



BUSINESS & BIODIVERSITY

Opportunities for Natura 2000

IN FOCUS

- Why does conserving biodiversity matter to Europe's businesses?



LIFE IN ACTION

- Partnering with SMEs

ACTION TOWARDS 2010

- IAS under the spotlight

nature



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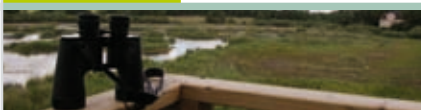


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Natura News



The Natura 2000 Newsletter is produced by the LIFE and Nature & Biodiversity Units of the Environment Directorate General (DG ENV) of the European Commission.

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Theme of this issue: **BUSINESS & BIODIVERSITY**



Editorial

Recognising the strong business case for biodiversity protection

Biodiversity protection is a priority issue in EU environmental policy. In addition to fully establishing the Natura 2000 network across all 27 Member States by 2010, we must do more, as recognised in our 2006 Biodiversity Action Plan, to better integrate biodiversity considerations into other important policy areas and especially to build partnerships with businesses.

Today, while the protection of species and habitats remains an important part of the biodiversity agenda, the main objective is to protect the structure and function of our natural ecosystems. Without robust, healthy and properly functioning ecosystems we cannot rely on the continued flow of goods – food, materials, medicines, clean air, water etc; and services – **flood protection, coastal protection, nutrient recycling, carbon storage** – upon which human society is so dependent. If ecosystems are degraded by habitat destruction, over abstraction of water, and over-loaded with pollutants they will not have the resilience to face the additional major stress of climate change.

Protecting biodiversity not only makes sense at a macro-economic level, it also makes sense for individual companies. There are many business leaders who have recognised the strong business case for biodiversity protection and have had the courage and the foresight to provide leadership within their companies, their industries and on a wider global stage. IUCN – International Union for Conservation of Nature has over many years provided inspiration and ground-breaking initiatives in working closely with companies to elaborate the business case for biodiversity protection. Several Member States, for example Germany, France, the Netherlands, Portugal and the UK have also developed national programmes for promoting the links between business and biodiversity protection.

The European Commission is also convinced that the business community can make a significant contribution towards biodiversity protection both inside and outside the EU. We need their support and engagement if we are to succeed in halting biodiversity loss. The Commission therefore aims to build on the very strong foundation provided by our Portuguese colleagues who identified the business and biodiversity link as a priority action for their presidency in 2007, and to further develop an EU initiative on Business and Biodiversity. This initiative will complement ongoing actions at international and national level. In order to carry out this work the Commission will create a technical facility to work with business sectors, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and national organisations in order to develop a strong implementation network.

We will not be able to make progress towards the 2010 target unless business is convinced of the added value of this initiative. While voluntary, business sectors involved in such partnerships will need to commit to work within, and to support, the existing legal framework governing biodiversity protection. I am convinced that the energy, skills and resources of the business community can be a net-positive contributor to biodiversity protection and a major factor in halting the loss of biodiversity.

Patrick Murphy

Head, Nature and Biodiversity Unit, DG Environment.

Why does conserving biodiversity matter to Europe's businesses?

Several international treaties and many conservation initiatives have tried to stem the loss of biodiversity, but with limited success to date. In Europe, the centrepiece of the European Union's biodiversity policy is its legislation, the Habitats and Birds Directives, which are the legal bases for the Natura 2000 network. But, Natura 2000 alone is not sufficient: action on biodiversity conservation is required from businesses, as well as governments and NGOs.

Biodiversity supports the world we live in. Yet it is being lost and degraded at an unprecedented rate as a result of human activities. According to a United Nations study of global ecosystems¹, virtually all the Earth's ecosystems have been dramatically transformed through human actions. And there are deeply worrying signs that we may be facing an accelerating loss that has already reached a high level of destruction, such as the collapse or the near-collapse of many of the fish stocks in the world's oceans.

Biodiversity is also of strategic importance for business, providing the raw materials and natural assets for many enterprises. This is most obvious in cases where profits depend directly on healthy ecosystems, such as eco-tourism. But it is now recognised that greater variability in genes, species and ecosystems is associated with increased resilience and biological productivity in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, pharmaceuticals, food processing etc.

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1 The Millenium Ecosystem Assessment
– MEA 2005



Opening session of the Business & Biodiversity conference, Lisbon – a key event of the Portuguese Presidency

As well as the direct economic benefits to businesses from biodiversity, there are indirect benefits in terms of ecological, aesthetic and ethical value. Corporate actions on biodiversity can help companies to distinguish themselves from competitors, while also involving retailers, investors, employees, local communities and others.

When businesses first began addressing environmental issues, it was usually in terms of risks or costs, or their license to operate. The question of public image is also crucial for businesses if they are to compete successfully for customers. Today many companies have realised the necessity of meeting their social





Photo: Forest Research Institute (FVA) Freiburg

Forester working in the Feldberg Natura 2000 site of the Black Forest, Germany, where the 'zoning' of forestry work is helping to maintain capercaillie populations

responsibilities to implement sustainable practices and limit their impact on the environment. The lead on this has come from the sectors whose direct impact on the environment is the most obvious, such as the extractive industries. However, real success will only come when all businesses do this as part of their core business.

Companies are also realising that adopting measures that promote biodiversity can bring financial benefits to their business. The business case for conserving nature is strong and getting stronger, according to a recent report, "Building Biodiversity

Business²". The report calls for policy reforms to increase the commercial rewards for conserving biodiversity, increased penalties for biodiversity loss and better information on the biodiversity performance of businesses. A key challenge facing all biodiversity businesses is the lack of accepted indicators to measure positive and negative contributions to biodiversity conservation. As the world wakes up to the accelerating loss of biological diversity, businesses are increasingly viewing biodiversity conservation as a potential profit centre, says the report.

Eco-tourism is one example of how money can be made from looking after species and their habitat. Environmentally-friendly tourism is expanding at a rate of 20-30% annually, compared with 9% for tourism as a whole. Many other businesses, historically responsible for the loss of biodiversity, are starting to lead the way by protecting biodiversity. Markets for organic agriculture and sustainably-harvested timber are growing at double-digit rates. Another major growth area is the demand for climate mitigation services, such as the protection of forests and wetlands to absorb carbon dioxide.

Message from Lisbon

Over 400 participants, more than half of whom were Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) or senior business leaders

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2 Bishop, J., Kapila, S. Hicks, F. Mitchell, P. and Vorhies, F. (2008): *Building Biodiversity Business*. Shell Int. Ltd. and IUCN. - <http://www.iucn.org/dbtw-wpd/edocs/2008-002.pdf>

from 150 companies, together with the EU, governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) met in Lisbon recently, to discuss ways of getting Europe's businesses more involved in biodiversity conservation³. The high-level Business and Biodiversity conference (12-13 November 2007) was organised under the Portuguese Presidency of the EU and the European Commission with the assistance of the Countdown 2010 Initiative. It signalled a major shift in thinking on the role of business in biodiversity conservation. Convergence between the views of the public and private sectors on the critical importance of biodiversity and what needs to be done to stem a steadily worsening global crisis emerged.

"Current development patterns are unsustainable and biodiversity is being lost at an unprecedented rate. Business has a crucial role in preserving biodiversity, and Europe can be a world leader in making this happen on the ground," said Francisco Nunes Correia, Portugal's Minister for the Environment, Spatial Planning and Regional Development.

"The European Commission is convinced that the business community can and should make a significant contribution towards biodiversity protection both inside and outside the EU," said Mogens Peter Carl, Director General, DG Environment. He acknowledged that many business leaders have already recognised this and taken initiatives to

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3 www.countdown2010.net/business

EU BIODIVERSITY POLICY

The EU has a stated political aim, dating from the 2001 European summit in Gothenburg, to "halt the decline of biodiversity by 2010". At a global level, in 2002, it joined some 130 world leaders in agreeing to "significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010".

To achieve these ambitious targets, in 2006 the European Commission put forward a Communication on halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 – and beyond¹, together with a detailed Biodiversity Action Plan², outlining the necessary actions and supporting measures to be taken by the EU and its Member States. While this EU agenda for biodiversity confirms the central importance of existing legislation and in particular the Natura 2000 network, it also sets out a more comprehensive and inclusive vision for biodiversity protection that extends to supporting measures. One of these is to build more effective partnerships, including partnerships with business, both at the level of the EU and in the Member States. This thinking is in line with the global commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

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1 [COM(2006)216] http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/index_en.htm

2 Technical Annexes to COM/2006/216



La Gomera
giant lizard

Photo: LIFE02 NAT/E/008614

promote biodiversity protection. He also praised the work over many years of organisations such as IUCN and WWF who have provided “inspiration and ground-breaking initiatives” in working closely with business and elaborating the business case for biodiversity protection. “Many of these company initiatives now provide the benchmark for others to follow,” he noted. “But we need an EU dimension,” he added, and called for “stronger partnerships with business”.

CEOs and senior directors from major European companies in many sectors also showed strong consensus on the business case for putting biodiversity at the heart of their companies. “No one sector has all the answers. The wide range of large and small solutions needed to avert a breakdown in biodiversity will only be successful if companies, governments and NGOs work more closely together,” commented Director General of IUCN, Julia Marton-Lefèvre.

The Message from Lisbon called on business, governments, the EU and NGOs to:

- continue raising awareness of the strong competitive advantage companies can gain from conserving biodiversity;
- promote the use of market, corporate responsibility and regulatory schemes;
- support business with operational tools for biodiversity conservation and measuring their performance in meaningful ways, especially in small and medium sized companies; and
- encourage new incentives to develop and strengthen partnerships between companies, governments at all levels, NGOs and academia.

European Business and Biodiversity Initiative

One of the key outcomes was a call for a new European Business and Biodiversity Initiative, which would seek to introduce biodiversity considerations into corporate governance through voluntary initiatives, with a view to contributing towards reaching the goal of halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010. The Commission called for businesses interested in working with it on developing partnerships for biodiversity protection

Looking beyond EU borders

The Business and Biodiversity Initiative represents part of the EU's response to global commitments under the CBD. Tied in with this, the recent Ninth Conference of the Parties of the CBD, (held in Bonn, Germany, on 19-30 May) negotiated a new decision to further promote and facilitate businesses to actively contribute to biodiversity conservation¹. The conference included a three-day Business and Biodiversity Forum, and the German hosts also ensured high visibility for the topic with the presentation of their own initiative.

1 <http://www.cbd.int/cop9/>

at the European level to come forward, and pledged to establish, later this year, a technical support facility to work with stakeholders on its implementation.

Added value of action at EU-level

The integration of biodiversity considerations into major EU policy areas, such as agriculture, regional development, fisheries, energy, transport, trade, development aid and research, shows that there is a clear added value to EU action on business and biodiversity. EU leadership has also proven to be a valuable catalyst for national action, sharing of experience and good practices, and for the communication and dissemination of results.

Where there are conflicts between Natura sites and business sectors with specific difficulties e.g. ports, the EU is committed to working with enterprises to find solutions

Specifically concerning the Business and Biodiversity Initiative, the EU has a clearly established biodiversity agenda, and provides an excellent forum for cooperation and common action. It has set an ambitious target and will play a leading role to help meet the global commitments under the CBD. There is also a very important clear link to Natura 2000, the EU's ecological network, the centrepiece of EU nature protection, the establishment of which is now moving on to management and financing of the sites. This provides a potentially very good opportunity for business, especially small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) at the local level and is appropriate for site-specific actions with a multi-stakeholder approach.

Photo: LIFE00 EN/F/000630



Photo: LIFE00 NAT/EE/007083



Photo: LIFE02 NAT/S/008483

Estonian farmer carries out coastal meadow restoration work at Matsalu National Park, a Natura 2000 site (left). Pigs are used to break up and loosen the soil for cultivation within the Söderåsen National Park, Sweden (right).

Business opportunities and Natura 2000

The important link between businesses and the biodiversity preserved in the Natura 2000 network is increasingly recognised. Designated Natura sites now number some 25,000, covering approximately 20% of the EU27 Member States. As micro, small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)* constitute more than 99.8% of the total number of businesses in Member States, it is inevitable that the activities of many businesses will be inside or close to Natura 2000 sites. The network provides a potentially very good opportunity, in particular for SMEs at the local level, and is also appropriate for site-based actions via partnerships between companies and NGOs.

It is important to note that the strict rules and requirements governing the protection and conservation of Natura 2000 sites do not prevent them from being used for economic activities. "The experience from most Member States is that it is perfectly possible to use the flexibility provided in the nature directives in an intelligent manner and find a good balance between biodiversity protection and economic needs", Environment Commissioner, Stavros Dimas, said in a recent speech on EU nature policy¹. Speaking in Brussels, on 14 February, he emphasised the need to correct one of the common "myths" about Natura 2000 – that once a site is designated all economic activities have to stop. "The Natura network consists of living landscapes in which farming, fishing, forestry and hunting can

continue", he said, adding that "even major development projects can be carried out once certain safeguards have been respected".

While most businesses depend on financial support from banks or investors to cover initial start-up costs, in the case of biodiversity businesses there may be a need for some grant finance or subsidies to help entrepreneurs get beyond the pilot and learning phase and to stimulate demand for commercial conservation services. The following are some examples of co-financing opportunities for SMEs looking to develop business opportunities on, or adjacent to, Natura sites:

BTAU: working with SMEs

The DG Environment-funded Biodiversity Technical Assistance Unit (BTAU) project is working with SMEs to explore the opportunities to begin removing some of the barriers preventing engagement with the private sector – i.e. the scale and complexity of the network and the misconception that it represents major constraints and obstacles to development. By finding ways to enable

appropriate profitable business activities that also benefit Natura site management, this could help offset management costs. The pilot project is focused on Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland – new Member States with economies dominated by SMEs, with large rural populations that are often economically disadvantaged, and with extensive new networks of Natura sites that require management. The BTAUs create and apply a public-private partnership approach. For more information, see p.10.

Branding of local products

Three areas within Natura 2000 sites in the Czech Republic have introduced branding of local products such as food and farming produce, local handicrafts, mineral water, and forest fruit, under a project coordinated by the Regional Environmental Center Czech Republic. Under the scheme, in place since October 2005, products made in the areas of Krkonoše, Šumava and Beskydy can apply for branding (certification) that guarantees their origin from the given specific area. Each of the areas has a special logo, awarded by a certification com-

¹ "EU Nature Policy – Challenges in a changing world" [SPEECH/08/82]

* The EC defines micro enterprises as having less than 10 employees and an annual turnover of less than €2 million, small enterprises as having less than 50 employees and less than €10 million annual turnover, and medium sized enterprises as having less than 250 employees and with a maximum annual turnover of €50 million.



Photo: Bernard Lafon

Visitors to the Oh! Légumes Oubliés kitchen garden, Gironde, France. This enterprise grows and markets organic fruit and vegetables

mission representing local producers and other stakeholders including local and regional authorities, nature protection authorities and chambers of commerce. Product certification offers considerable marketing opportunities to local producers. At the same time, the initiative is helping to promote specific Natura sites.

Rural tourism and Natura 2000

The Commission is co-financing a project on “raising awareness for Natura 2000: working together with Europe’s rural tourism sector”. Comprising an innovative partnership of rural tourism associations and nature conservation businesses from five different countries, the project’s main objectives are to: a) promote a better understanding among a cross

section of rural tourism providers in three different countries and regions of the EU (Latvia, Andalusia, and Finland) of Natura 2000 and its implications/ opportunities for rural tourism businesses; and b) to pilot innovative tourist products based on Natura 2000 values in the three regions.

The project experiences will be widely disseminated later this year. For more information, see the project website:
<http://www.natura2000tourism.eu>

Harvesting cork from cork oak (*Quercus suber*) in the Algarve, Portugal – an activity that depends on the maintenance of living, healthy cork forests



Photo: Rui Simões

‘Pro-biodiversity’ business

The recently completed “Probioprise” project aimed to improve our understanding of the many so-called pro-biodiversity SMEs (PBEs) in Europe – that is, those businesses, many of which work in and around Natura sites, that are dependent on biodiversity for their core business and that contribute to biodiversity conservation through that core business (see box below).

LIFE supporting business

Since its conception in 1992, LIFE², the financial instrument for the environment, has supported numerous conservation actions that indirectly promoted biodiversity business opportunities largely, but not exclusively, under the LIFE-Nature component of the LIFE programme (see p.11-12 for LIFE project case studies). Now with the launch of LIFE+³, the new financial instrument for the environment, with an overall budget of € 2 billion, LIFE+ will continue to offer robust support to new project applications seeking to develop biodiversity business opportunities in Europe under the “LIFE+ Biodiversity” component.

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 2 LIFE I, II and III (1992-2006)
 3 LIFE+ (2007-2013)

Probioprise project: understanding pro-biodiversity SMEs

Many small- and medium-sized enterprises in Europe base their businesses on biodiversity and contribute to its conservation. A number of them work in and around Natura 2000 sites. Led by Barney Dickson, project coordinator and head of international policy, Fauna & Flora International, the “Probioprise” project, funded by DG Research, aimed to improve our understanding of these enterprises, the nature of the contribution they are making to conservation. This understanding was then used to set out a programme of research questions to determine what can be done to promote the role of SMEs in achieving biodiversity conservation goals. In partnership with the European Foundation for Management Development and the European Bureau for Conservation and Development, the project, which ran from October 2005 to August 2007, focused on learning directly from SMEs that are working with biodiversity. The main research means employed were workshops and case studies. Four workshops were held, each with an ecosystem theme: forestry; wetlands; grasslands; and marine and coastal. Just over 50 SMEs participated in these workshops. Fifteen case studies were also conducted, of which 13 were on individual enterprises, one was a comparative study of two enterprises and one was a study of a National Park authority that works with a number of SMEs. There is considerable diversity among PBEs: they are found in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors with different PBEs contributing to the conservation of various types and components of biodiversity. Because of this diversity, the project recommended the adoption of sector specific and site specific approaches to encouraging pro-biodiversity enterprises. Its main results are found in the report: “The Working Partnership: SMEs and Biodiversity”, together with the 15 case studies.

See the project website: <http://www.efmd.org/probioprise>.
 For further details, contact Barney Dickson at: barney.dickson@fauna-flora.org.

Natura 2000 BAROMETER - December 2007

Nota Bene:

- The Natura Barometer is managed by the European Topic Centre for Biodiversity and based on information officially transmitted by Member States.
- Numerous sites have been designated according to both nature directives, either in their entirety or partially. It is therefore not possible to combine the numbers implemented under the two directives to get an overall figure for Natura 2000.
- The surface area percentage relates only to the terrestrial area that has been designated, which is the overall SPA (Birds Directive), proposed SCI, SCI or SAC (Habitats Directive) area, not including the marine area. Some Member States have designated substantial portions of their marine waters. These are included in the number of sites and areas proposed but not in the percentage surface area. The sufficiency of national proposals for several marine habitats and species cannot be determined, as further work is needed for the successful application of Natura 2000 under both directives, especially in the area of offshore marine environment.
- Several Member States have proposed large areas including "buffer zones", while others have proposed only the core areas. In both cases, Article 6 of the Habitats Directive also applies to new activities, which are foreseen outside a Natura 2000 site but likely to affect it.
- The 12 new Member States, which acceded to the EU on 1 May 2004 and 1 January 2007, had a duty to classify SPAs and propose SCIs by the date of their accession. All countries have submitted their lists and evaluations are ongoing.
- The global assessment of national lists may be revised upwards or downwards, following more complete scientific analysis of the data, particularly at the relevant biogeographical seminars.

-  notably insufficient
-  incomplete
-  largely complete
-  recent significant progress























SPECIAL PROTECTION AREAS (SPAs) Birds Directive						
MEMBER STATES	Number of sites	Total area sites (km ²)	Terrestrial area (%)*	Number of marine sites	Marine area (km ²)	Progress
BELGIË/BELGIQUE	234	3,282	9.7	4	315	
BULGARIA	88	12,551	11.3	3	9	
ČESKÁ REPUBLIKA	38	6,936	8.8	-	-	
DANMARK	113	14,709	5.9	59	12,173	
DEUTSCHLAND	568	48,102	8.9	14	16,216	
EESTI	67	12,592	13.1	26	6,654	
ÉIRE/IRELAND	131	2,815	2.9	66	810	
ELLÁDA	151	13,703	10.0	16	567	
ESPAÑA	563	97,123	19.1	23	634	
FRANCE	371	46,194	7.8	62	3,260	
ITALIA	589	43,798	13.6	41	2,718	
KÝPROS**	7	788	13.4	1	21	
LATVIJA	98	6,766	9.7	4	520	
LIETUVA	77	5,435	8.1	1	171	
LUXEMBOURG	12	139	5.4	-	-	
MAGYARORSZÁG	55	13,519	14.5	-	-	
MALTA	12	14	4.5	0	0	
NEDERLAND	77	10,125	12.6	6	4,895	
ÖSTERREICH	98	9,744	11.6	-	-	
POLSKA***	124	50,407	16.1	0	0	
PORTUGAL	50	9,956	10.1	10	622	
ROMÂNIA	0	0	0	0	0	
SLOVENIJA	27	4,656	23.0	1	3	
SLOVENSKO	38	12,236	25.1	-	-	
SUOMI	467	30,836	7.5	66	5,567	
SVERIGE	530	28,872	6.2	107	3,033	
UNITED KINGDOM	265	15,988	6.2	4	901	
EU	4,850	501,286	10.3	514	59,090	

Photo: Forest Research Institute (FVA) Freiburg





SITES OF COMMUNITY IMPORTANCE (SCIs) Habitats Directive

Number of sites	Total area sites (km ²)	Terrestrial area (%)*	Number of marine sites	Marine area (km ²)	Progress	MEMBER STATES
280	3,239	10.0	2	198		BELGIUM
207	29,548	26.5	8	124	BE	BULGARIA
858	7,251	9.2	-	-		CZECH REPUBLIC
254	11,136	7.4	118	7,959		DENMARK
4,617	53,294	9.9	48	18,086		GERMANY
497	11,328	16.5	36	3,854		ESTONIA
413	10,561	10.2	92	3,386		ÉIRE/IRELAND
239	27,641	16.4	102	5,998		GREECE
1,434	123,716	23.4	94	5,548		SPAIN
1,334	52,174	8.5	94	5,688		FRANCE
2,283	45,073	14.2	160	2,243		ITALY
36	711	11.5	5	50		CYPRUS**
331	7,663	11.0	6	562		LATVIA
267	6,664	9.9	2	171		LITHUANIA
48	399	15.4	-	-		LUXEMBOURG
467	13,929	15.0	-	-		HUNGARY
27	48	12.6	1	8		MALTA
142	7,552	8.4	10	4,067		THE NETHERLANDS
168	8,889	10.6	-	-		AUSTRIA
362	28,490	9.1	0	0.0	↑	POLAND***
94	16,503	17.4	23	490		PORTUGAL
273	32,833	13.2	6	1,353	BE	ROMANIA
259	6,360	31.4	3	0.2		SLOVENIA
382	5,739	11.8	-	-		SLOVAKIA
1,715	48,552	12.7	98	5,460		FINLAND
3,971	62,782	13.7	325	5,849		SWEDEN
616	26,365	6.8	44	9,724	↑	UNITED KINGDOM
21,574	648,441	13.2	1,277	80,818		EU

- notably insufficient
- incomplete
- largely complete
- ↑ recent significant progress
- BE being evaluated in the context of biogeographical seminars

The Natura 2000 Barometer: commentary on progress

- The existing barometer monitors progress in the implementation of both the Habitats and the Birds Directives in all 27 countries to December 2007.
- There have been significant additional SCI proposals and SPA designations by Poland to fill gaps for that country, but further designations are still required. Bulgaria has substantially increased its SCI proposal, which together with that for Romania is subject to ongoing evaluation to determine whether they sufficiently cover the relevant habitats and species (Biogeographical seminar on 9 -12 June 2008 for Bulgaria and Romania).
- There has been a significant increase in the SPA area for Italy, especially for marine. The United Kingdom has also added significant new SPAs and proposed SCIs. New Natura 2000 sites have also been designated or proposed by France, Spain, the Netherlands and Austria.
- No new sites have been established in any of the other Member States. However, there is now additional information on the existing sites, along with updates on the presence of habitats and species.
- With regard to evaluating the completeness of national SPA networks, there is no biogeographical screening process, but the Commission makes use of different scientific references, including national inventories, where they exist, and the Important Bird Areas' (IBAs) publications of Birdlife International.

* % of SCI or SPA terrestrial area compared to MS terrestrial area

** The area of the MS and the % corresponds to the area of Cyprus where the Community acquis applies at present, according to protocol 10 of the Accession Treaty of Cyprus

*** Several marine sites, but no information on marine areas provided in the database

Role of small businesses in managing the Natura 2000 network

Natura 2000 sites are predominantly located in rural areas and many have people living and working within or adjacent to them. Site management plans designed and implemented to maintain their conservation value have proven to be extremely useful. In 2004, a Commission Communication estimated that the annual cost of managing the network would be €6.1 billion. Finding ways to either secure more funding from existing or new sources, or to reduce site management costs is therefore key to the future of the sites.

Under the new EC financial programmes for 2007-2013 there are increased financial opportunities to support Natura 2000. However, the potential role of the private sector has only been partially explored, with attention predominantly focused on sponsorship from large corporations. This is despite the fact that 99.8% of EU businesses are micro, or small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The potential negative or positive role of these 23 million small businesses in relation to Natura 2000 has been largely ignored to date. The main barriers preventing engagement with the private sector appear to be its scale and complexity, and the widely held belief that Natura 2000 represents a major constraint and obstacle to development and is therefore 'bad for business'.

The DG Environment-funded Biodiversity Technical Assistance Unit (BTAU) project is working with SMEs to explore the opportunities to begin removing both of these barriers. Finding ways to enable appropriate profitable business activities that also benefit Natura 2000 site management could help offset management costs. This pilot project is focused on Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland – new Member States with economies dominated by SMEs, with large rural populations that are often economically disad-

vantaged, and with extensive new networks of Natura 2000 sites that require management.

For both the EU and Member State governments struggling to meet the costs of Natura 2000 site management obligations, this approach envisages "site management plans" being further developed into "site business development plans" that will enable SMEs to identify business opportunities compatible with maintaining their biodiversity value. Initial research has shown that many SMEs work within Natura 2000 sites in all key EU ecosystems. Biodiversity resources play an important role in their operations, especially in the agriculture, forestry, fisheries, tourism and environmental services sectors. The project teams are now expanding research in key business sectors and specific habitats to determine the types and proportion of management activities that could be delivered or offset by SMEs.

It is already clear that building greater understanding of Natura 2000 in the business community is also a prerequisite for success. However, to drive tangible changes, the BTAU project is discussing with partner banks the possibility of creating business development loans at preferential interest rates. These will be targeted at supporting SMEs working within Natura 2000 sites, with loan conditions derived from the site management plans. A pipeline of suitable SMEs, identified by the project teams and banks can then benefit from the loans. Incentive-driven market mechanisms to encourage shifts in business practices are already proven to work effectively for pollution reduction and energy efficiency, and are being applied to climate change mitigation, so lessons learned from these market-based instruments are being applied in this innovative pilot project.



Photo: Barbara Vándor

Within Natura 2000 sites, there are many opportunities for small business activities that are compatible with maintaining the site's biodiversity value

This approach is designed to ensure benefits for all key stakeholders. The BTAU project offers international and national financial institutions a new national (or EU-wide) financial instrument to realise the latent SME market investment in rural areas. Equally, the new loan facilities will enable pro-biodiversity SMEs to realise their potential. Large corporations are also included in the process, as they can use it to identify and invest in pro-biodiversity businesses to improve the environmental sustainability of their supply chain. The ultimate beneficiary will be the Natura 2000 network, which will be better managed as a result of an increase in pro-biodiversity business activities that can help offset management costs.

By Mark Day & Zbigniew Karpowicz, RSPB (UK) with input from BTAU national coordinators: Mira Dikova (Bulgaria); Nagy Dénes (Hungary) and Zenon Tederko (Poland).

For more information and to see tools developed by the project, visit the BTAU website at: www.smeforbiodiversity.eu.

Little bustard (Tetrax tetrax) thrives on farmland



Photo: Juan Martín Simón

Working with SMEs to build partnerships for sustainable development

The EU's LIFE projects, which typically work with small- and medium-sized enterprises, have demonstrated that conserving endangered habitats and species, as well as introducing sustainable business practices, can also have a great impact on a local economy.

Eco-tourism is a growing trend.

A LIFE project (LIFE98 NAT/GR/005264) that aimed to conserve the unique Vai palm forest of Crete increased the island's attraction as a tourist destination. As well as doubling the area of this rare habitat, the project introduced a much-needed tourism plan. Sustainability was achieved through dialogue with local stakeholders and via a national conference. Many other examples of eco-tourism have shown how promoting the protection of ecosystems can go hand-in-hand with boosting local economies. The Spanish LIFE project (LIFE02 NAT/E/008610) to protect marine life off the southern Iberian coast collaborated with whale-watching companies on field studies and awareness-raising activities. Given the importance of tourism to the regions of Murcia and Andalucia, the project had a significant impact on the social-economic development of the area. A second Spanish LIFE project involving whale-watching took place on the tiny Canary Island of La Gomera (see box).

Food and drink

The symbiotic relationship between biodiversity and business has also



Photo: K. Raptopoulou

Conservation of the unique Vai palm forest of Crete has also increased the island's attraction as a tourist destination

resulted in the production of marketable goods, such as cheese, mushrooms and beer. Such produce can be classified as supporting biodiversity through labelling. For example, one of the results of the COEX LIFE project (LIFE04 NAT/IT/000144), which aimed to conserve bears and wolves in France, Italy and Spain, was the pro-

motion of cheeses that are produced by farmers that have supported the conservation initiative.

Other projects have maximised the potential of agricultural practice to contribute to biodiversity. The Finnish project, "Operation model of environmental management in Salo region"



Conservation and socio-economic development go hand in hand on La Gomera

The management of marine sites is one of the greatest challenges for the implementation of the Natura 2000 network. La Gomera, the second smallest of the Canary Islands, is home to the Santiago-Valle Gran Rey coastal belt, a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) where environmental conditions provide optimal feeding and resting grounds for the loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*), an EU-listed priority species, and for a variety of cetaceans, in particular for a large breeding colony of bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*). The LIFE Project "Conservation of Tursiops and Caretta on La Gomera" (LIFE03/NAT/E/000062) developed a management

plan for the SAC that, by involving all stakeholders, has been able to persuade them that this status does not limit the socio-economic development of the area and of La Gomera. Several conferences and educational activities for the users of the SAC were organised that have strengthened ties between the beneficiary – the environmental NGO SECAC ("Society for the Study of Cetaceans of the Canary Islands") – and local fishermen and whale-watching, boat trip and diving companies.

A sign of the positive response to the project has been the involvement of marine tourism companies and fishermen in data collection

activities that have highlighted the complexity and richness of the protected marine area. For instance, more than 50 scientific boat trips were made, with 171 whale and dolphin and 28 marine turtle sightings recorded within the SAC.

Bottlenose dolphins (Tursiops truncatus)

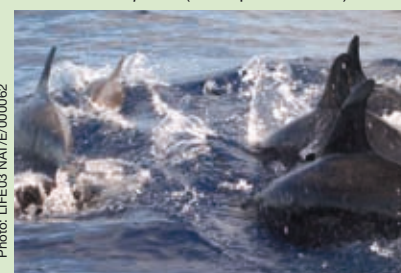


Photo: LIFE03 NAT/E/000062



Photo: LIFE04 NAT/B/000010

Action to restore an area of the wetlands of De Liereman in Belgium, also aided the brewing of a local beer, Gageleer

(LIFE02 ENV/FIN/000319), co-operated with the 300 cattle farmers that use the project site and are able to maintain the meadows. As a result of the project, co-operation rules

were amended in order to increase efficiency through the swapping of some pasture lands. In collaboration with slaughterhouses, meat producers in the area created a Pasture Meat Organisation in order to certify and promote pasture-fed cattle.

An unusual outcome of a LIFE project (LIFE04 NAT/B/00010) was achieved on the wet heathlands of De Liereman, Belgium. As well as restoring an area of Natura 2000 sites and introducing management plans, the project also aided the brewing of a local beer, Gageleer, which is made using a plant gathered from the site (see box).

Hunting and gathering

For some LIFE projects the link between business and biodiversity is more direct. The Micovaldorba project (LIFE00 ENV/E/000402) in Navarra, Spain, aimed to introduce sustainable practices to the mushroom-producing forest ecosystems. The project provides a good demonstration of the impact successful sustainable management can have on a region. As a result of the project, Valdorba has a developed an eco-tourism sector that is linked to the mushroom activity. Some estimate that the LIFE project



Ascoma (fruitbody) of a prized truffle

has increased rural hotel occupancy rates by 30%, making it one of the most visited areas in Navarra. Truffle producers are now integrated into the local market, where they can obtain a price of 30% above normal levels. Furthermore, services in the area are much improved. These include water supply, refuse collection, paved streets, telephone connection, and social and cultural services. The area has also experienced population growth and low unemployment.

Fungi were at the centre of another project in Spain. There is mounting pressure for forests in the Pyrenees to become more economically viable, as the low returns on wood production continue to exacerbate the problems of an already declining population. A LIFE project (LIFE96 ENV/E/000512) aimed to stabilise the forest population through the implementation of an innovative solution: trees were introduced that had been inoculated with edible mushrooms and truffles. The project offered an economically viable solution that did not require intensive management.

The Birds and Habitats directives recognise hunting as a form of sustainable use, though it is restricted to certain species and governed by a set of rules. The LIFE project, "Conservation of the Iberian *Lynx pardinus* in Montes de Toledo-Guadalupe" (LIFE02 NAT/E/008617), aimed to conserve the Iberian lynx, which is a highly endangered species and fully protected under the Habitats Directive. To help ensure that the hunting of other species within its range doesn't disturb the lynx, the LIFE project has supported the preparation of technical hunting plans.

Photo: Catalonia Forestry Technology Centre



Preserving a landscape, reviving a taste

The Natura 2000 site, the Landschap De Liereman in Antwerp province, Belgium, is a mosaic of wet and dry heathlands, dunes, peat bogs, pastures, woods and shrubs that is home to rare fauna such as the curlew (*Numenius arquata*) and the natterjack toad (*Bufo calamita*).

Among the unusual native flora is the sweet gale (*Myrica gale*). This plant was one of the constituents of gruit, a mixture of herbs for bittering and flavouring beer

widely used in Europe until the late 16th century, when it was superseded by hops. De Proefbrouwerij, a local brewery, has revived the gruit method to make Gageleer beer using sweet gale samples collected each year from De Liereman by volunteers (the beer was certified as organic in 2003). After a hard day walking round the site, thirsty patrons can enjoy a bottle of Gageleer at the visitors' centre. Gezondheid!

Sweet gale (*Myrica gale*) used to make Gageleer beer



Photo: Tico Bassie

Forging links between a diversity of stakeholders

A diverse range of business and biodiversity partnerships has emerged in recent years. These have mostly been between companies and NGOs, but they can take many forms – from the informal provision of information on biodiversity issues to improve understanding among staff and other business stakeholders, to long-term contractual arrangements covering multiple activities and sites.



Photo: LIFE03 NAT/P/000013

Azores bullfinch (*Pyrrhula murina*)



Photo: LIFE02 NAT/HU/008627

Hungary's 'unobstructed skies' agreement has paved the way for similar actions across Europe to help safeguard birds from electric shocks from unsecured power lines

A number of successful examples of public/private-sector partnerships were presented at the conference on Business and Biodiversity in Lisbon (see also the conference background paper on business and biodiversity partnerships)¹. These include alliances between mobile phone giant Nokia and WWF; and building materials company Holcim and IUCN. For companies such as Nokia, "environmental sustainability is no longer optional, it is the license to operate," says vice president and head of environmental affairs, Nokia Corporation, Kirsi Sormunen.

One successful partnership was recently agreed on the initiative of Péter Olajos, a Hungarian Member of the European Parliament. The "Unobstructed Skies" agreement was inspired by the actions of two LIFE-Nature projects in Hungary. It aimed to reduce the number of birds that die as a result of the unsecured power grid in Hungary, where migratory bird populations are very important.

According to MME / BirdLife Hungary, around 30,000 birds perish every year from electric shocks from unsecured power lines. The damage caused in the process is valued at some €5 million.

There are around 645,000 medium voltage power lines in Hungary and some 215,000 of these are dangerous for birds. The "unobstructed skies" agreement provides for coating all high voltage power lines and power grids that could be dangerous for birds with a protective lining by 2020. The costs will be covered by Hungarian and EU funds as well as electricity suppliers. This strategic agreement is a very important step forward for the conservation of bird species in Hungary and it may well inspire other countries to follow suit.

Signatories to the agreement included the Hungarian Environment Ministry, MME/BirdLife Hungary group, three major electricity providers and the LIFE-Nature projects: "Conservation of

Aquila heliaca in the Carpathian basin" (LIFE02 NAT/H/008627) and "Conservation of *Falco cherrug* in the Carpathian basin" (LIFE06 NAT/H/000096).

The actions and results of these LIFE-Nature projects paved the way for the nationwide agreement. Across Europe, there are several LIFE-Nature projects that have carried out similar actions to protect birds.

Another good example of a beneficial working partnership is the Portuguese Banco Espírito Santo and the Institute for the Conservation of Nature and Biodiversity (ICNB), Portugal. The bank has established an annual biodiversity award scheme (see box), in recognition of R&D and innovative projects focusing on biodiversity.

LIFE winners of Portuguese Biodiversity Award Scheme

Two LIFE-Nature projects have won prizes in the 2007 Portuguese Banco Espírito Santo Biodiversity Award Scheme. The top prize was awarded to the LIFE-Nature project "Important bird areas for seabirds in Portugal" (LIFE04 NAT/P/000213), which received unanimous support from the judges and a prize of €75,000 for its survey and educational work improving knowledge about the protection of marine birds in the Atlantic Ocean. LIFE-Nature's "PRIOLO" project (LIFE03 NAT/P/000013) also received commendations by the judges for its work restoring Bullfinch habitats in the Azores and won a prize of €3,000. The project has involved new management measures, introduction of native species and removal of exotic species as well as surveillance measures and a series of awareness-raising activities aimed at the local population.

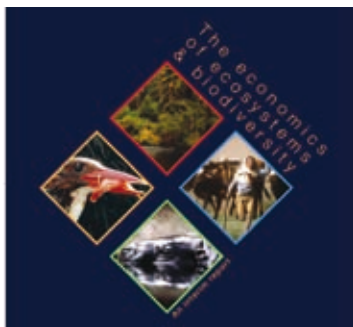
Photo: P. Gerardo



Northern gannet, Atlantic Ocean

¹ Business and Biodiversity Partnerships:
<http://countdown2010.net/business>

Review on the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity



Preliminary findings of a "Review on the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity" were presented at the Ninth Conference of the Parties (COP-9) of the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Germany in May 2008. This global study was instigated as part of an initiative on biodiversity, launched in 2007 in Potsdam, Germany, at a meeting of environment ministers from the G8, together with five leading emerging economies.

The interim report sets out the case for a comprehensive assessment of the economic value of biodiversity and ecosystem services. It reviews latest knowledge about biodiversity loss, the decline of ecosystem services and the impacts of these trends on human well-being and the Millennium Development Goals.

It also examines methodologies for evaluation of biodiversity and ecosystem services and looks to the future with a vision of better integrating valuation in policy measures, including payments for ecosystem services and green accounting. The final report will be presented at the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP-10) in 2010.

Survey on attitudes of Europeans towards biodiversity

An EU survey on attitudes to biodiversity shows an overwhelming majority of Europeans believe that the loss of biological diversity is a serious problem. The (November 2007) survey highlights the concern of Europeans regarding the decline and extinction of animal and plant species, natural habitats and ecosystems.

According to its findings, Europeans see air and water pollution and man-made disasters such as oil spills and industrial accidents as the greatest threats to biodiversity (27%). This is followed by climate change (19%), the intensification of agriculture, deforestation and overfishing (13%), and the construction of roads, housing, or industrial areas (8%).

The EU has legislated on biodiversity since the 1970s. The cor-

Photo: European Commission



Climate change – a threat to biodiversity

nerstone of its biodiversity policy is the Natura 2000 network, which now covers around 20% of the Union's total land area. However, the Eurobarometer survey reveals that Europeans have little knowledge of Natura 2000 – 80% say they have never heard of it and of those who have, few know exactly what it is.

This survey clearly demonstrates the need to increase communication efforts both at National and EU level. Some Member States already have effective communication initiatives and lessons from these need to be more widely applied.

For more information, see the Eurobarometer 2007 report summary: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/pdf/flash_eurobarometer_2007_biodiversity_summary.pdf



Carprobrotus edulis is proving fatal for the natural flora of Minorca

Photo: LIFE00 NAT/E/007355

Nature's uninvited guests under scrutiny

Europe's biodiversity is under threat from species from abroad such as muskrats and giant hogweed, but little is known about the extent of the problem. These invasive alien species (IAS) can disrupt local flora and fauna and cause considerable damage to nature and the economy. In March this year, the Commission launched an eight-week web-based survey to gather suggestions about how to address this issue most effectively at EU level. The results of the survey will inform a Commission Communication on an EU framework for Invasive Alien Species to be adopted by the end of the year.

"Europe is committed to halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010," says Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas. "We know that invasive species are one of the major threats to biodiversity, and that economies often suffer as a result, but we lack a harmonised system for tackling the problem and assessing its impact".

Biodiversity Action Plan: 2007 report on implementation

The first annual report on progress in the delivery of the EU's Biodiversity Action Plan was published earlier this year (January 2008). The 2007 report, which focuses on action at Community level, shows some progress in relation to each of the objectives, targets and actions of the 2006 Biodiversity Action Plan. However, much of this relates to existing legislation, in particular the establishment of the Natura 2000 network.

Important new initiatives are working towards an EU framework on invasive alien species, strength-

ening partnerships on business and biodiversity, communicating biodiversity and the launch of a review of the economics of biodiversity loss.

The report highlights that it is still difficult to demonstrate significant progress in the integration of biodiversity into other policies relating to the wider EU countryside and marine environments, and in reinforcing the compatibility of regional and territorial development with biodiversity in the EU. It also shows that there is a need to strengthen synergies between climate change and biodiversity objectives.

Good progress has been made in enhancing global governance and

addressing trade in illegal timber. The mainstreaming of biodiversity in bilateral development cooperation and in EU trade policies remains an important challenge. Meanwhile, the Commission is now preparing its 2008 mid-term report, which will also assess progress by the Member States. Publication is expected this autumn. Download the 2007 report at:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/knowledge/rep_biodiv_ap/pdf/2007_report.pdf;

and the detailed annex on 150 actions at:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/knowledge/rep_biodiv_ap/pdf/2007_report_annex.pdf

CBD COP 9 and International Biodiversity Day

The Ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD COP 9) took place on 19-30 May in Bonn, Germany. The high-level meeting, hosted by Germany, also coincided with International Biodiversity Day, on 22 May 2008, which this year focused on "Biodiversity and Agriculture" in order to highlight the importance of sustainable agriculture not only to preserve biodiversity, but also to ensure that we will be able to feed the world, maintain agricultural livelihoods, and enhance human well being into the 21st century and beyond. For more information, visit the conference website:

<http://www.cbd.int/cop9/>

IUCN European species assessments

A new study of the conservation status of European species, based on European Red Lists, is being prepared for the European Commission by IUCN – the World Conservation Union. The 36-month study will provide a set of European species assessments – Red Lists – on pan-European and EU level (27 Member States), according to IUCN's widely recognised, global Red List criteria and guidelines for classifying species by their extinction risk.

The study will provide European Red Lists for the following:

- amphibians and reptiles;
- dragonflies, butterflies and saproxylic beetles; and
- molluscs and some families of vascular plants.

First results for the European species assessments for amphibians and reptiles are expected at the end of 2008. These will be followed by Red Lists for dragonflies, butterflies and saproxylic beetles (end of 2009); and for molluscs and vascular plants (end of 2010).

The information collected on each species will include taxonomy, geographic range, distribution status in Europe, population, habitat and ecology, major threats, and



Southern damselfly (*Coenagrion mercuriale*)

conservation measures. These assessments will supplement the European assessment for mammals, published May 2007, see:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/ema/index.htm>.

Natura 2000 factsheet

A new information source on the Natura 2000 network is now available. It includes key facts and updated information on the recent progress of existing (Atlantic, Boreal, Continental, Alpine, Macaronesian, Mediterranean) and new (Pannonian) lists. http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/info/pubs/docs/nat2000/factsheet_en.pdf



Natura 2000 Partner reward scheme

Work on a new scheme to reward people, organisations or institutions that have proved particularly effective in the management of and the communication on Natura 2000 sites has been initiated by the Commission. The annual "Natura 2000 Partners" awards will start in 2009. They are open to any public or private-sector institution or organisation – including local authorities, municipalities, NGOs, companies, farms, land owners, tourism/recreation bodies, etc – that has made a special contribution to the integrated management of Natura 2000 sites, or raised awareness of the sites. The selection will be made annually, by national selection committees to be established by the competent authorities in the Member States. The awards, which will include the title, "Natura 2000 Partner of the year", will be announced by the Commission, selected from the Natura 2000 partners designated by the national authorities.

EU Biodiversity Action Plan: brochure and posters



The EU agenda to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010, in particular the Biodiversity Action Plan, is explained in this informative brochure: The

publication also features examples of implementation actions. Posters illustrating selected objectives of the plan are also available. Download the brochure, "The European Union's Biodiversity Action Plan - Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 - and beyond" at:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/info/pubs/paper_en.htm; and the posters at:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/info/pubs/posters_en.htm

Pan-European conference on large carnivores

This pan-European event, held on 10-11 June in Postojna, Slovenia, discussed work on the Guidelines for Population Level Management Plans for Large Carnivores (brown bear, wolf, Eurasian lynx, wolverine) – an initiative launched by the Commission over two years ago. Work on the guidelines, carried out on behalf of the Commission by the Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe, involved lengthy discussions with the Member States,



Photo: LIFE00 NAT/H/007162

Eurasian lynx (Lynx lynx) has been successfully reintroduced in some parts of Europe

including 15 national and/or international workshops over the two-year period.

Sixth European Conference on ecological restoration



The Society for Ecological Restoration is organising an international conference in Ghent, Belgium in September, addressing new developments in European ecological restoration. The event: "Towards

a sustainable future for European ecosystems – Providing restoration guidelines for Natura 2000 habitats and species", takes place on 8-12 September 2008. Through lectures, workshops, poster sessions and excursions, it offers a unique opportunity for exchange of knowledge, experiences and good practices in the Natura 2000 network. Further information is available at: <http://www.ser2008.be>

IUCN World Conservation Congress

More than 8,000 of the world's leading decision makers in sustainable development: from governments, NGOs, business, the UN and academia will attend this year's IUCN World Conservation Congress, to be held in Barcelona on 5-14 October. Topics to be addressed by the 10-day event include climate change, safeguarding a healthy environment, and global diversity. For more information, see:

http://cms.iucn.org/news_events/events/congress/index.cfm

LIFE and Europe's wetlands – restoring a vital ecosystem



Wetland ecosystems contain an important part of Europe's biodiversity. They provide ideal conditions for a vast diversity of habitats and species, and are

especially important for birds. This brochure presents a selection of wetland projects that have received EU LIFE programme co-funding since 1992. Published by the Commission, 2007, 68p, it is available in English from the publications section of the LIFE website:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/>



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For details on LIFE and LIFE-Nature projects see: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/>



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