000* (LIFE11 INF / ES / 000 665), which goal was in fact to promote a better understanding of the topic among all European citizens. The project is an excellent example of the demonstration value of good practices under-



A by-effect of good practices in Life projects is also the protection of endemic species of conservation interest not directly defended by the Habitats Directive. Above: Gigaro mangiamosche Cuckoopint (*Helicodiceros muscivorus*) endemic species of Sardinia. Left: *Chilostoma cingulatum apuanum* an Apuan Alps endemic snail. Photo: E. Calvario

taken through this financial instrument. It is a matter of fact that Natura 2000 network, despite the undoubted importance for the preservation of the natural environment from which our well-being fully depends, is not yet sufficiently known by the public. Nevertheless, it is clear that a greater awareness towards these policies can help to better understand the actions necessary to ensure the proper management of these areas and the ecosystem services they provide us, while continuing to keep this natural heritage available to citizens. The event (the LIFE day) has been very successful, and was actively attended by 18 member countries, with thousands of images sent by the citizens to show their appreciation for policies related to Natura 2000, and in particular the application of 163 projects candidates for the award.

No Italian project was among the winners, but among the 20 finalists a very special one was selected: it is the project Monte Cristo 2010 (LIFE08 NAT / IT / 000 353) aimed at the elimination of some non-native species from two islands of Tuscan Archipelago,



A picture taken during the "Montecristo 2010" Life project aimed to eradicate different alien species including the *Ailanthus*. Photo: Giannini.

Source: http://www.montecristo2010.it/media_dettaglio.asp?C=0810360AOT2359026094

LIFE for social

The contribution of LIFE projects to the management of alien species in the Natura 2000 network is well recognized. There are in fact hundreds of projects funded for this purpose. Among them, however, there is one that stands out from the others for its contribution to innovation in the social sector: it is the BRIGHT Portuguese project (LIFE10 NAT / PT / 000075) aimed at the recovery of habitats threatened by invasive alien plants. The innovation, that earned widespread recognition and high visibility even in the media, was its social commitment. For this purpose control activities and threatened habitat conservation have been carried out by the project staff in collaboration with a team of 7 inmates of the Coimbra regional prison. As a demonstration of the rehabilitation value of this collaboration, the inmate who first finished serving his sentence had the opportunity to join the project team full time.

Montecristo and Pianosa. Insiders will probably remember the great success of the international conference held at the end of the project, but there are also other important credits. The problem of biological invasions, one of the greatest threats to global biodiversity, is strongly felt in the European Union, this is clearly demonstrated by the speed with which an "ad hoc" regulation it has been recently adopted, in order to prevent the introduction and to manage the presence of alien species in the member states in a more efficient and coordinated way. LIFE projects have historically been pioneers in this field, launching pilot projects and being confronted on the ground with the problems that most characterize the direct intervention on alien species, ranging from the need to develop methodologies and technologies to the intrinsic difficulties in the management of the public opinion poorly sensitive to the phenomenon of biological invasions. The 2010 Montecristo project, had the great merit of demonstrating that it is possible to significantly improve the conservation status of a species with the removal of an alien predator. In this case, following eradication of the black rat (*Rattus rattus*), the reproductive success of an important population of Manx shearwater (*Puffinus yelkouan*), once reduced to zero, rose to 90%. Even if the Montecristo project was not awarded on the occasion of the *European Day for Natura 2000*, it drew a lot of attention on the issue and has already stimulated similar initiatives (see the *Puffinus Tavolara* LIFE project, LIFE12 NAT / IT

/000 416).

Glancing at LIFE projects winners of the *European Natura 2000 Award*, which has been praised for showing the value of Natura 2000 for communities and local economies, and noting the large variety of activities carried out within the European network of protected areas.

During a special ceremony hosted by European Commissioner for Environment, Janez Potočnik, which took place in Brussels, 5 projects related to different categories: conservation, socio-economic benefits, communication, interests reconciliation, networking and cross-border cooperation won the award. Award winner in the "conservation" section was the BSPS LIFE + SAVE THE RAPTORS about the imperial eagle (*Aquila heliaca*) in Bulgaria (LIFE12 NAT / BG / 000 572). Monitoring activities carried out within the project have shown that populations of this species in danger of extinction were threatened by electrocution due to the impact of these raptors with power lines. The project has shown that by isolating a few hundred pylons, at a cost of just €50 each, it was possible to reduce the mortality rate of this species to zero. Another example of a pioneering effort supported by the project, that contribute to increase the imperial eagle population by 20%, was the signing of a "memorandum" agreement between the Bulgarian society for the protection of birds, beneficiary of the project, and the EVN company managing the distribution of electricity. In addition, the project started a cooperation with the Mi-

nistry of Agriculture to introduce new agri-environmental measures in the rural development program, aimed at stimulating farmers to convert arable land into grassland, environment necessary for the survival of the main prey of the imperial eagle, the Souselik (rodents like ground-squirrels). Similarly, the Belgian project "3Water" on the ecological recovery of wetlands (LIFE08 NAT / B / 000036), winner of the "reconciliation" section was awarded for its success in the difficult attempt to bring together a large number of different stakeholders, inviting them to dialogue with the common purpose of supporting the Natura 2000 network in name of the mutual respect, and thereby reconcile the positions of political and socio-economic conflicting forces. Also the STIPA project on pastoralism in Transylvania, Romania (LIFE09 NAT / RO / 000618), winner in the 'socio-economic benefits' section has successfully demonstrated how the Natura 2000 network can give a boost to the local economy in the name of environment protection. By working together with farmers, institutions and local communities, the project has improved the state of conservation of grasslands in the long term through demonstration activities

focusing on the provision of incentives for good management: in practice agri-environmental measures have been successfully proposed, in force since 2012, and sustainable activities have been promoted, giving voice to hundreds of thousands of small business owners.

But awards aside, concerning LIFE projects Italy was certainly not outdone. E. g., the approach of LIFE Romanian described above is similar to what is planned as part of the recently launched LIFE WIMINE (LIFE12 NAT / IT / 001122) focuses on an integrated approach to the conservation of salt marshes in the Venice lagoon. To oppose the rapid disappearance of these habitats, the project aims to involve local communities and key stakeholders that due to their link to the territory and to the knowledge of its dynamics, will ensure the long-term results, through the implementation of small interventions of bioengineering

with low environmental impact. This informational approach should promote sustainable local economic development activities aimed at stimulating new local employments.

The experience promoted by LIFE projects allowed to prepare the ground for even more ambitious initiatives, such as the implementation of PAFs (*Prioritised Action Framework*), or the documents of national and regional economic planning – also provided for Habitats Directive – necessary to define the framework of priority actions for Natura 2000. The PAFs play an essential role for the future launch of the Natura 2000 network at the local level, as they have the task of linking conservation measures to financing instruments, and therefore to help national and regional authorities responsible for the Natura 2000 management in choices



Several Life projects faced the issue of pasture as closely related to the management of habitats of Community interest. Among these the Life "Stipa" on pastoralism in Transylvania. There are several on-line contributions and guidelines on this subject. Photo: E. Calvario

to be made in order to better invest in this network. These tools are therefore an integral part of the EU programme 2014-2020 precisely because their purpose is to ensure greater efficiency and effectiveness in the impact of EU funds. It is not surprising that one of the main changes introduced in the new LIFE programme 2014-2020, is the new tool of “integrated projects”, intended to be the ideal catalysts for the development of large-scale projects and to integrate the various European financial instruments in order to achieve environmental objectives, including the preservation of biodiversity. In the “nature” sector these integrated projects, aimed above all at national and regional authorities responsible for the management of Natura 2000, will be the reference financial instrument designed for the implementation of this kind of planning, and therefore will require as a prerequisite precisely the existence of PAFs. This strategy should meet the need to cover the nearly 6 billion Euros per year estimated as necessary for the management of Natura 2000 network in Europe, and - in ideal situations - would be desirable to obtain the 75% of which from the European Commission, through the various financial instruments (Structural Funds, CAP, LIFE, etc.). For this purpose, since 2011, the LIFE tender notices provided for the possibility of financing projects for management and restoration programmes under Natura 2000, for preparing concrete and operating measures on the basis of PAF strategic approach. This is

an opportunity directed primarily to the authorities responsible for the sites management, so that they could benefit in the task of preparing PAFs and move

to their implementation, precisely in view of the launch of the integrated projects.

In Italy, as in other EU countries, LIFE projects focused on the PAFs were funded. In Lombardy, for example, through the project MANAGE *Development of a strategy for managing the Natura 2000 network in Lombardy* (LIFE11 NAT / IT / 000044) pilot actions have been funded to contribute to the development of national and regional PAFs. One of the most innovative elements is the assessment of ecosystem services and the analysis of green jobs linked to Natura 2000, as well as the consideration in ensuring that nature conservation is well integrated with other sectors (fishing, tourism, transport, energy, etc.). Even in Trentino Region, the TEN *Trentino Ecological Network* (LIFE11 NAT / IT / 000187) project aims to plan management and long-term recovery of the Natura 2000 network of competence of the Autonomous Province of Trento. In this case, the programmatic approach to the base of the operational decisions at the various levels of government involved (competent administrative authorities, and economic groups concerned, such as farmers and tour operators) is founded on the principles of subsidiarity, responsibility, participation and integration. Even in this case the importance of socio-economic development projects based on the ecosystem services of Natura 2000 has been emphasized. All in order to ensure the development of action plans for Natura 2000 sites (divided into homogeneous areas), and the quantification of long-term ma-



agement costs useful for the definition of a regional PAF. Another important example comes from the region of Sicily, that funded the project SPIN4LIFE, *SPIN Strategy for the implementation of Natura 2000 in Sicily* (LIFE12 NAT / IT / 000370). On this island, the largest in the Mediterranean Sea, over 200 Natura 2000 sites are located, covering 25% of the region territory. Even in this island the main actions aim at the revision and updating of the PAF through a multitude of activities, including the analysis of green jobs associated with the regional Natura 2000 network, the identification of a proposal to create new incentives, the evaluated costs associated with conservation measures for the N2000 network and the analysis of funds available at EU and national level, the working out of a policy document for regional N2000 network management, and - essential in such incisiveness projects - the implementation of a strategic communication plan for the next decade. Moreover, a rather innovative element in this kind of project was the attention to the potential contribution that can be offered to mitigation and adaptation to climate change at the regional level.

In conclusion, it is worth to point out that in addition to having always had a European primacy in terms of LIFE projects number and of funding amount received, Italy stood out in Europe for the wealth of experience accumulated and made available to those personally committed to the development of policies to protect the environment and in particular of nature conservation activities. The appointment is for the next *European Day for Natura 2000*, scheduled on May 21, 2015, with the hope of a more and more large participation of Italian LIFE projects and of their loads of innovative experiences and best practices to export to Europe and to the world. ■



The eradication of alien species constitutes one of the most common actions in Life projects since their presence is one of the most significant threats to native biodiversity. Recently, the European Commission approved a regulation including rules for preventing and managing the release of these species (see news on page 15). Above on page 4: *Alternanthera philoxeroides* (Alligator weed). Photo: S. Sarrocco. Above right: Red shrimp of Louisiana (*Procambarus clarkii*). Photo: E. Calvario. Above: Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*) in hatching. Photo: E. Calvario

A LIFE + project for the evaluation of ecosystem services

The first Italian project to develop new ways of environmental governance designed to protect agro-ecosystems



The approach proposed by the project "Making Good Nature" LIFE + 11 ENV / IT / 000 168, with a duration of 4 years (2012-2016) and included in the LIFE + component "Environmental Policy and Governance" is indeed very significant; it focuses the attention on so-called "ecosystem services" that can be seen as natural public goods, which are the basis of many of the essential services on which depends our society: the availability of drinking water, the fertility of the soil, food supply, carbon absorption and crop pollination, regulation of floods, drought but also the benefits of recreational, spiritual, religious and other non-material benefits.

As defined by the "Millennium Ecosystem Assessment" the most extensive and detailed systematization of knowledge acquired to date on the status of the world's ecosystems, ecosystem functions have been divided into 4 main categories:

- **Supporting:** these functions include all the facilities necessary for the production of all other ecosystem services and contributes to the conservation (in situ) of biological and genetic diversity and evolutionary processes.
 - **Regulating:** in addition to maintaining the health and functioning of ecosystems, the regulatory functions include many other services both direct and indirect benefits to humans (such as climate stabilization, recycling of waste), not usually recognized up to the moment in which they are lost or degraded;
 - **Provisioning:** these functions include all resource's supply that natural and semi-natural ecosystems provide for (oxygen, water, food, etc.).
 - **Cultural:** natural ecosystems provide for essential "consultation function" and contribute to the maintenance of human health by providing opportunities for reflection, spiritual enrichment, cognitive development, recreation and aesthetic experiences.
- These ecosystem functions enclose the goods and services used by human society to meet their own well-being.

The 26 project actions can be synthesized as follows:

1. Processing of a demonstration model for assessing ecosystem services in pilot sites.
2. Processing of a demonstration model of governance of the pilot sites based on self-financing.
3. Setting up of WebGIS software for the evaluation and quantification of ecosystem services.
4. Publication of a manual for the implementation of the governance model.
5. Organization of public communication events to spread the project activities.



The Project Life MGN involves 21 Natura 2000 sites with a total area of over 90,000 hectares.

The project's main objective is to assign a quantitative value in biophysical terms to some ecosystem services, making available to directors of Natura 2000 sites a tool based on WebGIS technology for the management of territorial data, in order to quantify the benefits they provide that unlike tourism and recreational facilities, are off the market. The initiative involves 21 Natura 2000 sites with a total area of over 90,000 hectares, well representing the high ecosystem and socio-economic diversity in the Italian context, both through the involvement of seven regions (Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Emilia Romagna, Marche, Lombardy and Sicily), and the coverage of the three biogeographical regions in Italy: Alpine, Mediterranean and Continental. The project is implemented by a working group formed by the University Consortium CURSA as the project leader, the European Academy of Bolzano EURAC, WWF Italy, WWF Research and Projects, the Pollino National Park, the National Park of Cilento and Vallo Diano, the natural Park of Sasso Simone and Simoncello, the Sicilian Region and the Region of Lombardy, the Agency for Services to Agriculture and Forestry of Lombardy ERSAF, the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture.

Finally the project include in this budget, and this is the most innovative aspect, legal and economic mechanisms for the compensation of "stakeholders" that protect ecosystem services.

Life + MGN wants to apply a governance model based on the identification of participatory methodologies that implement the payment for ecosystem services (PES) and self-financing (e.g., tradable permits, fees for the use of services, Verified Emission Reduction for CO2 absorption, businesses, donations, etc.), useful for site managers to remedy the lack of resources for the conservation of biodiversity.

Technically, the term PES refers to a voluntary transaction in which a specific ecosystem service (or a type of land use that ensures the supply) is sold by at least one seller to at least one buyer if and only if the provider of that service will ensure supply itself (conditionality). In current use PES is an umbrella name that covers a wide range of incentives and market mechanisms to convert non-market environmental values into real financial incentives for local stakeholder, to ensure that by voluntary certification, good practices and environmental communication, they promote and support the maintenance of the multiple ecological functions provided by biodiversity and natural capital.

A concrete example of PES (one of the first) is the agreement freely signed by the municipal company for the provision of water services in the city of New York and forest owners of the catchment basin. Under this agreement the owners have committed themselves to manage their forests according to a specific forest management program compatible with the maintenance of the water flow downstream quality and quantity constant over time. The compensation for the maintenance of ecosystem service (drinking water) supplied to the urban population by forest managers are paid through a surcharge on water tariff, which is remitted by last users. The programme implementation allowed a partial cost savings on 6-9 billion dollars needed to set up treatment plants, which would anyhow be paid by the community, assuring forest owners of an annual flow and steady income.

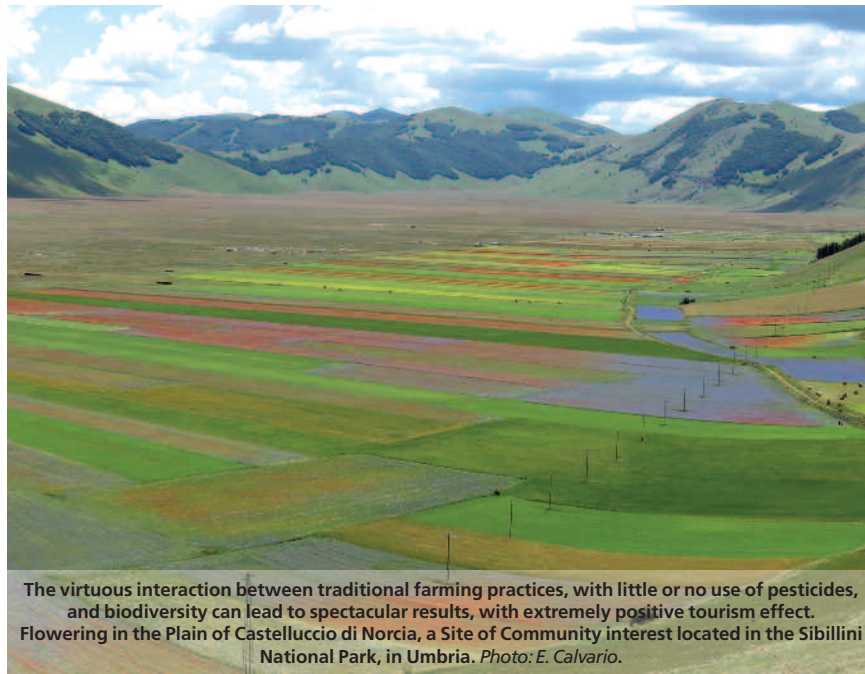
PES can thus be a tool for effective management of natural resources that allows to internalize environmental costs and benefits in decision-making through a voluntary contractual transaction between the supplier and the buyer of a particular ecosystem service (or of a specific management soil) so as to make sure the same service at the same time ensuring high levels of quality of the landscape.

For more information and updates visit the project website:

<http://www.lifemgn-serviziecosistemici.eu/IT/home/Pages/default.aspx>

Agriculture and biodiversity: a possible coexistence

Agriculture and nature conservation have historically an ambivalent relationship. On the one hand livestock and farming practices led to a radical transformation of natural habitats, contributing to loss of biodiversity, such as in the case of reclamation of wetlands, on the other hand were decisive in the creation of semi-natural habitats among the richest of biodiversity, as in the case of rice fields or secondary pastures in the Alps and the Apennines. Two major changes in agricultural practices have upset the balance between agriculture and biodiversity: the intensification of production and the under-utilization of land. Furthermore, pollution from agricultural sources (e. g. excessive use of nutrients or chemicals) had significant direct and indirect negative effects on biodiversity. The main agricultural practices that have a negative impact on biodiversity are: the unsustainable use of fertilizers and plant protection products; the replacement of traditional practices by mechanical systems; the specialization of production systems and intensification of certain practices (abandonment of mixed cropping systems and cereals growing in the pastures); reducing the number of species and varieties used; the conversion of natural ecosystems to agriculture; land consolidation (oversizing of land with disappearance of field margins, hedges and ditches); reclamation and irrigation (especially when dimensions are not suitable for environmental conditions as in the case of over-exploitation of ground water or streams). The evolution of farming in Europe has helped however, in some cases, also to enrich biodiversity. Over the centuries it has been created a real symbiosis between agricultural practices and ecosystems or particular species, the maintenance of which in a favourable conservation status depends on the continuation of certain agricultural practices. Numerous scientific studies clearly prove the link between certain agricultural practices and the richness of biodiversity found in traditional



The virtuous interaction between traditional farming practices, with little or no use of pesticides, and biodiversity can lead to spectacular results, with extremely positive tourism effect. Flowering in the Plain of Castelluccio di Norcia, a Site of Community interest located in the Sibillini National Park, in Umbria. Photo: E. Calvario.

European farming systems. In certain areas special ecosystems and habitats, with semi-natural areas and a mosaic of cultivated fields bordered by hedges and ditches have been created and maintained, providing shelter or food to many species of flora, fauna and micro-fauna. If on the one side thus intensifying crop affects many areas of the European territory, on the other side in Eastern Europe and in some remote areas of Western Europe (such as the Italian Alps and Apennines) problems about the impact on biodiversity are mainly related to the decline of farmed areas or traditionally used for grazing. The gradual marginalization of farmland and its abandonment, particularly in certain areas where the conditions for practicing agriculture are particularly difficult, lead to an impoverishment of ecosystems that are highly dependent on the continuation of agricultural activities. In some circumstances, however, the abandonment of farming may prove to be a positive factor for biodiversity, such as in the case of the conservation of wetlands, steppes, bogs and meadows of the ecosystem. The strategic importance of agriculture for biodiversity conservation is confir-

med by EU “Habitats” (92/43 / EEC) and “Birds” (2009/147 / EC) directives, which identified the rural areas as Sites of Community Interest and Special Protection Areas indicating “priority” habitats created and maintained by agricultural activities. The need to reduce the pressures of intensive agriculture on biodiversity and maintain traditional agricultural practices, usually in remote areas, to conserve biodiversity and landscape, relates environmental sustainability with economic sustainability of Italian and European agriculture. This applies more in some EU member states such as Italy, characterized by the presence of small farms (in our country the average size of farms in terms of UAA - utilised agricultural area, is only 8 hectares, compared with 24 in Spain, 46 in Germany, 52 hectares of France, 54 in the UK, 60 in Denmark and 89 in the Czech Republic). In Italy, only 7% of farms has over 20 hectares of UAA, but produces 60% of Italian agricultural income. The high biodiversity of agroecosystems depends in part on the structure and size of farms, the smallest promote crop diversification and complexity of the spatial mosaic, but turn out to be the most vulne-

rable to market dynamics, with a very weak economic sustainability.

Environmental challenges related to agriculture, such as biodiversity conservation or the contrast of climate change and maintaining in the territories of small businesses, including the recognition of their role in monitoring and maintenance of ecosystem services through the positive externalities of traditional cultural practices, were some of the guiding principles of the latest reforms of CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) of the European Union since 2000 until today. Even in the last reform that redefined the CAP for the period 2014 - 2020, biodiversity conservation by reducing the pressures of farming and livestock and the contrast of the abandonment of marginal rural areas, remains one of the strategic objectives of the main European financial instrument of agricultural support.

The new CAP for 2014-2020 maintains the two pillars but reinforces the synergies and links between them. More specifically, it introduces a new organization of direct payments, more focused, more equitable and more "green" (new EU regulation no. 1307/2009 on direct payments to farmers), as well as a stronger safety net and a reinforced rural development (new EU regulation no. 1305/2013 on rural development). The single farm payment will be replaced by a system of payments with seven multi-functional components: 1) a basic payment per hectare; 2) a "green" element, in form of additional support in compensation for the costs associated with the provision of environmental public goods not remunerated by the market; 3) an additional payment to young farmers for five years; 4) a redistributive payment to strengthen the support for the first hectares of a farm; 5) additional support to incomes in areas with specific natural constraints; 6) support joined to production granted to certain areas or

types of agriculture for economic or social reasons; 7) a simplified system for small farmers. The first three components are mandatory for member states, while the last four are optional. Member States must assign 30% of their national allocation for direct payments to the financing of the green component, the so-called "greening". The remaining 70% will be used to finance part of basic payments, reserved only for

interest "of at least 5% of the arable land for the companies whose arable land is more than 15 hectares (excluding permanent grassland and permanent crops), or wasteland on board fields, hedges, trees, fallow land, landscape features, habitats, buffer zones, areas covered by afforestation, land with nitrogen-fixing crops; this figure could rise to 7% following a Commission report in 2017 and a legislative proposal.

The agro-ecosystems are special habitats for several bird species of Community interest including marine jay (*Coracia garrulus*) that often nests in the wall cavity of farmhouses. Photo: E. Calvario



To avoid penalizing farmers who already care about the environment and sustainability, a system is provided for "equivalent greening", whereby it is considered that the implementation of green practices already in existence complies with these basic requirements. The compliance provisions are confirmed and simplified, subordinating the disbursement of direct payments to the respect by farmers of the statutory management requirements (SMRs), which include community, national and regional rules, on environment, public health, animal welfare, plant and animal health and rules for maintaining the land in good agricultural and environmental conditions (GAEC). The statutory management criteria include the requirements for compliance with the rules to protect

Natura 2000 network, for the protection of groundwater by dangerous pollutants, for the sustainable use of sewage sludge in agriculture, for the protection of water from nitrates of agricultural origin. If compliance rules are not respected by the farmer, direct payments to which he would be entitled are partially reduced or even completely suppressed. The new regulations confirm that the Water Framework Directive and the Directive on the sustainable use of pesticides will be incorporated into the compliance system as soon as the Member States have been shown to apply them properly and have been clearly determined obligations for farmers.

active farmers (as defined by each Member State). The greening extent, as required by the Rules, is mandatory and the failure to comply with environmental requirements will entail sanctions. Together with greening three key measures are planned:

- crop diversification: the farmer must cultivate at least two different crops if the arable land is more than 10 hectares and at least three crops if the arable land is more than 30 hectares; the main crop can occupy a maximum of 75% of the arable land and the two main crops not more than 95%;
- the conservation of permanent grassland;
- the maintenance of an " area of ecological

In the new CAP, rural development policy has been strengthened and confirmed as the second pillar. The reform was intended to improve the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector, to strengthen the links between the core business and the environment, to improve the quality of life in rural areas, to stimulate cooperation and innovation and encourage diversification of economy in rural communities. To ensure the sustainable development of rural areas, the second pillar of CAP should focus on six priorities:

1. transfer of knowledge and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas;
2. farm profitability, competitiveness of all types of agriculture in all regions and promotion of new agricultural technologies and sustainable management of forests;
3. organization of the food chain, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture;
4. restoration, protection and enhancement of ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry;
5. promotion of efficient use of resources and transition to a low-carbon economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors;
6. promotion of social inclusion, poverty

reduction and economic development in rural areas.

Between 2014-2020 Italy will have resources of over 10 billion euro made available by the EAFRD. At least 30% of the rural development funds should be allocated to measures relating to the protection of biodiversity, organic farming, soil management and fight against climate change, and at least 5% for the Leader approach. Their activation in this sense depends on setting and contents of the Regional Rural Development Programmes (RDP), whose jurisdiction is attributed to the regions. And it is preferred that the actions planned under the availability resulting from the RDP measures are integrated and complementary with resources related to other EU Funds (ERDF, ESF, EMFF) within the PAF (*Prioritised Action Framework*), the instrument voluntary proposed by the European Commission for Natura 2000 funding. EAFRD provides for a number of measures specifically committed to the protection of biodiversity, and others that may indirectly contribute to this goal. Article 7 of the Regulations provides that Member States may include within their rural development programmes thematic sub-program-

mes addressed to specific needs. Annex IV of the Regulation includes an indicative list of measures and types of operations of particular relevance for each thematic sub-programme.

Article 28 of the Regulations is dedicated to the "agri-climate-environment payments" this measure allows to fund specific commitments required to farmers deemed functional to implementation of programmes for the conservation of habitats and species, also outside Natura 2000 sites for which there is a specific provision (Art.30), and to change agricultural and livestock practices not stimulated by other rural development measures. The most effective activation of this measure may be performed within the agri-environmental agreements of area.

Article 30 of the Rule is dedicated to the "Natura 2000 compensations and compensations linked to the Water Framework Directive". Support under this measure is granted annually per hectare of agricultural area or per hectare of forest in order to cover additional costs and loss of income due to the constraints arising in the areas concerned, by the application of Directive 92/43 / EEC and Directive 2009/147 / EC and the Water Framework Directive. Sup-



The agro-ecosystems managed in a careful biodiversity with their network of paths and lanes running between one property and another are a great opportunity to undertake activities related to leisure and nature tourism. Photo: E. Calvario

port to farmers in relation to Directives 92/43 / EEC and 2009/147 / EC is granted only for the constraints imposed by the requirements that go beyond good agricultural and environmental condition under Cross Compliance. This measure is of particular interest for the implementation of Natura 2000 sites conservation programmes, because allows the partial compensation of specific limitations to agricultural and / or livestock activities in relation to conservation measures. The limit that per-

sists in Regulation 2014 - 2020 is the payment to surface based exclusively on the principle of compensation for the extra costs or loss of income.

The Article 35 of the Regulations deals with the subject of "cooperation". The support is granted in order to encourage all forms of cooperation between at least two parties, in particular the relations of cooperation between various stakeholders in the agricultural sector, in the forestry sector and in the food chain, and other stakeholders who

contribute to implement the objectives and priorities of rural development policy. This measure can be activated to support the promotion and management of agro-environment agreements in the area.

An analysis of the first financial data relating to the measures of funding provided for Natura 2000 areas in the field of rural development programmes 2014-2020, notified by Italy to the European Commission on July 22, 2014, shows the picture illustrated in the table.

Table 1. Comparison of the amounts allocated to measures dedicated to Natura 2000 by EAFRD (rural development) planning during the periods 2014-2020 and 2007-2013. Source: National Rural Network (data on RDP transmitted to the EC July 22, 2014).

Code	Description	2014-2020	2007-2013	Difference	Variation %
M8	Investments in the development of forest areas and improvement of profitability of forests	756,2	1.421,6	-665,35	-46,8%
M7	Basic services and village renewal in rural areas	317,2	446,1	-128,95	-28,9%
M13	Compensation to areas under natural constraints or other specific constraints	698,0	730,6	-32,59	-4,5%
M19	Support for local development LEADER	640,9	652,7	-11,79	-1,8%
M3	Quality systems for agricultural products and foodstuffs	95,2	91,3	3,96	4,3%
M14	Animal welfare	197,6	190,3	7,28	3,8%
M15	Forestry and environmental services Climate. Forest protection	31,9	18,5	13,40	72,3%
M9	Establishment of associations and organization of products	25,2	-	25,22	100,0%
M1	Knowledge transfer and information actions	134,9	104,4	30,46	29,2%
M20	Technical assistance	243,3	196,7	46,56	23,7%
M12	Natura 2000 compensation and payments linked to the Water Framework Directive	66,7	16,9	49,82	295,0%
M5	Restoring agricultural production potential damaged by natural disasters and catastrophic events	124,1	73,1	51,05	69,8%
M10-M11	Payments agro-climate-environmental and organic farming	2.086,4	1.967,8	118,57	6,0%
M6	Development of farms and businesses	843,1	707,9	135,25	19,1%
M2	Consulting services, relief and assistance to the management of farms	218,2	47,5	170,73	359,6%
M16	Cooperation	359,8	101,7	258,12	253,8%
M4	Investments in tangible assets	3.022,8	2.159,6	863,20	40,0%



The management and maintenance of the water network within agricultural systems is essential but requires great attention to the naturalistic aspects; often the practice of implementation reveal very high concern about the conservation of habitats and species of Community interest. Several guidelines and examples of good practice in solving the conflict are available online. Photo: E. Calvario

In particular, as regards to "Natura 2000 compensation" measure that is certainly an important indicator of the degree of integration between rural development and Natura 2000, has to be taken into account that it has been proposed by 15 regions / autonomous provinces on 21. For period 2014-2020 total budget is of € 66.7 million, with an increase of approximately € 50 million compared to the previous planning, and it will be used for the effective management of SPAs and SCIs / SACs network.

The significant increase in resources compared to the previous planning (+295%) is certainly due to the simplifications of the new Community regulation and the constant support and "awareness" activity that has been carried out at various institutional levels (e.g. by the Joint Committee on Biodiversity), to promote the adoption of this measure and, more generally, strengthening governance of Natura 2000. Other measures of interest are:

- **Agro-environment-climate payments: with € 2 billion** of financing and include environmental interventions also for the management of Natura 2000 areas, but not exclusively;
- **Cooperation: with € 360 million**, includes

also area agro-environmental agreements.

The implementation of CAP measures functional to the biodiversity conservation in the last two planning periods (2000-2006 and 2007-2013) allowed to acquire data and information on best good practices replicable by applying measures of the new CAP (see website).

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/best_practice_en.htm

The European Commission has promoted a number of specific research in this direction as the European Report "How species conservation can be supported through Rural Development Programmes", that pre-

sents examples of good practices on how to support the conservation of 12 species of EU Directives "Habitats" and "Birds", through the implementation of measures of the rural development programmes. http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/species_report.pdf.

Another review of good practices for the implementation of measures for the conservation of biodiversity in the context of the RDP is available in a document produced under the Italian project "LIFE Farenait" dedicated to the role of agriculture in the management of the Natura 2000 network. www.lamiaterravale.it. ■

Agricultural practices do not always take into proper consideration the natural elements such as hedges, rows and riparian strips. Often the land works come close to the shores with the total elimination of the riparian strip that, besides protecting from erosion, would be a valuable "buffer" to avoid / limit the introduction of pesticides used in the water body. Even in this case several guidelines and examples of good practice to solve the conflict are available online. Photo: E. Calvario



"Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their services (MAES)". Outcomes of the EU Conference held on 22 May 2014 in Brussels

The European Commission, for more two years, set a course, managed by ad hoc working groups involving the Member States, to support the process of achieving the target of the "European Strategy for Biodiversity 2020", including the ecosystem mapping and their services, a necessary step in the implementation of the Strategy itself, which provides, among others, for the following target (Target n. 2): "By 2020, preserving and enhancing ecosystems and their services through the green infrastructure and the restoration of at least 15% of degraded ecosystems."

The Ministry of Environment, for the implementation of the process called "Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their Services (MAES)" on the territory of our country, availed itself of the collaboration of University and Scientific Societies (Italian Botanical Society and Italian zoological Union), by specific agreements.

In Italy we have a good knowledge base of data and maps, but we need a methodology able to use this information to chart and define the state of ecosystems and their services within our national territory, in close relationship with the guidelines and the analytical framework developed by Eu and Maes Working Group. The main difficulty in implementing these guidelines is due to the complex ecosystem heterogeneity present in Italy.

The process provides for four main actions, for which information about the implementation in our country are provided:

1) **Mapping of ecosystems.** A "Cartography of Italian Ecosystems" in scale 1: 100,000, with 90 legend classes and with 36 types of forest ecosystems, has been created through integration and interpolation of the Corine Land Cover with potential natural vegetation, and with information of bioclimatic and biogeographical type.

2) **Assessment of ecosystem condition.** The assessment of the conservation status of each ecosystem and certain environmental units is in progress within our national territory. The potential natural vegetation has been adopted as a reference model and some specific parameters have been selected, such as naturalness, artificiality (hemeroby index), coverage and spatial configuration of different ecosystems

3) **Identification of ecosystem services.** The assessment of ecosystem services has been identified for 5 ecosystem types nationally well-known as the beech forests, urban green, olive groves, lakes and meadows of Posidonia. And a preliminary test phase for the assessment of services of the "carbon stock" and "carbon sink" of forest ecosystems, and services related to the function of "nur-

sery" and "water supply" of volcanic lakes has been conducted.

4) **Ecosystem field assessment.** The relationship between the state of conservation of ecosystems and their ability to provide for services will be studied soon.

As part of this process on May 22, 2014 a high-level conference on the specific issue related to "Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their Services (MAES)", organized by the European Commission was held in Brussels, on the occasion of the International Day of biodiversity.

The conference was attended, along with the European Environment Commissioner Potočnik and three national ministers, by over 300 people belonging to the Commission from several DGs and the European Joint Research Centre JRC (responsible for MAES coordination between Member States), representatives of all European countries (plus Brazil, China, Bangladesh, Venezuela, Switzerland, Macedonia), of research, academia, IUCN, WWF and other NGOs. Various and numerous sectors represented: environment, agriculture, economy, industry, research and others.

In the context of the planned assistance to Member States by the Commission, the Conference had the purpose of presenting the technical-scientific work undertaken to date, both at European and national level, as part of the MAES process and to highlight the interest that the process plays from political, economic and social standpoint, through the contribution of significant stakeholders.

The intent of the conference was to prove as reliable and high-quality information on ecosystems present in an area, on their conservation status and on services able to contribute to a more effective protection of biodiversity.

The continuous degradation of ecosystems and of their ability to provide services is in fact deeply tied to a poor understanding of their contribution to human well-being.

The MAES process should therefore contribute to a better understanding of the close relationship between economics and natural capital, by promoting, through a sound scientific basis, the integration of biodiversity in all European sectorial policies.

Official information on the conference and recording of interventions in the plenary and thematic sessions are available on the Commission website:

<http://biodiversity.europa.eu/maes/high-level-conference-on-mapping-and-assessment-of-ecosystems-and-their-services-maes-in-europe>

The main messages conveyed by the Conference were the following:

1) MAES represents the starting point and is one of the main tools in the process of identification of the economic, financial, social and cultural development of the Natural Capital at European and national level;

2) MAES concretely prepares and follows changes of progressing development models (according to Biodiversity and Climate conventions, to agreements UN-Millennium Goals, and to European Union aquis), linking the ecosystem mapping and assessment of services arising from, not only to biodiversity conservation, but also, and especially, to new perspectives for employment and income;

3) MAES requires to make the best use of knowledge and data available in each country, promoting both the quality, sharing, updating and mapping of information and its spread and communication for the planning and management of territory at different administrative levels, through the active participation of people and for the promotion of new forms of economic development;

4) MAES aims to demonstrate the effectiveness of mapping and assessment of ecosystems and their services in planning and land management; Swedish case provides by 2018 for the legislative integration of mapping and ecosystem services in all economic activities linked to the territory such as infrastructure, industry, agriculture, forestry, tourism.

Within the Conference, Italy presented the "Charter of Ecosystems of Italy", produced by the Italian Botanical Society under the direction of Prof. Carlo Blasi; it represents the basic document essential for the implementation of the following stages of the process MAES at national level. The Charter and the covering presentation, illustrating basic knowledge, the methodological approach adopted, the results and their significance from MAES perspective, have been included in the official website Biodiversity Information System for Europe (BISE) in the MAES catalog of case studies, at the following address:

<http://biodiversity.europa.eu/maes/maes-catalogue-of-case-studies>



The image shows the "Charter of ecosystems in Italy" a valuable contribution made by the Italian Botanical Society, presented on May 22, 2014 in Brussels during the high-level Conference on "Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their Services (MAES)," organized by the European Commission, on the occasion of the International Day of Biodiversity. The map, scale 1: 100,000, covers the entire country with a spatial resolution of at least 15 hectares. It was achieved through the integration and interpolation of thematic layers of Corine Land Cover with those of the Charter of the potential natural vegetation and with bioclimatic and biogeographical data; provides 90 classes of legend, with 36 types of forest ecosystems testifying the great ecosystem wealth of our country.

Financing Natura 2000 and European Funds - Guidance and dedicated blog



Projects and actions of conservation and management concerning the marine and coastal environments, habitats and species associated with them, are one of the target to prefer in the use of European Structural Funds 2014-2020. Photo: E. Calvario

EU is committed to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the European Union by 2020. First of all the Commission made specific commitments to ensure that the funds available to the EU budget are not used to finance actions that may have negative impacts on biodiversity, and moreover, that budget is committed to actions that, on the whole, are favorable to the achievement of the objectives aiming to protect biodiversity. For this purpose, the Commission has developed a document entitled "Common Framework for Biodiversity proofing of the EU budget," which provides a guidance for the most appropriate use of the European Funds and includes general and specific guidelines relating to each Fund to be used by national and regional authorities, as well as by the services of the Commission. The document consists of the following parts, downloadable at:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/proofing.htm>

- Common Framework for Biodiversity proofing of the EU Budget - General Guidance
- Proofing Guidance for the Cohesion Policy Funds
- Proofing Guidance for the Common Agricultural Policy funds (EAGF and EAFRD)
- Proofing Guidance for the Connecting Europe Facility (TEN-E and TEN-T)
- Proofing Guidance for the European Ma-

ritime and Fisheries Fund

The guidance documents listed above constitute the update and continuation of the document entitled "Background Study towards biodiversity proofing of the EU budget," that examined the opportunities for financing actions in favor of biodiversity within the EU bud-

get and that was a structured attempt to ensure the use of tools to avoid or at least minimize harmful impacts on biodiversity resulting from the use of European funds and identifying mechanisms to maximize the benefits.

A tool just as useful in relation to the issue "Financing Natura 2000" is constituted by the blog called "Financing Natura 2000 about" which has been developed as part of a contract tendered by EU, serving as a platform for discussion in order to strengthen the use of European funds used or utilizable to implement Natura 2000 network, through the exchange of information and experien-

ces among the different actors / institutions / organizations involved and / or interested in the use of EU funds for the period 2014-2020. The goal is to convey information to promote the integration of issues relating to the conservation and management of biodiversity within the different EU funds, during the negotiation phase of the Operational Programmes, between the Member States and the European Commission. Within the blog there are also some interesting documents made available under the project "Strengthening the uptake of EU funds for Natura 2000" (ENV.B.3 / SER / 2012/2020), funded by the European Commission, available for download at:

<http://www.financingnatura2000.eu/about/documents/>, including:

- Kettunen, M., Torkler, P. and Rayment, M. (2014) Financing Natura 2000 Guidance Handbook. Part I - EU funding opportunities in 2014-2020, a publication commissioned by the European Commission DG Environment (June 2014).
- Kettunen, M., Green, S., McConville, A., Menadue, H., Newman, S., Poláková, J., Torkler, P. and Underwood, E. (2014) Financing Natura 2000 Guidance Handbook. Part II - Analysis of the Natura 2000 Management Measures eligible for financing in 2014-2020 a publication commissioned by the European Commission DG Environment (June 2014).



Online Handbook on compensation measures under the habitats Directive

Based on the experience gained over the years by the General Directorate for the Protection of Nature and Sea, by the Ministry of Environment as the Supervisory Authority for the Natura 2000 sites, An online Handbook on compensation measures under the habitats Directive has been prepared, serving as a useful reference and analysis of national level for operational and procedural steps of the procedure for impact Assessment, addressing in particular those that in Italy are implementing this special and important provision of the Habitats Directive, (extensor of incidence studies by institutions, companies and professionals, as well as assessors to the delegated competent authorities).

The publication is so configured as a tool for the specific purpose of making clearer and easier the eventual adoption of the measures provided for by compensation under art. 6.4 of the Habitats Directive. The publication points out a framework which, starting from the description of the characteristic features of Natura 2000, in European Union and in Italy, discussed in the first chapter, explains in the following two chapters the purpose and stages of the Impact Assessment. The meaning and definition of compensation measures, as well as the phases and documentation necessary to verify the results obtained, both in terms of substance and procedure are defined in chapters 4, 5 and 6.

The last chapter is the interpretation and guidance on the compiling of the individual items contained in the appropriate form for the transmission of information to the European Commission pursuant to art. 6, paragraph 4 of the Habitats Directive.

The file can be downloaded at the following address:

<http://www.minambiente.it/pagina/le-misure-di-compensazione-nella-direttiva-9243cee#sthash.7hx9KGS4.dpuf>

New European Regulation 1143/2014 on invasive alien species

The European Union approved a regulation to face the growing threat to biodiversity, constituted by the presence of so-called invasive alien species (non-native); this measure, published in the EU Official Journal on November 4, 2014, because of its legislative nature, does not require transposition by the member states, and will come into effect on January 1, 2015. Alien species, consisting of plants, animals, mushrooms and microorganisms have been transported as a result of human activities (voluntary or involuntary) through ecological barriers such as mountain chains or oceans, and settled in areas located outside their natural range of distribution. There are currently more than 12 000 alien species in Europe and, in the new environments colonized, some spread very rapidly to become "invasive alien species" (Invasive Alien Species - IAS), provoking significant damage to biodiversity, human health or economy; about 10-15% of alien species reaching Europe become invasive.

The Regulation is a crucial step towards achieving the objectives of protection ratified by the "Community Strategy for Biodiversity 2020" and is in line with the provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in order to establish rules to face threats caused by the presence of these species that determine an annual cost estimated at € 12 billion for health care expenses, police health control costs, loss of crop yield, loss of fish stocks, damage to infrastructure, damage to the navigability of the rivers and damage to protected species. The system will be based on a list of European Union interest species, to be developed with the Member States, based on accurate risk assessments and sound scientific evidence. This list will focus on species that cause the most serious damage. Italy has decisively contributed to change some of the rules contained in the first draft proposal of the European Commission, as the limit of 50 species, and achieved to include in the same Regulation the consideration of "national lists", that are lists of invasive species that member states of the European Union will be able to define.

For the effective functioning of the Regulations, will be set up at the European Commission a Committee that will define a preliminary list of invasive alien species for which all Member States should initiate appropriate actions. A mechanism for "early warning" it is also provided, where are identified new invasive species that need a quick reaction time to prevent its spread in the Union.

What will change following the adoption of the Regulation

- There will be a total ban on import, sale, breeding, cultivation, use, release of most problematic invasive alien species ("priority species").
- To enforce the ban, EU countries will have to organize border controls and introduce a surveillance system to detect prohibited species; will also have to implement measures to identify the species entering accidentally in Europe.
- If a EU country detects the presence of a prohibited species, must take immediate steps to stop its spread; will need everyone's help to identify the species and to report their presence to the authorities.
- The EU countries must take the necessary measures to control the species that are already widespread or that are spreading.

Document "Farming for Natura 2000"

The Commission has published on its website a new guidance document entitled "Farming for Nature 2000", that is a guide for the agricultural sector in order to achieve conservation objectives of Natura, based on experiences gained within the different Member States.

The document includes also five annexes dealing with the following issues

- Key habitat types of Community interest that depend on farm management.
- Main species of Community interest associated with the agro-ecosystems.
- Main habitats of Community interest that depend on agriculture in each Member State.
- Recommendations for the management of each habitat type in Annex I depending on farm management.
- Study cases related to agricultural management within Natura 2000 sites.

The document can be downloaded at the following website: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/FARMING%20FOR%20NATURA%202000-final%20guidance.pdf>

Communication Platform Natura 2000

The communication platform called "the Natura 2000 Good Practice Exchange" started by the Commission to promote the "networking" and the experience exchange between stakeholders from different sectors responsible for, or actively participating, to socio-economic activities or development projects within or close to Natura 2000 sites.

This tool should allow and facilitate actors operating in the different economic sectors to exchange information on the research for solutions to balance the objectives of nature conservation with economic development and to provide for examples of good practice (integrated management of Natura 2000 sites). Four mini sites have been developed specifically for this purpose (fisheries, tourism, forestry, coastal infrastructure).

<http://www.natura2000exchange.eu/>

The platform include the link for the "Update newsletter on the process of biogeographic seminars realized by European Centre for Nature Conservation (ECNC)". This newsletter is produced every two months with the aim of providing an overview of the progress made in the biogeographic Natura 2000 process.

It contains information about the developments of the activities related to Natura 2000 within each of the biogeographic regions, the latest news, networking events and links to other initiatives.

There is also the possibility to send news, projects, publications, events on Natura 2000 in order to promote them through the newsletter using the following email address: natura2000platform@ecnc.org

Federparchi conference on "Tourism in Protected Areas"

On 8 and 9 October 2014, a conference on "Tourism in Protected Areas", organized by Federparchi-Europarc Italy, Marche coordination and Marche region was held in Fabriano, in Marche region.

Indeed, Europarc Federation and Federparchi "centre of national environmental policies", recognized Marche region as virtuous territory in sustainable tourism. Within the region protected areas occupy 10% of the territory and are all certified ECST. And here, not by chance, was held the annual meeting to verify the implementation of the "European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (ECST)."

During the conference the first results of the Report "Development of a deepened analysis on the conservation status of habitats and species Natura 2000 according to the objectives of the ECST", made by Federparchi have been presented, following an agreement with the Ministry of environment and downloadable at this address <http://www.federparchi.it/pagina.php?id=36>.

The survey has been designed to highlight some aspects of the relationship between sustainable tourism and nature conservation within three National Parks in ongoing membership to the ECST (Appennino Tosco Emiliano, Alta Murgia, Gran Sasso Monti della Laga) and focused on possible conflict elements between tourist presence and protection of Natura 2000 sites, underlining both the initiatives carried out by Parks to face this issue and the measures identified in the planning tools adopted.

The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism is a methodological tool and a certification that allows better management of protected areas for the development of sustainable tourism.

The main task of the Charter is the cooperation between all parties concerned to develop a common strategy and an action plan for tourism development, based on a detailed analysis of the local situation. The goal is the protection of natural and cultural heritage and the continuous improvement of tourism management in the protected area in favour of environment, local people, businesses and visitors.

The ECST is coordinated by the EUROPARC Federation, which, with the support of the national sections of the federation (as Federparchi-Europarc Italy), manages the procedure of conferring the Charter membership to protected areas and coordinates the network of certified areas.

NATURA 2000 Italia informa

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THIS NEWSLETTER IS AVAILABLE IN ITALIAN AND IN ENGLISH.

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[&m=Rete_Natura_2000.html|Documenti_di_riferimento.html](#)

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GRAPHIC DESIGN: Sagg srl, Roma

PRINTING: November 2014