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# Natura 2000

Europe's safety net for nature – and people

Europe, indeed the world, is in crisis. We are presently facing a rate of extinction of species of plants and animals that exceeds that experienced when dinosaurs disappeared from earth. As these species are lost to us, forever, the web of life of which we are a part of and on which we depend is quickly becoming threadbare and frayed.

At threat is not only our natural heritage, but also the very basis of our economy, culture, and society. To address this serious threat, European countries have taken an unprecedented step to establish a safety net for nature, and ultimately also for people: the Natura 2000 network.



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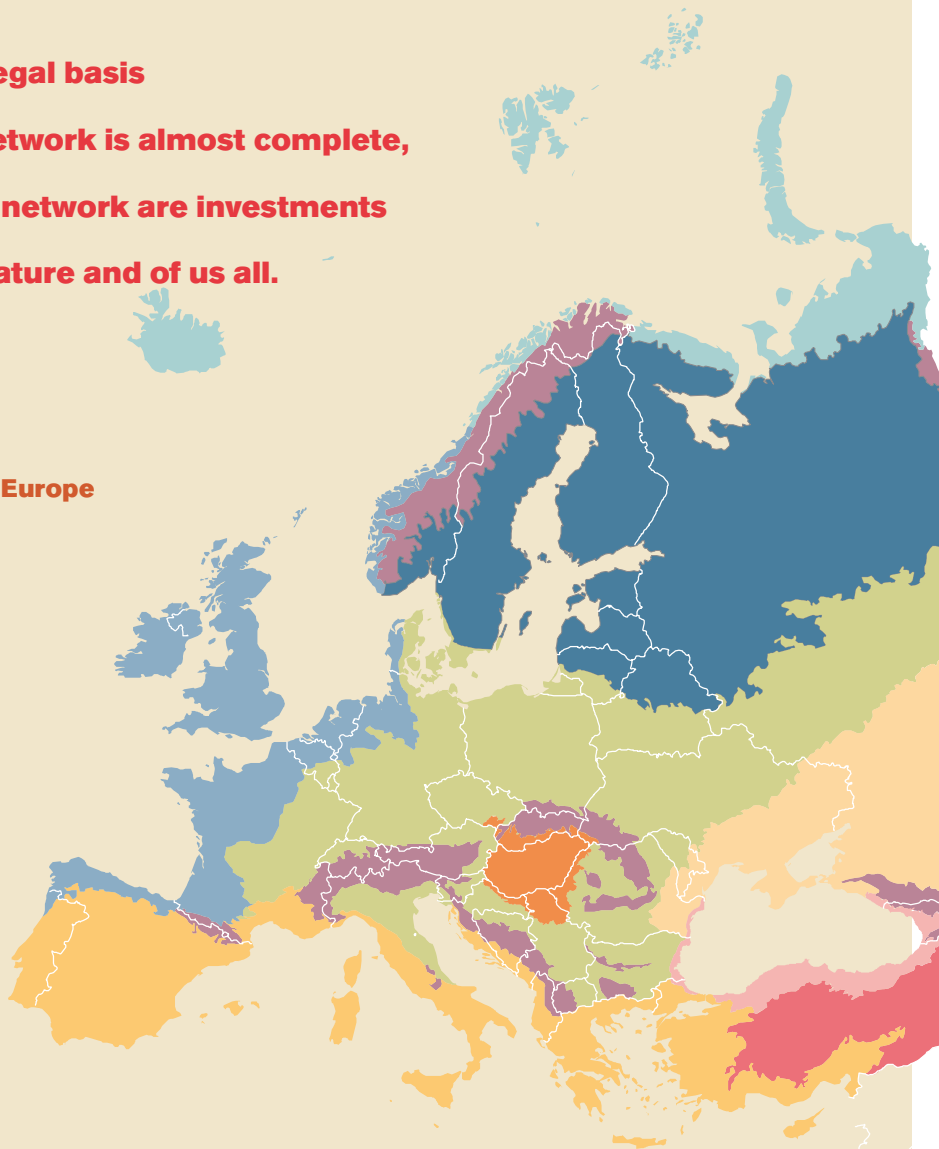
Hohe Tauern, The Alps, Austria.

# Natura 2000 and the

- **Thanks to a good legal basis**
- **the Natura 2000 network is almost complete,**
- **investments in the network are investments**  
**in the future – of nature and of us all.**

## Biogeographic Regions of Europe

- Arctic
- Boreal
- Atlantic
- Continental
- Alpine
- Pannonian
- Mediterranean
- Macaronesian
- Steppic
- Black Sea
- Anatolian



Source: © EEA, Copenhagen, 2006



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Mediterranean sea, Ile de Port-Cros, France.

# EU Habitats Directive

Natura 2000 is a network of specially protected sites, established to protect and maintain habitats and species of European value and importance. Establishment of the network is at the heart of the Habitats and Birds Directives, the cornerstones of the EU's legislation on nature conservation and key instruments for achieving the Community objectives of halting biodiversity loss in 2010 and long-term sustainable development. The twin directives represent the most important legal effort to preserve our natural heritage at continental scale in the whole world.

In addition, the Directives provide a mechanism for mediating potential conflicts between nature and humans, helping to develop win-win solutions that can benefit humans while preserving the natural assets upon which we depend. They provide a process for evaluating potential negative impacts on nature values from infrastructure development and other human activities and identifying alternatives. Where these alternatives are not possible or practical, the Directives can help identify mitigation and compensation measures to limit the negative impacts on the nature values as much as possible.

At present, the Natura 2000 network covers one sixth of the European Union – an area larger than Germany – and is still growing, with additional areas to be designated especially for marine areas.





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Male Ruff in breeding plumage, Poland.

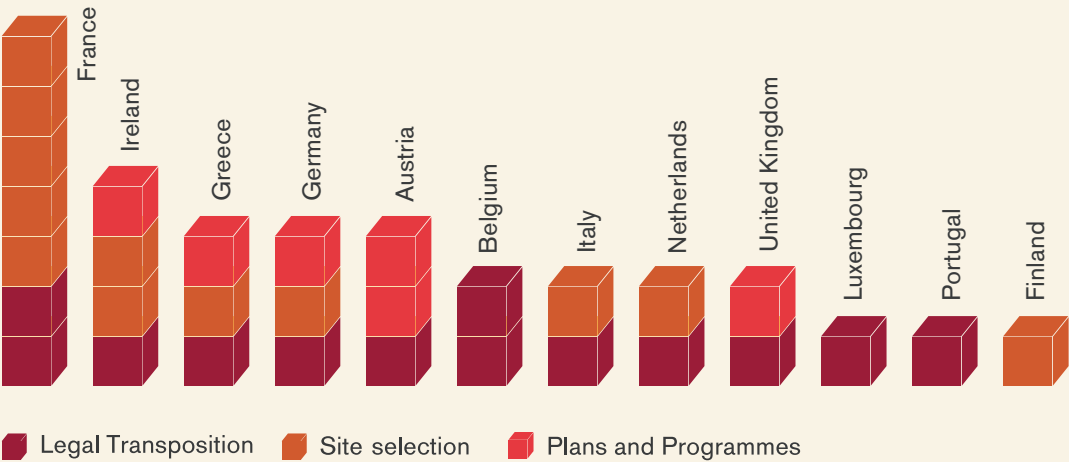
# The Habitats Directive:

The Habitats Directive and companion Birds Directive are the only pieces of EU legislation that directly address biodiversity. In developing and implementing the twin directives, the EU has been treading new ground – both within Europe and across the globe.

As a result, to a certain extent, the EU has had to “learn by doing”. However, the practical work of developing and implementing the Habitats Directive has not thrown up a big number of questions and uncertainties, as the information from the European Court of Justice show:

## 27 Judgements by the European Court of Justice concerning the Habitats and Birds Directive

one cube = one case



Source: [www.curia.europa.eu](http://www.curia.europa.eu)



© WWF-Canon/Krista Sormunen

Lapland, Finland.

# A Good Legal Basis

The Habitats Directive provides a useful mechanism for finding win-win solutions that take into account both biodiversity protection and other needs, including socioeconomic development – a mechanism for evaluating and limiting potential negative impacts to these exceptional nature values, including identifica-

tion of less damaging alternatives or, where this is not possible or practical, identification of possible compensation measures. As such, the EU's cornerstone conservation legislation is a crucial instrument for our efforts not only to halt biodiversity loss in Europe, but also to achieve long-term sustainable development.

To date, the European Court of Justice has passed 27 judgments related to the Habitats and Birds Directives – compared with 387 judgments on “competition” and almost 300 with regard to “environment and consumers” (except habitats and birds).

Clear decisions by the European Court of Justice have expedited transposition of the Habitats Directive into national legislation, which will soon be completed. For site selection – the second most important subject of judgements – a clear and transparent procedure has been established for identifying and evaluating proposed sites: the biogeographic seminars. The seminars provide

a transparent and scientifically based decision making process involving leading scientific experts, national authorities, the European Commission and nongovernmental organisations that should minimise the need to resort to courts of law. Judgments concerning plans and projects causing conflicts with the aims of the EU conservation legislation are less in number as generally such cases can be addressed at national level.





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Danube river delta. Romania.

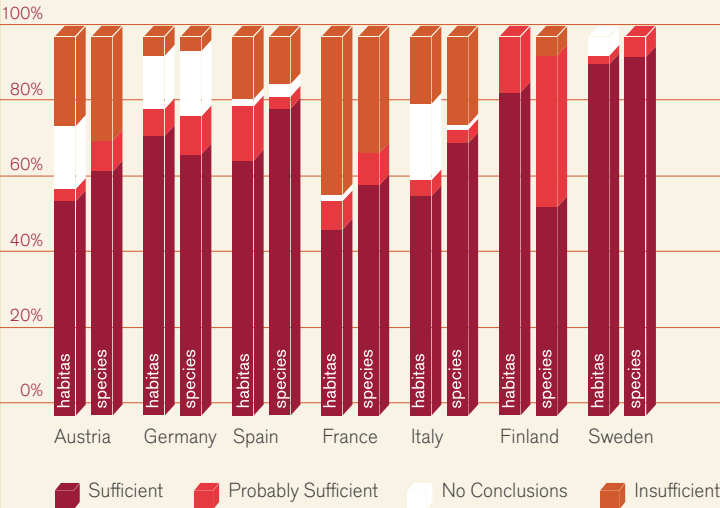
# Natura 2000: A Nearly

The first step towards protecting our natural richness is to know what we have. The work of identifying and designating individual sites for inclusion in the Natura 2000 network is nearing completion. The task has been hugely challenging, requiring the comprehensive mapping and analysis of nature values across

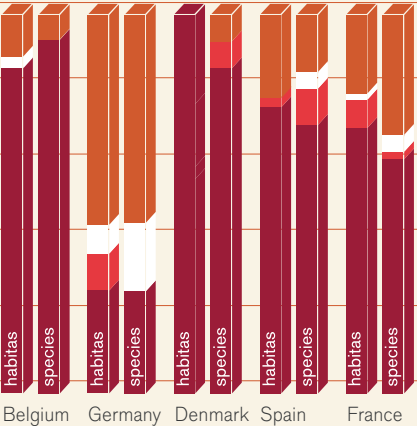
the EU member states – much of it done for the first time. Today, thanks to this process, we have a much better understanding of Europe's most valuable flora, fauna and natural areas.

The process of site designation takes place according to several discrete biogeographic regions. For the older EU-15 member states, the process of site identification and designa-

Results from last Biogeographical seminars  
Alps Region



Atlantic Region





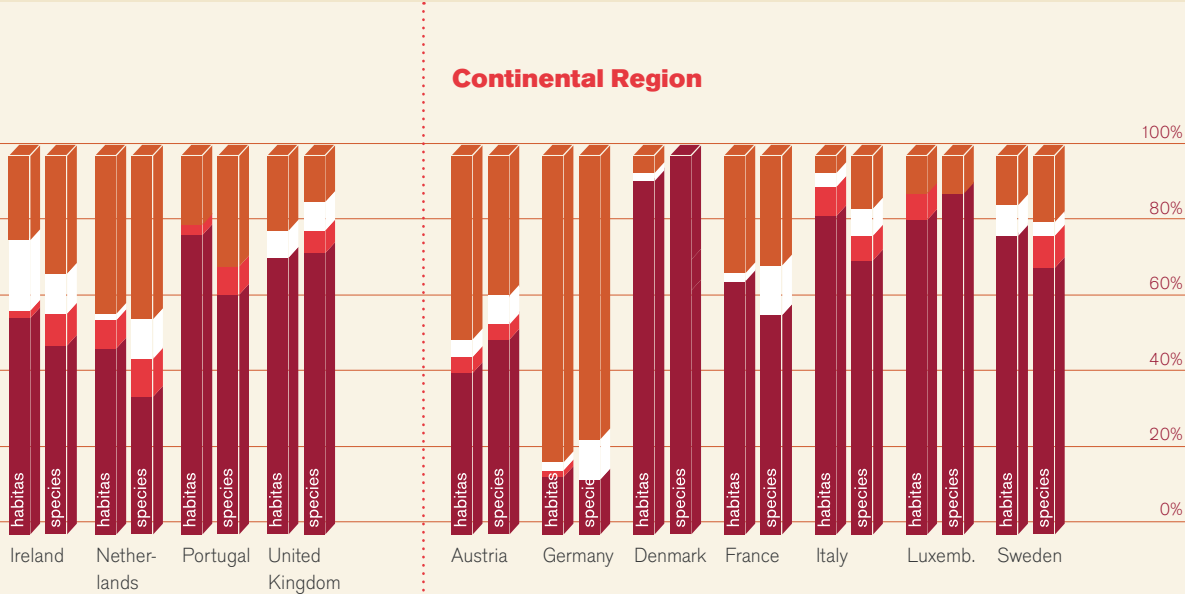
© WWF-Canon/Fred F. Hazelhoff

Eurasian beaver, Poland.

# Completed Network

tion is almost finished, although some work is still needed to complete totally the network. Site designation is also moving quickly forward in the new EU member states, which have profited considerably from the experience of their older EU neighbours. The main challenge remaining will be to identify and designate Natura 2000 sites in marine areas, for which data is often missing.

The latest information from the European Commission shows the advanced status of completion of the network for three of the biogeographical regions in the EU-15 (see graphics below). The EU ember states have to make a final effort in order to finish off the network.



Source: [www.ec.europa.eu/comm/environment/nature](http://www.ec.europa.eu/comm/environment/nature)





Coruche, Ribatejo region, Portugal.

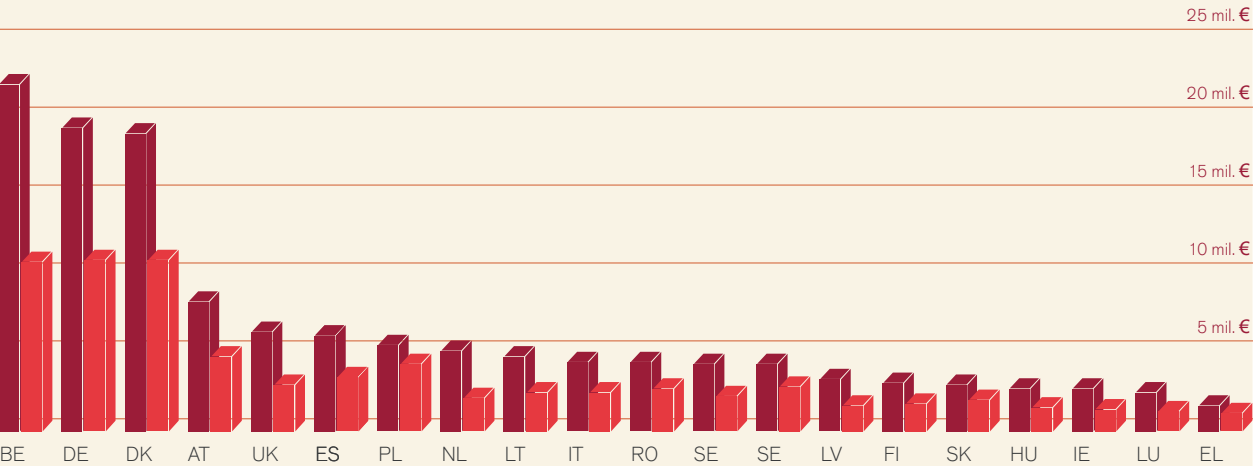
# Investments in Nature,

Conservation needs money, and investing in nature is ultimately investing in the future, for the benefit of ourselves as well as future generations. The EU's "LIFE-NATURE" fund has supported concrete measures for the implementation of Natura 2000 which cannot be financed from other EU sources. Lots of projects have been undertaken throughout the European Union, to protect and maintain habi-

tats and species of European interest from the Iberian lynx in Spain to the brown bear in Austria. In addition to habitat restoration, LIFE projects have supported the harmonization of land user interests or the development of economic activities in conjunction with conservation strategies. The graph shows the budget of LIFE Nature projects from the year 2005.

LIFE NATURE Projects 2005

Total budget LIFE budget



Source: [www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/life](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/life)





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Lech river, The Alps., Austria.

# Investments in the Future

Significantly more EU and related national support should become available for implementation of the Natura 2000 network in the EU's next financial period, 2007–13, both through EU agricultural as well as regional development funding programmes.

For the next 6-year financing period (2007–2013), the EU Member States should integrate the funding for Natura 2000 into all relevant EU funds, such as the Structural Funds. Only the so-called LIFE+ Regulation will include funds exclusively for nature and environment. Only about 0.2% of the EU budget will be dedicated to this fund. Therefore, all relevant stakeholders – from Ministries to NGOs – currently have a very important responsibility to ensure that the use of these funding opportunities is adequately planned and used.





© WWF Canon/ Jean-Luc Ray

Aiguamolls de l'Empordà, Costa Brava, Catalonia, Spain.

# WWF and Natura 2000

**WWF and its partner organisations strongly support the implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives and the establishment of Natura 2000.**

The twin directives represent a real attempt to conserve Europe's biological diversity based on sound scientific evidence, and protecting a representative sample of all Europe's most threatened habitats and species. The Habitats Directive does not rule out economic activities in Natura 2000 areas, but rather provides a process and framework for protecting Europe's natural wealth and promoting long-term sustainable development.







Some members of the WWF and Partner Organization's Natura 2000 Team.

## Our work

For this purpose, we have been actively assisting national and EU authorities and other stakeholders to identify, to designate and then to actively protect and manage Natura 2000 sites and species. Our work includes raising awareness of Natura 2000, e.g. the “Flying over Natura 2000” project, in which storks were monitored and shown in TV in their migration over Europe ([www.flyingover.net](http://www.flyingover.net)). We also support the EU accession member states in their first stages of implementation of the EU nature directives.

## Who are we?

WWF, the global conservation organisation, works together with partner organizations throughout the EU for the implementation of Natura 2000 and the Habitats and Birds Directives. As a member of the European Habitats Forum, a coalition of NGOs working for the implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives ([www.iucn.org/places/europe/rofe](http://www.iucn.org/places/europe/rofe)), we provide input and advice to the European Commission, particularly relating to the implementation of the Habitats Directives and the establishment of the conservation network.



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**[www.panda.org/epo](http://www.panda.org/epo)**

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WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

- conserving the world's biological diversity
- ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable
- promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption



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