

NATURE SCORE CARD



Italy

Italy has been a member of the European Union since 1957. Its Natura 2000 network consists of 2596 sites, covering 63.979 km². Terrestrial sites cover 57.173 km² (19% of the land area) while marine N2000 sites cover 6806 km². The below analysis and recommendations suggest that national authorities still need to make further efforts in order to fully implement the Birds and Habitats Directives and effective conservation of threatened species and habitats to be achieved on the ground.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transposition of the Birds and Habitats Directives
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site designation • Species protection • Funding and resources • Habitats and species monitoring • Promotion of research • Non-native species
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of sites • Avoid deterioration of sites, disturbance of species and implementation of appropriate assessments • Landscape connectivity • Stakeholder engagement, public participation and communication

ACTION PLAN FOR NATURE IN ITALY

<p>Transposition and designation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure coherence between rules of different regions 	<p>Prevention of negative impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Properly apply the Appropriate Assessment • Introduce adequate administrative and penal sanctions • Ensure vigilance and enforcement
<p>Active management to achieve favourable conservation status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Natura 2000, particularly offshore • Draft site-specific management plans and/or conservation measures for all Natura 2000 sites • Ensure coherence in the regional management of Natura 2000 sites • Ensure the integrated management of Natura 2000 sites with other sectors and policies • Set habitat restoration goals and avoiding damage to the sites • Concretely ensure connectivity 	<p>Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earmark specific funds for the monitoring and management of the Natura 2000 network
<p>Monitoring and research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up for detailed monitoring plans for habitats and species and allocate appropriate ring-fenced funding for their implementation 	<p>Stakeholder engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earmark suitable funds for concrete and large-scale project to improve citizens' knowledge, awareness and sense of belonging with regards to Natura 2000 network

The information in this scorecard is based on expert analysis from FAI, Federazione Pro Natura, Legambiente, Lipu, and WWF. Full details on the following pages.

LEGAL REQUIREMENT	STATUS IN ITALY
<p>Transposition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The transposition of the Birds and Habitats Directives is considered complete in Italy. There is not always coherence between rules of different regions.
<p>Site designation</p> <p>Designate and establish sites that form the Natura 2000 network of protected areas</p> <p><i>Habitats Directive, art. 3 & 4</i> <i>Birds Directive, art. 3 & 4</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terrestrial sites are covering 57.173km² (18,97% of land area) while marine N2000 sites are covering 6.806 km² Overall, the terrestrial Natura 2000 network is nearly complete. Nevertheless, a number of new sites hosting important populations of species and habitats of community interest have not been included yet. The data that emerged from the biogeographic seminars should be the point of reference to assess these gaps at the national and regional levels. Below are some examples of sites that should be included in the Natura 2000 network: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IBA 115 – Maiella, Monti Pizzi and Monti Frentani, in Abruzzo, which hosts important populations of <i>Milvus milvus</i> and <i>Alectoris graeca</i> and should be designated as an SPA in its entirety. Equally urgent is the designation as SCI and SPA of the Malpensa and Lonate heathlands, which are threatened and host one of the largest healthy Italian areas of habitat 4030 “European dry heaths” (133,4 hectares) along with important populations of <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i> and <i>Coenonympha oedippus</i>. Also worthy of inclusion in the Natura 2000 network is the area where the Isonzo river runs along the Gorizian Karst, between the confluence with the Vipacco river and the town of Sagrado, which hosts nesting populations of <i>Circaetus gallicus</i>, <i>Bubo bubo</i>, <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>, <i>Pernis apivorus</i>, <i>Dryocopus martius</i>, <i>Lullula arborea</i> and occasionally <i>Falco peregrinus</i> and <i>Mergus merganser</i>. The marine Natura 2000 network is still incomplete, with regards both to SCIs and to SPAs. For example, there remain gaps in the designation of SCIs for <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> and <i>Caretta caretta</i>. Concerning SPAs, four new marine IBAs for <i>Calonectris diomedea</i> were identified in 2016 and should be designated as SPAs as soon as possible. Additionally, there is a lack of data on other seabirds (e.g. <i>Larus audouinii</i>, <i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>, <i>Puffinus yelkouan</i> and terns), especially in some areas (e.g. the Gulf of Trieste, which is currently not part of the Natura 2000 network). In light of the facts above, the European Commission has opened the EU Pilot 8348/16/ENVI for the failure to complete the designation of Natura 2000 network sites in Italy (both on land and at sea). Natura 2000 sites are regulated differently from national and regional protected areas (e.g. national parks). Additionally, while many Natura 2000 sites partially or fully overlap with protected areas, the management of Natura 2000 sites and protected areas is not truly integrated.
<p>Management of sites</p> <p>Establish site protection measures in Natura 2000 sites</p> <p><i>Habitats Directive, art. 6(1)</i> <i>Birds Directives, art. 4(1) & 4(2)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As far as it is known, conservation objectives have not been set, either at the national or biogeographic level, to take into account the problems identified by reporting under art. 12 and 17. The lack of data on the distribution and conservation status of species and habitats has a negative impact on conservation goals. The lack of coordination between the regions exacerbates this problem (e.g. for the conservation of species undergoing severe declines, such as <i>Alectoris graeca</i>, <i>Lagopus muta</i>, <i>Falco biarmicus</i>, <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i> and <i>Sternula albifrons</i>). Regarding the adequateness of the conservation objectives at the site level, the situation is quite varied across regions, and also within regions between different sites, with regards to: availability of site-specific data, responsibilities and competence of the managing bodies, date of drafting/updating of the management plans and/or conservation measures, and coordinating role played by the regional administration in drafting these plans. Generally speaking, many Natura 2000 sites, especially SPAs, still have excessively generic conservation goals that are not rooted in a detailed site-specific analysis keeping into account the actual pressures/threats faced by the site, the conservation status of the species and habitats for which the site

	<p>was designated, and the coherence of the network as a whole.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Until 2015, most regions only had general conservation measures, and very few Natura 2000 sites had site-specific conservation measures or management plans. • Encouragingly, the opening of the infringement procedure 2015/2163 on the designation of SCAs, which is still open, has led the regions to begin drafting site-specific conservation measures for SCIs, and in some cases for SPAs as well. As a result, 17 out of 21 regions/autonomous provinces have now designated some or all of the SCIs as SACs. • The quality of the management plans varies both across and within regions. Some regions coordinated the drafting of site-specific conservation measures, thus ensuring some degree of coherence between the conservation measures and/or management plans, while other regions did not, and the drafting of conservation measures or management plans was left up to the individual managing bodies, resulting in a lack of coherence. • The conservation measures for some sites were defined without any in-depth analysis of the situation and without including concrete, site-specific goals. On the other hand, in many other Natura 2000 sites, conservation measures are very generic. • <i>One problem is that some of the management plans that were recently approved are already obsolete (drafted in 2010 or earlier), and do not take into account neither the ecological nor the social changes/modifications occurred meanwhile.</i> • There remain major shortcomings in the management of SPAs in most regions, especially where SPAs do not overlap with SCIs, and were thus not the object of the infringement procedure 2015/2163. • Finally, the management of marine sites remains very inadequate. • Even if several management plans or conservation measures were recently drafted, most of management plans approved years ago are not yet implemented. • For those that were approved years ago, the lack of implementation is due to various factors, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ conservation measures are ignored in plans and programmes for other sectors; ○ the Appropriate Assessments for plans/projects that can have a negative impact on the sites are not drafted properly; ○ many conservation measures have not been mapped, causing problems in adopting regulations and thus activating Natura 2000 payments under the rural development programme; ○ some conservation measures are too generic, or consist of incentives / active interventions / monitoring activities for which sufficient funds are lacking. • More specifically, the lack of compliance with regulations is usually due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a near-total lack of vigilance; ○ insufficient knowledge on the Natura 2000 network, including by officers responsible for managing it; ○ the lack of sanctions to discourage violations (all too often, whatever sanctions do exist they do not outweigh the economic benefits arising from the non-compliance with conservation measures). • Clearly designated management authorities for Natura 2000 exist, but the problem is that various types of management authorities were designated, some of which, such as municipal administrations, often lack the skills and/or resources to adequately perform this task. In some regions, two or more management authorities were designated for the same Natura 2000 site, making it easy for the buck to be passed from one to the other. • In most cases, the conservation measures do not take climate change considerations into account.
<p>Species protection</p> <p>Ensure species protection</p> <p><i>Habitats Directive, art. 12-16</i> <i>Birds Directive, art. 5-9</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eleven species action plans have been approved at the national level, for the following bird species: <i>Numenius tenuirostris</i> (2001), <i>Larus audouinii</i> (2001), <i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i> (2001), <i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i> (2007), <i>Aythya nyroca</i> (2007), <i>Falco biarmicus</i> (2007), <i>Falco eleonorae</i> (2007), <i>Neophron percnopterus</i> (2009), <i>Alectoris graeca</i> (2016), <i>Perdix perdix</i> (2016) and <i>Falco naumanni</i> (2017). Although the action plans are meant to be updated after a few years, none of the older action plans have yet been updated.



Avoid deterioration of sites, disturbance of species and appropriate assessment

Ensure no deterioration of habitats and disturbance to species in Natura 2000 sites

Habitats Directive, art.6(2)

Ensure that plans or projects likely to affect Natura 2000 sites are subject to appropriate assessment

Habitats Directive 6(3)

Ensure that developments affecting the integrity of the site are not approved unless there are no alternative solutions, and for imperative reasons of overriding public interest and if compensatory measures are taken

Habitats Directive 6(4)

- Species action plans have been approved for four mammals: *Rupicapra pirenaica ornata* (2001), *Canis lupus* (2002), *Lutra lutra* (2011), *Ursus arctos* (2010 and 2011). The former two have not been revised yet, although a process for updating the wolf action plan is currently on hold.
- In 2012 Lipu carried out an analysis of bird action plans that showed an unsatisfactory level of implementation. The same is particularly true for the wolf action plan.
- There is no adequate indication of the necessary economic resources to develop the measures foreseen in the species Action Plans.
- There are few prohibitions in the action plans. What is lacking is a clear relationship between the threats identified by the action plans and the measures applied for species management.
- For instance, the action plan for *Alectoris graeca* (SPEC1¹), which was drafted in 2016, identifies hunting as one of the main factors behind population decreases in this species, including its disappearance from many areas of the central and southern Apennines. Nevertheless, the action plan does not set clear limits on hunting, and *Alectoris graeca* is still considered a game bird – albeit with bag limits based on population surveys – in the Alps (except for Liguria), Abruzzo, and Marche.
- Derogations on the full protection of brown bear (resulting in two cases of culling) have been issued in the Alpine population for alleged safety reasons, but the local acceptance of the species is strongly decreasing, whereas prohibition of other activities impacting on the species (e.g. unleashed dogs in cub areas) have not been enforced.
- To date 18 species with unfavourable conservation status are huntable in Italy. Five of them are classified as SPEC1 (*Alectoris graeca*, *Vanellus vanellus*, *Aythya ferina*, *Streptopelia turtur*, *Turdus iliacus*) in BirdLife International (2017). Only for three of the 18 species (*Alauda arvensis*, *Perdix perdix*, *Alectoris graeca*) a management plan is being drafted. Particular caution should be applied to all SPEC species for which provisions are markedly negative (es. *Lagopus muta*, *Alauda arvensis*).
- The article 6 procedures to assess projects and plans are not implemented adequately in any region.
- LIPU and WWF have submitted an extensive dossier documenting this to the European Commission, which opened the EU Pilot 6730/14/ENVI. Following the indications received by the European Commission, the Ministry of the Environment and the regions have recently drafted national guidelines on the appropriate assessment. It is now urgent that these guidelines become binding and that regions undertake all the concrete changes requested by the Commission in order for the assessment procedure to become effective (about governance, training, surveillance, sanctions, etc.).
- The AA process followed can vary from region to region, especially depending on whether or not it is part of another administrative procedure and/or whether the authority in charge of the appropriate assessment (AA) is also the managing authority of the Natura 2000 site and/or is also the proponent of the plan/project.
- What works well is that citizens have begun to be aware of the AA mechanisms, and are requiring it to be used as a tool to protect nature and ecosystem services. The drafting of assessment studies also provides job opportunities. If AAs were to be applied adequately, there would be even greater job opportunities.
- The most frequent problems relating to AA are:
 - the rules regulating AA sometimes clash with other sectorial rules, causing problems with their interpretation;
 - many regions have approved a list of interventions/plans/projects that can be excluded a priori from the AA (often this exclusion does not come from a previous analysis and applies to all the sites in the region, independently of conservation goals);
 - sometimes the authorities responsible for the AA do not ask for its application, although this happens more rarely;
 - studies for the AA are carried out in a superficial manner;
 - cumulative impacts are not taken into consideration;

¹ BirdLife International 2017. European birds of conservation concern: populations, trends and national responsibilities. Cambridge, UK: BirdLife International.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ although the situation is improving, “mitigation measures” are still not distinguished from “compensatory measures”; ○ alternative solutions and the “zero option” are not taken into consideration, or are rejected solely for economic reasons; ○ the competent authority issues a positive opinion, but indicates numerous prescriptions, including major ones; ○ the authority in charge of vigilance is often unable to verify compliance with these prescriptions, either because they have not been informed or because of serious staff shortages. ○ adequate administrative and penal sanctions are lacking. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At times, neither experts nor evaluators are properly qualified. Regardless of their qualifications, the experts are not independent since they were entrusted with drafting studies for the AA directly by the proponents. • The adverse effects on the site are not correctly assessed, even when the conservation objectives were set as part of the site’s management plan or conservation measures. • The precautionary principle is not applied. • The “overriding public interest criteria” are generally not enough justified. Additionally, compensatory measures are sometimes applied without first taking into consideration any alternative solutions, and/or without any regards to “overriding public interest criteria”. • Compensatory measures rarely lead to positive effects greater than the negative ones. • A recent modification to art. 57 of the law 221/2015 gave rise to controversial interpretations (contrasting with the Aarhus Convention and with art. 6 of the Directive 92/43) regarding the right of NGOs to participate to administrative procedures of the AA on plans and programs.
<p>Landscape connectivity</p> <p>Encourage the management of landscape features to improve the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network</p> <p><i>Habitats Directive art. 3(3) & 10</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The management of the Natura 2000 network at the national, inter-regional and regional levels rarely takes into account the functional links or connectivity between the various Natura 2000 sites. • Many regions have identified regional or provincial ecological networks comprising Natura 2000 network sites, protected areas, and other ecological or functional corridors. In addition to these, other ecological corridors have been included, mainly narrow belts along rivers. Nevertheless, a preliminary analysis suggests that these networks have not been concretely integrated into the management documents for the Natura 2000 network. Additionally, little work has been done in recent years on these ecological networks, and over time it may turn out that many of them have been fragmented or eliminated. • Nevertheless, as far as it is known, there are no regions in which these corridors are protected by rules or sanctions. • Additionally, no new Natura 2000 sites and/or protected areas have been designed to ensure connectivity between sites and/or to reflect climate change and the resulting changes in the environmental suitability for the various species and habitats.
<p>Funding and resources</p> <p>Identify funding needs</p> <p><i>Habitats Directive, art. 8</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to the Ministry of the Environment’s website, between 2011 and 2016, 17 out of 21 regions/autonomous provinces elaborated their own PAF. Several regions are updating it. • The level of detail of the PAFs differs from one region to the next: some result from in-depth analyses carried out as part of LIFE projects, while other PAFs are only partially compiled. Many PAFs report knowledge gaps concerning habitats and especially species, and some PAFs were unable to evaluate the conservation status of habitats and/or species. • Of the 17 regions that have elaborated a PAF, only 10 have reported cost estimates for the management of the Natura 2000 for 2014-20. Obviously, estimates vary from one region to the next. • As far as we know, there is no dedicated budget to cover Natura 2000 needs. • The regions do not have sufficient staff for monitoring and managing the Natura 2000 network.
<p>Habitats and species monitoring</p> <p>Undertake monitoring of the conservation status of habitats and species of Community importance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reporting under art. 12 of Birds directive showed that in Italy the 48% of species in Annex I of Birds directive are in an unfavourable conservation status. The reporting under art. 17 of Habitats directive revealed that the 50% of species and 67% of habitats of community interest have a negative conservation status. • Generally speaking, and in spite of recent progress, in Italy the monitoring of

<p><i>Habitats Directive, art.11</i></p>	<p>species and habitats remains very incomplete, at both the regional and national levels, as highlighted by reporting under art. 12 of Birds Directive (2008-2012) and reporting under art. 17 of the Habitats Directive (2007-2012), as well as in the PAFs for several regions. Additionally, the level of knowledge and the extent of research and monitoring activities is highly uneven from one region to another.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One monitoring effort that has provided important data on Italian wetlands since 1992 is the IWC (International Waterbird Census), coordinated by ISPRA. • In 2014, the Ministry of the Environment and ISPRA drafted the “Guidelines for regions and autonomous provinces regarding the monitoring of species and habitats of community interest”. • Regarding the quality of the data, as a consequence of the above, the situation is highly uneven both among regions and among different areas within the same region. • The data related to reporting under art. 12 BD and art. 17 HD are available. Data on regional monitoring efforts are rarely available.
<p>Promotion of research</p> <p>Encourage research and scientific work</p> <p><i>Habitats Directive, art. 18</i> <i>Birds Directive, art. 10</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several universities and scientific associations have been involved in assessing the conservation status of threatened species, but mostly in terms of data analysis and validation, as opposed to data collection and monitoring. Generally speaking, the resources invested in such efforts remain very limited.
<p>Non-native species</p> <p>Ensure that introductions of non-native species do not prejudice native habitats and species</p> <p><i>Habitats Directive, art. 22</i> <i>Birds Directive, art. 11</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The situation varies from one region to the next. In some regions, measures have been adopted to monitor and/or control invasive alien species and their effects, also as part of management plans and conservation measures for Natura 2000 sites. • Numerous LIFE projects have dealt with alien invasive species, or are currently doing so.
<p>Stakeholder engagement, public participation and communication</p> <p>Stakeholder engagement and public participation are key to ensuring effective implementation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although still inadequate, stakeholder participation in the site designation process is improving, particularly with regards to municipal administrations and farmers. However, suggestions to design new sites by local chapters of environmental associations have been often disregarded without providing any motivation. • The situation regarding stakeholder participation in the development of management plans is improving in some regions, but generally speaking, participation remains inadequate. It should be kept in mind that participative processes must be managed quite carefully to prevent them from taking up too much time or from removing valid content from management plans. • Public consultation and transparency on the granting of authorisations under Article 6 are lacking. We are not aware of any websites where AAs are made available, unless they are part of Environmental Impact Assessments or Environmental Effects Assessments. • There is no full public participation and transparency in decision-making impacting nature. • As far as it is known, there have been no awareness-raising activities on Natura 2000 at the national/regional level, if not within the framework of specific LIFE projects. A recent survey carried out within the LIFE project ConRaSi (LIFE14 NAT/IT/001017 on February 2017 revealed that less than 5% of the 700 respondents was aware of the existence of the Natura 2000 network. • The same is true for Natura 2000 communication strategies for the local level.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ITALY

- Set up for each region detailed monitoring plans for habitats and species and allocate appropriate ring-fenced funding for their implementation. Earmark specific and appropriate funds to bridge gaps in knowledge emerging from biogeographic seminars and from reporting under art 12 of Birds directive and 17 of Habitats directive.
- Proceed swiftly with the designation of key terrestrial and marine sites on the basis of in-depth scientific data (e.g. designation as SPAs of IBAs for *Calonectris diomedea*).
- Proceed swiftly with site-specific and detailed target oriented management plans and/or conservation measures for all Natura 2000 terrestrial and marine sites. Urgent progress is needed on SPAs.
- Earmark appropriate funds for the management of the Natura 2000 network, including anti-poaching activities.
- Ensure coherence in the management of Natura 2000 sites across and within regions through effective coordinating mechanism involving the MoE, regions, management bodies, LEAs and through contracts with landowners and farmers, as appropriate.
- Properly apply the Appropriate Assessment according to all requests outlined by the EC in the course of the EU Pilot 6730/14/ENVI. Ensure the public participation in the AA procedure of plans, programs and projects and proper integration of the AA in EIA and SEA procedures.
- Ensure vigilance and enforcement for the management of Natura 2000 sites and to fight illegal killing of birds and other animal species protected by the directives, through adequate funding, training and coordination between management authorities and LEAs. Introduce adequate administrative and penal sanctions.
- The five SPEC1 species (*Alectoris graeca*, *Vanellus vanellus*, *Aythya ferina*, *Streptopelia turtur*, *Turdus iliacus*), *Lagopus muta*, for which a major impact of climate change is predicted, and *Alauda arvensis*, which already is experiencing a sharp decrease, should be excluded from the list of huntable species. Moratoria should be applied to SPEC 2 and SPEC 3 species, pending the adoption of dedicated management plans.
- Highlighting priorities to what concern connectivity between Natura 2000 sites, based on sound science. Safeguard existing functional links and concentrate efforts on habitat restoration aimed at functional defragmentation of habitats, when appropriate. Ensure to green infrastructures concrete protection and role inside planning instruments.
- Earmark suitable funds to carry out concrete and large-scale project aimed at improving citizens' knowledge, awareness and sense of belonging with regards to Natura 2000 network.