



Natura 2000 and Estuaries

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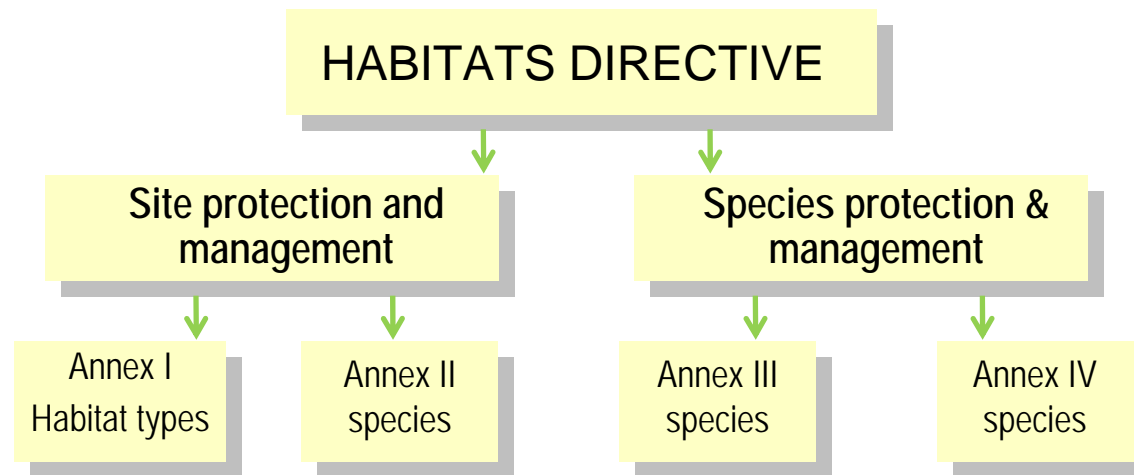


Natura 2000 and Estuaries

- In response to the rapid **global decline in biodiversity**, the European Union set itself the goal, at the European Summit in Gothenburg in 2001, “to halt the decline of biodiversity in the EU by 2010.
- The Natura 2000 network is the **cornerstone of the EU’s biodiversity policy** and the main instrument to achieve this objective.
- **Estuaries and coastal zones are among the most productive ecosystems of the world**, with both high ecological and economic values. They are of prime importance for wildlife, especially migrating and breeding birds.

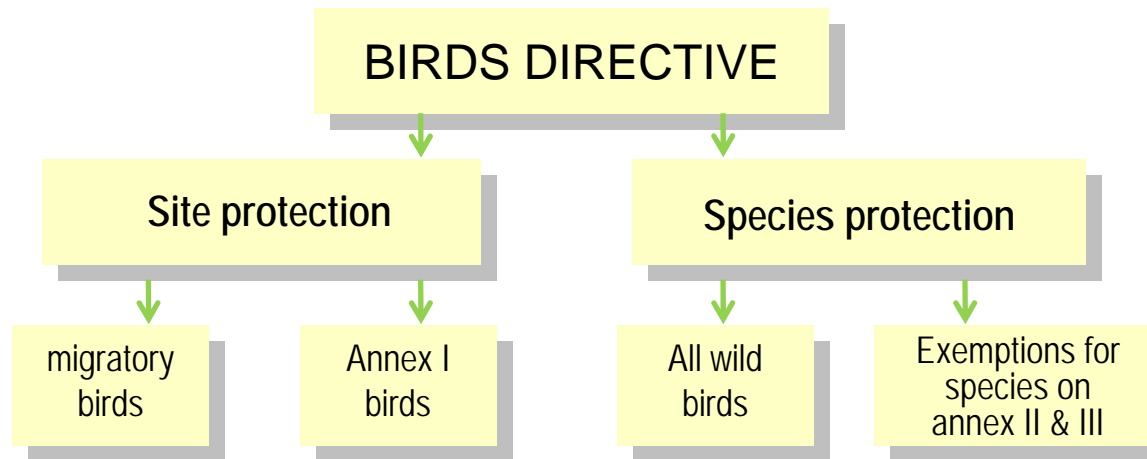
The Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)

- ❖ **Protects** 1000+ threatened plants and animals and ca 230 habitat types
- ❖ **Overall objective is** to ensure that these species and habitat types are maintained at, or restored to, a '*favourable conservation status*'.



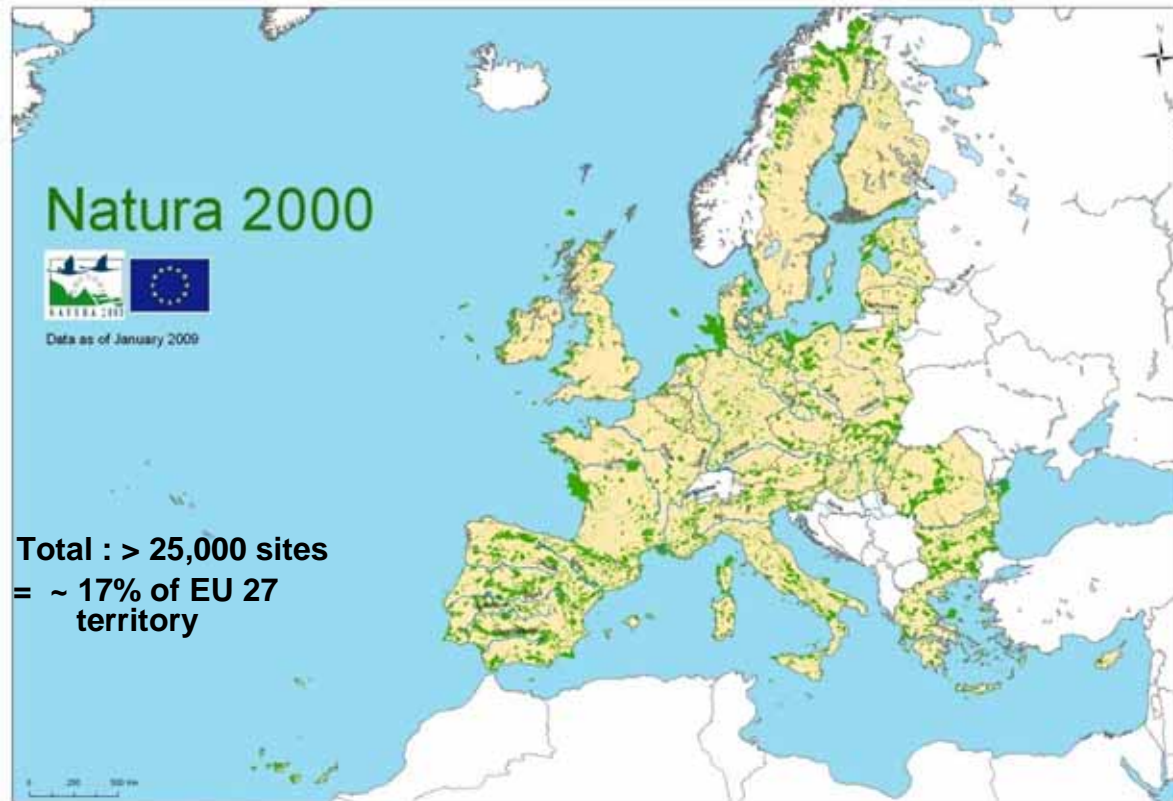
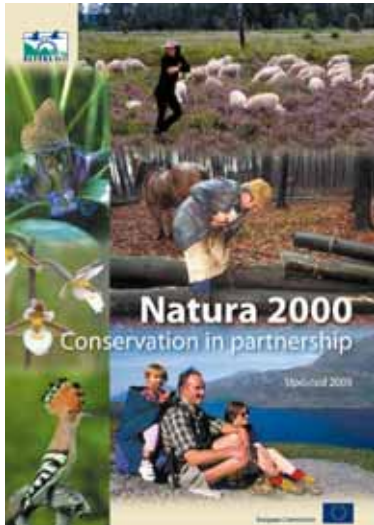
The Birds Directive (79/409/EEC)

- ❖ Protects all **species of naturally occurring birds in the wild state in the EU.**
- ❖ Overall objective is to **maintain the populations of all wild bird species in the EU at a level which *corresponds to their ecological, scientific and cultural requirements, or to adapt the population of these species to that level.***



The Natura 2000 Network

The largest co-ordinated network of conservation areas in the World



Managing Natura 2000 sites

Within all Natura 2000 sites:

- ❖ Damaging activities must be avoided **that could significantly disturb the species and/or habitats for which the site has been designated;**
- ❖ Positive measures are taken, **where necessary to maintain and restore those habitats and species to a favourable conservation status in their natural range**



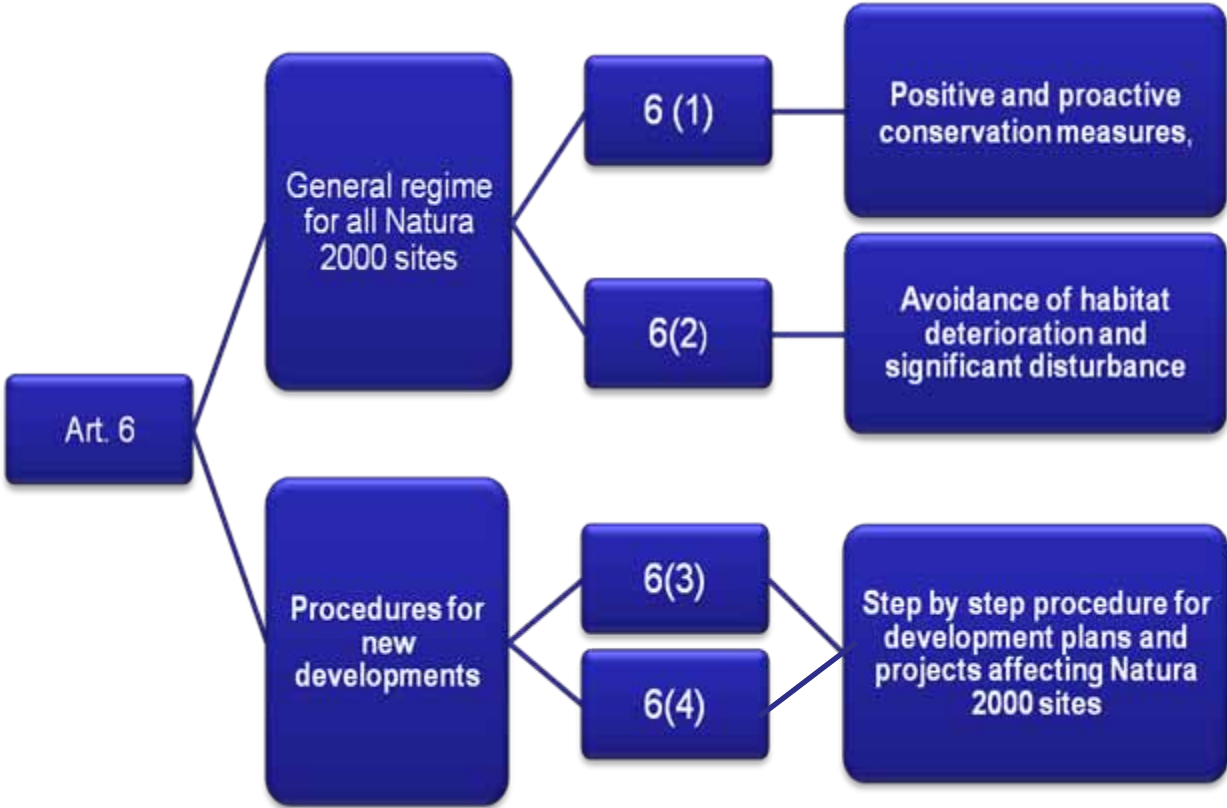
The ultimate objective is to ensure that the species and habitats types reach «favourable conservation status »

Development projects in NATURA 2000 sites

- no '*a priori*' prohibition of new activities or developments
- judged on 'case by case' basis
- procedure for assessments & decisions
- additional safeguards for priority habitats/species



Habitats Directive Article 6 provisions:



Habitats Directive, Art. 6 (1)

Member States shall establish the necessary conservation measures

- with **appropriate management** plans and
- statutory, administrative or contractual measures

for habitats and species of the sites

Habitats Directive, Art. 6 (2)

In Natura 2000 sites Member States shall take appropriate steps to **avoid**

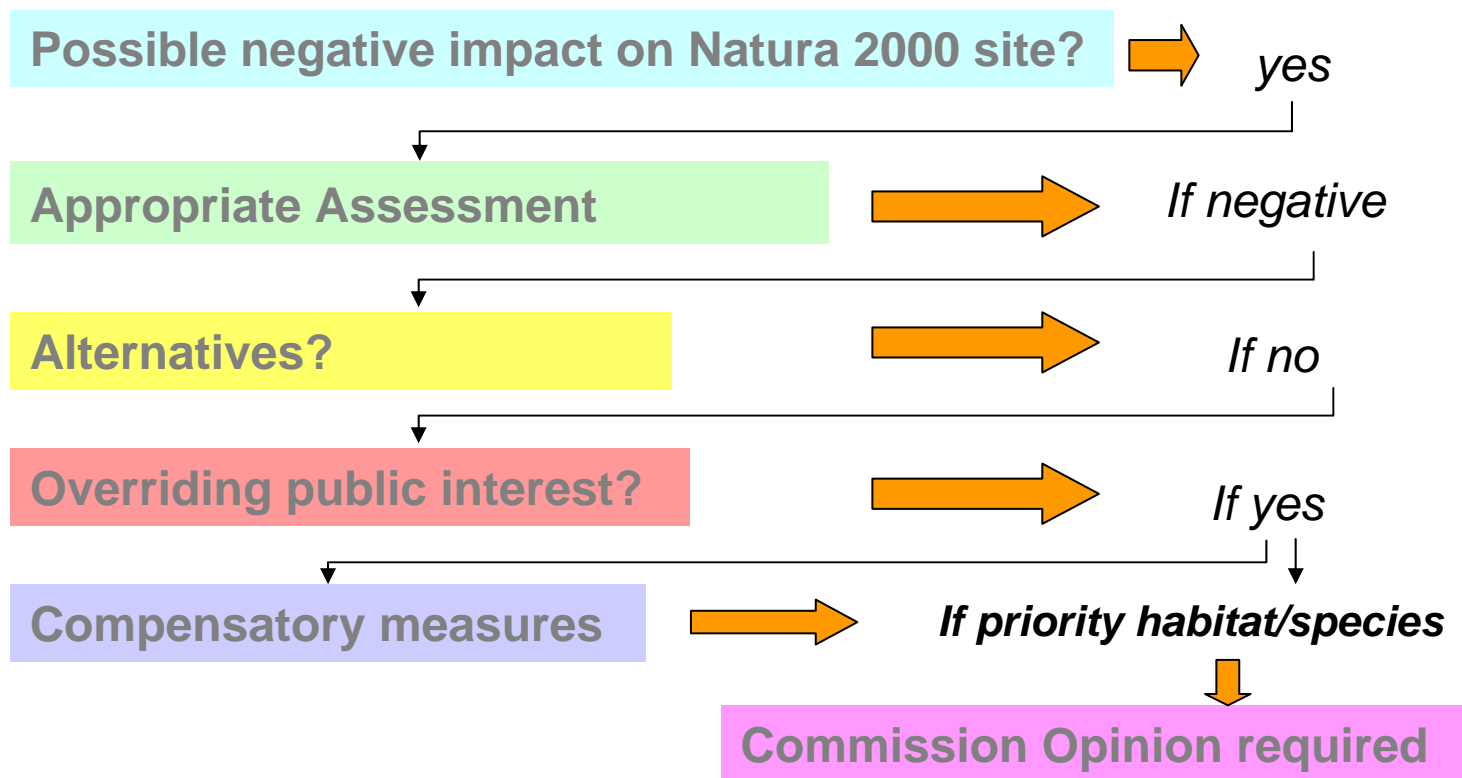
- **deterioration** of habitats
- **disturbance** of the species

Habitats Directive, Art. 6 (3)

Any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on the site (whether located in the site parameter or not), either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to **appropriate assessment** of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives.

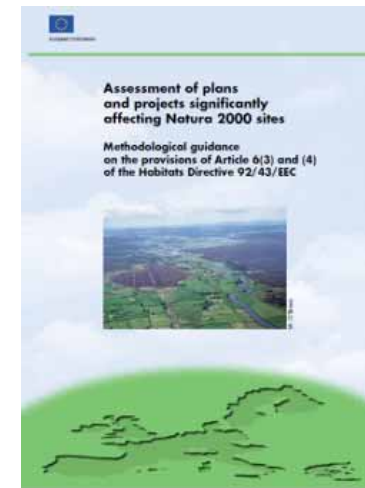
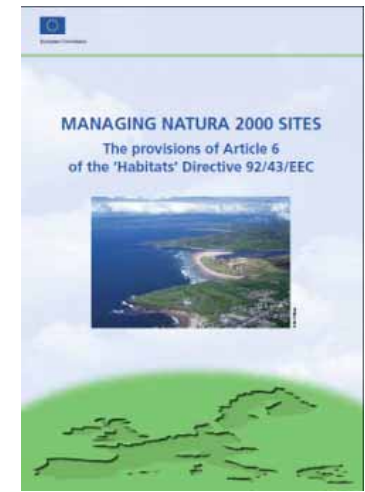
The competent authorities shall agree to the plan or project if the integrity of the site is guaranteed

Step-by-step assessment of plans and projects affecting Natura 2000 sites (Art 6.3 & 6.4)



Commission Guidance Article 6 of Habitats Directive

- ❖ **Managing Natura 2000 sites (2000)**
- ❖ **Assessment of plans and projects :
methodological guide Art 6 (3) & (4)**
- ❖ **Guidance on Article 6 (4)**
- ❖ **Sector specific guidance**
(forthcoming on wind farms, ports and
estuaries, non-energy extractive industries,
rivers, ...)



Guidance on estuaries and coastal zones: Working group on estuaries

Joint DG TREN and DG ENV initiative

- To bring together key players from national authorities, interest groups and the Commission services;
- To discuss the interactions between ports and waterway transport and EU environmental protection provisions for Natura 2000 estuaries and coastal zones;
- To provide guidelines on the interpretation of existing Art. 6 guidelines for estuaries and coastal zones;

The protection regime under the Habitats Directive: The solution – not the cause – of problems

Alternative I: Planning of project, afterwards assessment on negative effects

“I carry out my project, (unfortunately) with negative implications on nature, and compensate as much as possible“

→ compensation afterwards, Art. 6(4)

Alternative II: Integrated management (planning integrates nature values and ecosystem services)

“I carry out the best overall solution for my target, without damaging the ecological structure”

→ mitigation actions before, Art. 6(4) not necessary

The problem:

- Protection regime contains a well-established requirement to assess environmental implications of projects;
- **However**, in practice, the process is often complicated: may be frustrations, delays and increased costs
- If a design exists first, Article 6 assessment is necessarily about damage mitigation, limitation or compensation
- This approach is not the most efficient one
- Potential for missed opportunities!

The solution: “Working with Nature*”

- An integrated process, applied early in a project
- Aims at identifying and exploiting win-win solutions which respect nature and are acceptable to project proponents and environmental stakeholders
- Based on a shift in philosophy from ‘control’ to ‘management’
- Represents a medium-long term ambition

*From *PIANC* position paper (10/2008)

(*PIANC* - The World Association for Water borne Transport Infrastructure)

Working with Nature: what does it mean?

Working with Nature **requires a subtle shift in approach to:**

- **focus on achieving project objectives in an ecosystem context rather than assessing consequences of a pre-defined design (>> integrated management)**
- **focus on identifying win-win solutions rather than simply minimising ecological harm (>> partnership)**
- **>> better order in:**
 - ➔ 1. defining project needs and targets
 - ➔ 2. understanding environmental impacts (positive and negative)
 - ➔ 3. stakeholder and interest group involvement, use of win-win solutions where possible
 - ➔ 4. elaborate project design, which allows achieving project needs and targets and gives benefits for nature

Natura 2000 and people...

- Natura 2000 is about **nature and people**. Site conservation depends on *co-operation of local communities* and shall bring benefit to them.
- Natura 2000 is not about stopping development but it is ensuring **sustainable use** of nature and a healthy, intact environment. It can, if well used, be a positive element in economic development.
- Natura 2000 is a tool of **integration of policies** on EU but also on national and regional level, it needs different sectors work together.
- Natura 2000 is about **‘working with nature’**

Thank you for your attention



<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/home.htm>

Working Group on Estuaries and Coastal Zones:

<http://circa.europa.eu/Public/irc/env/estuary/home>