FACT SHEET

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF NATURA 2000 IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

CEEweb for Biodiversity

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“PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY

CREATES JOBS, STIMULATES INVESTMENT

AND GIVES OUR EUROPEAN INDUSTRY A COMPETITIVE EDGE.

AND AT TIMES OF RECESSION, IT PRESENTS US

WITH A NUMBER OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

OFFERED BY ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION.“

Karmenu Vella

European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

Business and Biodiversity Platform: 1st Annual Conference Speech

21 November 2014, Brussels.

INTRODUCTION

This fact sheet aims to show the socio-economic benefits of the Natura 2000 network in Central and Eastern Europe. It presents examples of successful nature preservation projects which are also socio-economic growth drivers.

WHAT IS THE NATURA 2000 NETWORK?

Natura 2000 was established under the Birds (1979) and Habitats (1992) Directives to ensure nature is preserved for future generations. The network covers **over 27,000 water and land sites** (covering one million square kilometres) and protects **23% of animal and plant species and 16% of habitats.**[1]

In order to halt the loss of biodiversity, the European Union committed to several biodiversity objectives in 2011 (EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020). The Natura 2000 network highly contributes to meet these targets and to **stop global biodiversity loss by 2020.**

As the European Commission is currently undertaking **the Fitness Check of the Habitats and Birds Directives** (the review of the legislation and implementation), CEEweb for Biodiversity strongly supports the directives deeming them fit for purpose.

A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMUNITY

Natura 2000 does not exclude human activities from the protected areas but rather gives priority to **sustainable use of the sites**. Therefore, Natura 2000 not only protects the environment but it also **benefits society and the economy.**
Natura 2000 sites **annually provide between €200 to €300 billion,** hosting 1,2 to 2,2 billion visitor per day and generating between €5 and €9 billion recreational benefits.[2]

"EVERYONE HAS A ROLE TO PLAY IN MAKING NATURA2000 A SUCCESS – BE THEY PUBLIC AUTHORITIES, PRIVATE LANDOWNERS AND USERS, DEVELOPERS, CONSERVATION NGOS, SCIENTIFIC EXPERTS, LOCAL COMMUNITIES. THIS IS THE LEGACY OF PARTNERSHIP THAT WE SHOULD AIM TO LEAVE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS."

Janez Potočnik
European Commissioner for the Environment, 2013

NATURA 2000: A "MOTOR OF THE ECONOMY"

Natura 2000 network is the largest network of protected areas in the world and acts as an economic and social driver.

Natura 2000 is also a **tool for security**, reducing the damages caused by **natural disasters** such as droughts and landslides. The network strengthens the ecosystem's resilience to disasters. For instance, while improving water retention, various Natura 2000 sites reduce flooding risks. Maintaining well-functioning ecosystems is of high-importance since **the economic losses from natural disasters amounted €163 billion** from 1990 to 2010. [3]

Water purification and provision has a double impact on **human health and money-saving**. The benefits arising from natural treatment from ecosystem can also be transferred to consumers through cost reduction. It has been estimated that water purification's economic benefits are **between €7 and €16 million per year** and per European city. [4]

In addition, the preservation of wetlands, grasslands and forests contribute to **climate change mitigation**. 9,6 billion tonnes of carbon are currently stored by Natura 2000 sites, representing between €600 and €1,130 billion in total (2010 stock value). [5]

Tourism is another important feature of the Natura 2000 network. Each year a significant number of tourists come to visit and enjoy Natura 2000's recreational activities while contributing to the support of their surrounding regional economies. [6]

In addition, Natura 2000 aids local employment by maintaining functioning ecosystems in Europe for the over 4 million jobs dependent on them. According to the 2011 Final Report of the DG Environment of the European Commission, Natura 2000 supports between **4,5 and 8 million full time jobs.**[7] Wages and livelihoods are created thanks to the Natura 2000 network.

Natura 2000 also has considerable effects on food security. The creation of Marine Protected Areas prevents overfishing and ensures healthy fish production for millions of Europeans, providing over €1,4 billion annually. [8]

CASE STUDIES

ON NATURA2000

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS

WATER RESTORATION IN THE TISZA RIVER BASIN

LOCATION: Nagykörű-Tóalj, Tiszakürt and Tiszajenő sites, Hungary.

BACKGROUND: In the Carpathian Mountains, several LIFE projects were developed to manage the floodplains along the Tisza river. For centuries, the Hungarian lowland plain experienced spring floods which provided abundant birdlife and rich habitats. However, recent droughts led to an extensive use of lands.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The aim of the LIFE project (2001-2005)[9], called **Theiss - Management of floodplains on the Tisza** was to reintroduce environmentally friendly land-use practices in the Natura 2000 site.

ACTORS: WWF Austria and WWF Hungary.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS: Infrastructures were improved and new reservoirs were developed to restore the water bodies (about 96ha) and improve grassland habitats (290ha). During the program, sustainable grazing and meadow management was implemented and 10 permanent jobs have been created for farmers at Nagykörű-Tóalj, Tiszakürt and Tiszajenő sites.

THE STIPA PROJECT'S CONTRIBUTION TO ECONOMIC GROWTH

LOCATION: Sighișoara-Târnava Mare, Romania.

BACKGROUND: The collapse of traditional rural economies has led to the disappearance of grassland areas and the spread of scrubland in the 90 000 hectares Natura 2000 site.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The aim of the LIFE project (2010-2013), called **Saving Transylvania's Important Pastoral Ecosystems (STIPA)**[10] was to improve the conservation status of dry grassland habitats.

ACTORS: Fundatia ADEPT Transilvania.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS: The project successfully implemented a **model of sustainable grassland management** in one of the largest High-Nature-Value lowland areas in the European Union. Along with the improvement of the conservation status of EU protected habitats, the plan provides **sustainable livelihoods in rural areas** and economic growth. Winner of the 2015 Socio-Economic Benefits Award, the Romanian project generated **€2,5 million annual benefits**, increasing the **incomes of 2300 farming families.**

THE COPERNICUS SCIENCE CENTRE GREEN ROOF

LOCATION: Warsaw, Poland.

BACKGROUND: The Natura 2000 and **Green infrastructure** networks are compatible tools to tackle habitat loss and contribute to sustainable socio-economic growth. In the Natura 2000 Site "Middle Vistula Valley" crossing Warsaw, 280 bird species have been recorded. It is thus considered as an important migration corridor for many endangered species.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: In 2010, the Copernicus Science Centre, located in the city centre of Warsaw, opened a green rooftop garden to contribute to the conservation of the Natura 2000 area. [11]

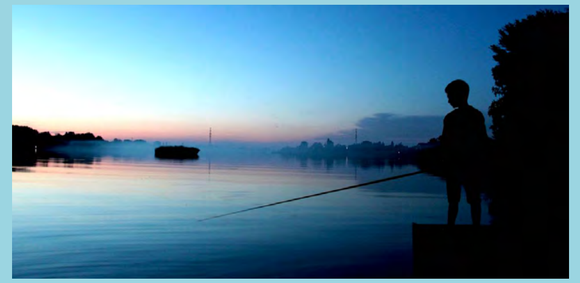
ACTORS: The Copernicus Science Centre, the City of Warsaw, the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education and the Polish Ministry of National Education.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS: The new habitat provides many services such as a place for **recreation and relaxation** and a **home for insects and birds** - 160 species regularly breed here and at least 23 of these are listed in Annex I of EU Birds Directive. During winter the rooftop isolates from the cold and in summer it prevents the building from overheating. Indeed, when the rooftop heats up to 80°C, the garden surface stays at ambient temperature.

"GREEN ROOFS IMPROVE THE MICROCLIMATE: MOISTURISE THE AIR AND HAMPER ITS MOVEMENTS. THEY HELP TO REDUCE SMOG AND COMBAT THE URBAN HEAT ISLAND EFFECT"

Joanna Jurkiewicz, *CNK*

REHABILITATION OF THE LOWER DANUBE GREEN CORRIDOR



LOCATION: Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova and Ukraine.

BACKGROUND: In the last few years, European countries have experienced over 100 major floods, resulting in €25 billion economic losses. In 2000, the four countries signed a regional agreement establishing a 1000 km long corridor along the Danube to ensure a **sustainable use of the water.**

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The 2014 **Lower Danube Green Corridor restoration** contributed to restore floodplain and ensure flood protection in the region. [12]

ACTORS: WWF Danube-Carpathian programme.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS: Sections of dikes have been removed and river meanders have been reconnected to the river to prevent flooding risks. It has been estimated that **€500 per hectare per year benefits** have been provided through **flood alleviation services** when the 2005 Danube flood resulted in €396 million in damages.

ECOTOURISM AT SLITERE NATIONAL PARK

LOCATION: North of Latvia.

SITE DESCRIPTION: In the Natura 2000 site **Slitere national park**, a sustainable tourism-management plan was implemented to reconcile tourism and nature conservation.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: From 2009 to 2012, the **POLPROP-NATURA project** (*Proposals for environmental policy and governance based on demonstration of environmental, social and economic benefits from tourism*)[13] aimed at creating **tourism products** and a marketing strategy to promote Natura 2000 benefits. **Hiking, cycling** and **boating** activities were introduced and preference was giving to less environmentally sensitive areas.

ACTORS: Latvian Country Holiday Association, (Lauku Celotajs), the European Centre for Ecological and Agricultural Tourism (the Netherlands).

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS: The project supported sustainable management of the site, generating long term socioeconomic benefits for the park. Thanks to attractive nature-based products (plant finder, touring route description sheets) **tourism increased** and in 2011, visitors spent around **€1 million** in the park. The number of **companies** providing travel services also rose from **23 to 48** after the project, ensuring additional work places.

RESTORATION IN THE BIALOWIEZA FOREST

LOCATION: Białowieża, Poland.

SITE DESCRIPTION: The **Białowieża Forest Natura 2000 site** is known as a 'living biological laboratory." The Białowieża National park was founded in the 20's, however it only covers 16% of the forestry site. In 2004, the whole forest was included in the the Natura 2000 network.

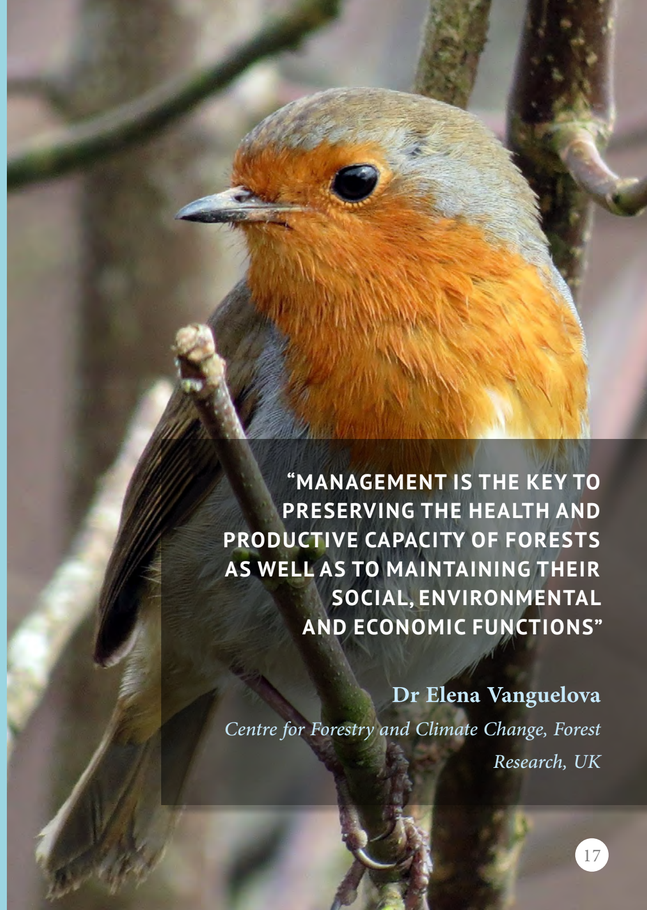
Project description: The LIFE+ project called **Land of the Bison** promoted the protection of the European bison and implemented an ecosystem approach management in the **most ecologically valuable forest in Poland.**

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS: Many vital services such as **fuel, food and medicines** are highly preserved since the area is included in the Natura 2000 network.

Local households are able to use **wild berries, mushrooms and nuts** for around **€250,000** in selling it to the food processing industry. The "Białowieski lipiec" label given to local honey ensures that the produce is high quality and provides a regular revenue to local population.

Inhabitants also benefit from **firewood to heat** their home and natural herbs, fungi and wild berries processed into medicines by the Polish company Herbapol.

Protecting the biodiversity of the Natura 2000 site also secures **water provisioning services** for domestic, business and recreational use. Hosting dozens of **outdoors activities** (walking, bird watching, biking, canoeing etc.), the numbers of tourists is tremendously increasing each year. **110 jobs** are directly dependent on the national park. The forest provides timber for **€6,000,000 per annum**, and over **80% of the wood is sold out of the region.** [14]



"MANAGEMENT IS THE KEY TO PRESERVING THE HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVE CAPACITY OF FORESTS AS WELL AS TO MAINTAINING THEIR SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC FUNCTIONS"

Dr Elena Vanguelova

Centre for Forestry and Climate Change, Forest Research, UK

ESSENTIAL SERVICES OF IGNIŞ SITE

LOCATION: North West Carpathians, Romania.
SITE DESCRIPTION: **The Igniş Natura 2000 site** hosts numerous habitats and species of high nature value. Over 60% of threatened plant species and many herbivores and birds of pray such as falcon and owl are found on the 20,295-hectare site.
PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Including this area within the Natura 2000 networks aims to maintain the wetlands and preserve the forest's water retention capacity and flood control functions.
SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS: The self-regulating site offers many goods to the local population such as **food, firewood, and natural medicines**. The site also provides **drinking water for 2/3 of the population** of the municipality of Baia Mare. [15]
50% of the forest at the site ensure **watershed, soil and climate protection** as well as recreation services. Sustainable management of the region thus contributes to the maintenance of high quality drinking water and a viable environment.

HEALTH BENEFITS FROM NATURA 2000

The Natura 2000 network ensures that human activities do not degrade **air, water and soil quality.** Because biodiversity and human well-being are completely intertwined, it is necessary for the European Union to provide a comprehensive legal framework protecting both. The so-called Nature Legislations (Birds and Habitats Directive) thus contribute to the **protection of hundreds of thousands of Europeans.**
In West Hungary, the designation of Lake Hévíz as a Natura 2000 site ensures a strong protection of Europe's largest **thermal and medicinal source waters**. Hungary is the fifth highest health and medical destination in the world, and this unique area offers natural treatment of rheumatic and other health problems to international and local visitors. It has been estimated that Heviz tourists spend twice as much as visitors in other tourist destinations in Hungary.
In Eastern Poland, a **network of Nordic walking trails** was established in Hajnówka. This pioneer initiative provides mutual benefits to the local rural community and nature at the heart of the **Białowieża Natura 2000 forest**. While tourism benefits account for €100,000 paid in entrance fees per year, the area also promotes **health through outdoor physical activities** (such as cycling, biking, and canoeing) and raises environmental awareness.[16]

PROTECTING NATURAL POLLINATION

Conservation of natural pollinators is valuable to beekeepers, farmers and consumers. It has been estimated that each year **insect pollination** provides ecosystem services amount to **€14 billion in Europe.** In 2005, this ecological process represented 10% of agricultural yields for human food. By transferring the pollen grains to fertilize flowering plants, **bees and birds help nature to produce fruit and seed.**
Nature legislation and Natura 2000 network ensure protected habitats for insects and other species, providing food security in Europe. Natural pollination **increased the yields of almost 80 major crops**, representing 35% of the world production.
Preservation of Natura 2000 sites is of high importance since pollination is one of the most significant socio-economic benefits that nature provides to humans.[17]

“THIS IS NO LONGER A TIME WHEN IT’S THE ENVIRONMENT VERSUS THE ECONOMY. TODAY THE ENVIRONMENT IS THE ECONOMY”

Karmenu Vella

Natura 2000 awards welcoming speech

21 May 2015, Berlaymont, Brussels

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TAKE HOME MESSAGE:

By covering both marine and terrestrial sites, supporting the restoration of habitats, and conserving species, Natura 2000 is safeguarding Europe's natural heritage. According to one study, Natura 2000 **brings €200-€300 billion annual benefits,** whereas the management and the restoration of the sites **only cost €5.8 billion a year.**[18]

Over 4 million people whose jobs depend on the health of ecosystems are benefiting from the network. Important socio-economic benefits are also delivered by the protected sites: **air quality** preservation, **climate change mitigation** through carbon storage, natural pollinator conservation, water flow maintenance, **tourism and recreation**.
In the future, Natura 2000 will play a crucial role for the EU to meet its biodiversity and climate commitments.

NATURE FITS FOR ALL, TIME TO ACT!

CEEWEB FOR BIODIVERSITY

is a network of non-governmental organizations in the Central and Eastern European region working for 20 years in 20 countries. Our mission is the conservation of biodiversity through the promotion of sustainable development.

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