



Site-specific conservation objectives for Natura 2000

ASCOBANS Workshop on Management of MPAs for Small Cetaceans

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Natura 2000

A coherent European ecological network

composed of sites designated under the Habitats (SACs) and Birds Directives (SPAs).

Natura 2000 shall enable the habitat types and the species' habitats, including bird species, **to be maintained or restored at a favourable conservation status** in their natural range.



NATURA 2000 - EUROPEAN UNION
Yellow: Birds Directive sites (SPA)
Blue: Habitats Directive sites (pSAC, SCI, SAC)
Green: Sites - or parts of sites - belonging to both Directives

European Environment Agency



Map of Natura 2000 sites in the European Union. The map is based on data provided by the Member States and is subject to change. The map is not intended to be used for navigation purposes. The map is not intended to be used for navigation purposes.



Conservation objectives in the Habitats Directive

Several references:

- In the preamble of the Directive: “It is appropriate, in each area designated, to implement the necessary measures having regard to the conservation objectives pursued”
- Explicit in Article 6.3
- Concept also in many Articles 1, 4.4, 6.1, 6.2, 8.2
- Article 7 (6.3 applies to SPAs)

What is a “site-specific conservation objective”?

It “is the **site-level specification** of the **conservation target to be achieved** for a **species or a habitat type** for which a site is designated, in order for the site to **contribute to maintaining or reaching favourable conservation status** of the habitats and species concerned, at national, biogeographical or EU level.”

(adapted from: Commission Note on Setting Conservation Objectives for Natura 2000 sites, November 2012)

In other words, the overarching question is...

WHAT DOES THE SPECIES NEED in/from that specific site?

Objectives have to:

- be species specific and site specific,
- relate to ecological requirements (What does the species need and what is the quantity of it that it needs?),
- flow from national assessments and define what each site can contribute to improving the global picture

Why are site-specific objectives needed?

- To specify the site's contribution to **the overall goal of favourable conservation status** of species and habitat types at national, biogeographical or EU level (Habitats Directive Art. 3).
- To **specify the condition** the species and habitat types present in the Natura 2000 site shall achieve.
- To provide an appropriate baseline for **identifying the necessary measures** needed at Natura 2000 site level.
- And to provide an appropriate baseline for **assessing the impact of plans and projects** in view of the site's conservation objectives (Habitats Directive Art. 6.3).

In order to fulfill their role, site-level conservation objectives must be:

- **site-specific**, i.e. set at site-level (but may need to be supplemented by a broader set of conservation targets at higher levels, e.g. national, regional or biogeographical);
- **species-specific** (or habitat-specific or specific as to the feature), i.e. clearly identify individual habitat types or species in the site → C-849/19, para. 59

Example: Monk seal (*Monachus monachus*)

Objective: ensure that the current population at site-level is maintained and acts as a “source population” for adjacent areas.

Attributes/targets:

- **Population:** maintain the current population of the species in the site (xx individuals).
- **Disturbance:** reduce or ban access to sea caves used for reproduction of the species.
- **Mortality:** prevent by-catch of monk seals in fishing gears in feeding areas used by the population.
- **Prey:** maintain the availability and density of adequate prey within the site.

There's an obligation to set site-specific conservation objectives

*“Setting conservation objectives is a **mandatory** and **necessary** step between the designation of SACs and the implementation of conservation measures” (C-849/19, para 52).*

- For SACs, SSCOs shall be established **as soon as possible and in any event within the six-years deadline** set out in Article 4(4)
- SPAs are an integral part of the Natura 2000 network, but the 6 year-deadline does not apply to them.

Conclusions

- Given their **key role** in the protection and management of Natura 2000 sites, it is essential that site-specific conservation objectives are set **without delay** for all Natura 2000 sites and that they are made **publicly available**.
- When setting site-specific conservation objectives, it is important to **link them to the overall goal to reach favourable conservation status** of habitats and species, including birds, at national (or national biogeographical) level.

Useful links and references:

Commission Note on Setting Conservation Objectives for Natura 2000 Sites of November 2012

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/commission_note/commission_note2_EN.pdf

CJEU ruling Case C-849/19, Commission v Greece (17/12/2020)

<http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?jsessionid=36973A6A761B342763114A713D0C978B?text=&docid=235718&pageIndex=0&doclang=FR&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=511530>

EC Workshop on conservation objectives (22/03/2021)

https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/fcb355ee-7434-4448-a53d-5dc5d1dac678/library/24ee5889-1c6b-4d61-a974-5d7e985140e9?p=1&n=10&s=modified_DESC

Thank you



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