

ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY?

BIRDLIFE ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS ON THE EU 2020 BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

COUNTRY PROGRESS ON THE EU 2020 BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

SLOVENIA | 2012

BirdLife Europe's partner in Slovenia, DOPPS, has assessed progress regarding the implementation of the Natura 2000 network as well as on selected topics that will be key in reaching the 2020 Biodiversity Target in Slovenia. The priority tasks that Slovenia should undertake are outlined on all topics.

NATURA 2000 STATUS IN SLOVENIA

Designation



In 2011, DOPPS-BirdLife Slovenia conducted a revision of national IBAs. Four of 35 IBAs are fully designated as SPAs. Twenty-two IBAs are partially designated as SPAs (28.7-99.3% of surface) and eight IBAs do not have SPA status. In all, 82.2% of IBA surface is designated as SPA. A new decree on Natura 2000 sites is expected at the end of 2012, taking into account revised IBAs.

Conservation/management



Slovenia does not have individual Natura2000 management plans but a common Operational programme for Natura 2000 sites (which qualifies as a PAF). It has loosely defined goals and no clear (financial) mechanism of achieving them. The sectoral planning in Slovenia (incorporation of Natura2000 goals into planning in different sectors, e.g. forestry) does not deliver the nature conservation benefits that it is supposed to and can even be detrimental (e.g. forestry plans to construct 2700km of forest roads in 2011-2020 in Natura2000 sites). The management and conservation of farmland/grassland Natura2000 sites is severely hampered due to a lack of funding and promotion of agri-environmental measures.

Financing



Only a very low percentage of Natura 2000 surface is managed through agri-environmental measures covered by rural development funding, making it inefficient (e.g. in period 2007-2011, only ca. 1% of surface of three SPAs with mosaical farmland landscape were covered by suitable measures). Occasionally, parts of some SPAs are financed by LIFE and INTERREG projects. The funding of national, regional and landscape parks is highly limited. The budget for protected areas was cut down in 2012 (e.g. by 25% for Nature Reserve and SPA Skocjanski zatok). A Prioritised Action Framework was developed for 2007-2013 but failed to deliver most of its nature-conservation objectives. A new one for 2014-2020 is being prepared currently.

LEGEND

Progress: egg chick adult **Trend:** up down



Large expanses of forest dominate the landscape in large parts of Slovenia, hosting still healthy populations of many forest-dwelling species.

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KEY TOPICS FOR REACHING THE EU 2020 BIODIVERSITY TARGET

> **Impact of EU-subsidies** Subsidies from 1st pillar of CAP (intensive agriculture) have a negative effect on biodiversity and Natura2000 qualifying species and habitat types in Slovenia. Agri-environmental measures are not obligatory on Natura2000 sites so farmers mostly decide not to participate in biodiversity schemes. Similarly, there is negative effect of subsidies from European Cohesion Fund which will (partly) finance the construction of 2700km of forest roads in 2011-2020 in Natura2000 sites. On the other hand, LIFE funds play a very positive role in nature conservation (see under "Major recent achievements").

> **Site protection** In Slovenia, all sectorial plans (e.g. hunting, fishery, forestry) are also considered as Natura2000 management plans and are not assessed at all regarding their impact on Natura2000.

Environmental impact assessments (EIA) are financed by investors. Firms that conduct EIAs are interested in further business and often write positive reports to please the investors. Environment Protection Act foresees a system of licenses, a supervision committee and loss of license in case of unscrupulous work but these provisions are not implemented.

Slovenian legislation (Ur. l. RS 130/2004 and its amendments) lists plans that should be assessed at Natura2000 sites. This is in contradiction with Habitat Directive which specifically states that all plans and activities that might affect Natura2000 sites should be assessed (Art. 6 (3)) and not only some. We have an open infringement regarding SPAs (from 2007) and pSCIs (from 2012).

> **Threats from a specific sector**

Majority of threats to Slovenian Natura2000 sites come from agriculture, infrastructure and energy. Slovenian Government already simplified some administrative procedures in 2012 to help investors realize their projects with less trouble and intends to simplify them further, which poses a serious threat to nature. For example, in Slovenia it is not obligatory to conduct an EIA or get nature-conservation consent when ploughing a qualifying Natura2000 habitat type (e.g. 6410 - Molinion caeruleae) or when intensifying it. Renewable sources of energy are highly promoted but often conflict the goals of Natura2000 sites at which they would be constructed (e.g. hydropower plants on SPA River Mura, wind turbines on SPA Sneznik - Pivka).

> **Major recent achievements** With the funds of LIFE project and national Water fund, the Skocjanski zatok Nature Reserve and SPA was restored. Populations of some species have increased (e.g. little bittern) and several new breeding species have appeared (e.g. common tern, little tern, black-winged stilt); the site now also being very important as a stop-over for migratory birds.

With LIFE funds the Iski morost Nature Reserve was created at Natura2000 site Ljubljansko barje, primarily for the corncrake. Its population has increased at the reserve but decreased in many other parts of this SPA. The reserve is mown very late, thus enabling the corncrake to safely fledge its young. Most of the rest of SPA is suspected to be a population sink for corncrake and several other meadow bird species (e.g. whinchat).

Successful management with LIFE and national funds has also resulted in increasing populations of qualifying species at the Secovlje salt pans Landscape Park (also Natura2000 site). This is the only breeding site for several species of birds (pied avocet, common shelduck) and holds largest national populations of others (little tern, black-winged stilt, Kentish plover).

MEMBER STATE TASKS

> **NATURA 2000 designation:**

Recommendation: IBAs 2011 and pSCIs (agreed on at biogeographical seminars) should be designated by the Government as Natura2000 sites. Slovenia has two infringements regarding Natura2000 – one on SPAs and one on pSCIs - so action must be taken immediately.

> **NATURA 2000 management:**

Recommendation: Agri-environmental measures should be reviewed as some are not being effective for nature conservation. Goals from PAF should be reviewed, amended and strictly pursued with a clear scheme of responsibilities for its implementation and ways of funding. Ecological research should be done for declining priority species, providing data for conservation measures. At least 25% of forest Natura2000 sites should be left to natural development. At least 25% of farmland/grassland Natura2000 sites must be covered by suitable agri-environmental measures that benefit qualifying species and habitat types.



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> NATURA 2000 funding:

Recommendation: More funds should be allocated for nature-friendly agri-environmental measures making them attractive for farmers. Money from detrimental subsidies should be diverted into nature-conservation measures on all Natura2000 sites. A 100% increase in funding for agri-environmental measures is needed, with a 150% increase for these measures on Natura2000 sites.

> Impact of EU subsidies:

Recommendation: No money from CAP or EU Cohesion Fund should be used for detrimental actions on Natura2000 sites. We suggest this money to be channelled into nature-friendly projects and measures (e.g. LIFE+, agri-environmental schemes).

Slovenia should make use of any modulation option allowed by the new cAP to shift pillar I funding towards agri-environmental schemes.

> Site protection:

Recommendation: Slovenian legislation should be harmonized with that of the EU, making it also necessary to properly assess the effect of all sectorial plans on Natura2000. Provisions of Environment Protection Act regarding licenses for EIAs should be implemented. A system of licenses for firms and individuals conducting EIAs and a supervision committee must be fully established.

> Threats from a specific sector:

Recommendation: At Natura2000 sites nature-conservation goals should be considered a priority and not a hindrance. National and EU funds should be allocated accordingly.

Halt of decline of qualifying habitat types and species at Natura2000 sites. Natura 2000 must increasingly be recognized and used as a local development tool.

LINKS

- > Landscape Park Secovlje salt pans: www.kpss.si/
- > Nature Reserve Skocjanski zatok: <http://skocjanski-zatok.org/>
- > Nature Reserve Iski morost: www.life-kosec.org/index.php?idv=122
- > Operational programme - Natura 2000 management programme 2007-2013: www.natura2000.gov.si/uploads/tx_library/141-natura_01.pdf and www.natura2000.gov.si/uploads/tx_library/141-Natura-priloga4-2.pdf
- > Ur. l. RS 130/2004: Rules on the assessment of acceptability of impacts caused by the execution of plans and activities affecting nature in protected areas: http://zakonodaja.gov.si/rpsi/r09/predpis_PRAV5539.html
- > Slovenian Rural Development Plan 2007-2013 (contains agri-environmental measures): www.pora-gr.si/PRP%202007-2013.pdf
- > Website "Pravo za naravo" ("Law for nature") edited by DOPPS – BirdLife Slovenia, contains EU and Slovenian legislation, major nature-conservation cases in Slovenia and instructions on how and where to report violations of legislation: www.pravo-za-naravo.si
- > Website of Municipality Velika Polana (NE Slovenia) which uses White Stork and Natura2000 status as a development tool: www.velika-polana.si



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