

EUSTAFOR Position Paper¹ Financing of Natura 2000

The European State Forest Association sees the need for a separate fund for the financing of Natura 2000

EUSTAFOR (European State Forest Association) represents:

- ***28 State Forest Enterprises in Europe with 110 000 employees***
- ***48 million hectares, or 30%, of EU forests***
- ***A sustainable annual increment of 155 million m³***
- ***A sustainable annual harvest of 115 million m³***
- ***The management of more than 10 million ha of protected forest***

The Natura 2000 system could be more successful in reaching all its targeted goals. It is highly indicated to analyze the reasons behind this and then try new options by integrating those players who are affected by the system and therefore have a serious influence in making the system fail or succeed.

The funding of the system is probably the most crucial issue. We believe it is necessary to concentrate the funding into one special funding scheme set aside specifically for Natura 2000 and at the same time give priority to the sites with the highest value. This has to be accompanied by simple but effective follow-up measures to guarantee that the money is used for the right purposes. To be able to do a fair follow-up it is necessary that each site be given a clearly identified conservation objective and goal to reach.

It also seems clear to us that to reach the goals, greater funds are needed to stimulate and to increase the support. If it is possible to find funds through private market mechanisms, then this should be tried.

We also believe that whenever a site with high value is identified, it is essential to seek cooperation between all parties involved, independent of type of ownership. Today, public forests are not eligible for funding under the Natura 2000 Rural Development Program. We believe that possibility should be opened up to them in order to speed up the process and thereby reach the goals accordingly.

In the eyes of the public it is very hard to understand why one owner's forest, located on one side of a border, is considered to be so valuable that the EU wants to spend money on it, restricting the ownership rights and impacting related management practices, yet at the same time the owner of the neighboring forest on the other side of the border remains unaffected due to a different legal status.

Natura 2000 needs to revise its existing implementation practices: adapted, goal-oriented, and appropriate funding mechanisms are now overdue.

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¹ Any statement in this document is to be considered as a reflection of the best available professional expertise and does not necessarily reflect the political commitments of individual member states.