

FINAL REPORT

Implementation of an upcoming management plan of a Natura 2000 zone

Peer Review hosted by COPIL Éislek / Naturpark Our, Luxemburg



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Location: CORNELYSHAFF

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1 Background

As foreseen in the article 6 of the Council directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, the National Conservation Agency has established Management Plans for every Natura 2000 Zones (sometimes several overlapping zones were considered as one). These plans have already been elaborated for the period 2018-2028 and shall help to reach the national goals included in the PAF (Prioritized Action Framework) and PNPN (National Plan for Nature Protection), two documents which assess the current state of conservation for habitats and species throughout Luxembourg and fix the general needs for the preservation or the restauration of a favorable state of conservation.

The new nature and natural resources protection law in effect since the 18th July 2018 describes in its article 35 the structure of the management plans for Natura 2000 zones and in its article 36 the creation of steering committees – **the so called COPILs (“comité de pilotage”)** - for the realization and supervision of the plans.

Article 35:

The National Conservation Agency establishes the management plans. A management plan can be elaborated for one or more Natura 2000 zones and includes:

- the objectives determined for the concerned Natura 2000 zones,
- a short description of the Natura 2000 zones, including the geographic and geological situation, as well as soil occupation;
- an evaluation of the state of conservation of habitats and species with a cartographic localisation in the Natura 2000 zones;
- if required, the surveillance needs in order to determine the state of conservation;
- the risks and dangers for habitats and species;
- the long-term objectives of the management plan suited for the preservation, or, if needed, the restoration of a favorable state of conservation of habitats and species;
- the operational objectives corresponding to the measures of conservation or reconstitution to be realized at the level of the concerned Natura 2000 zone and their cartographic localisation, in order to achieve a favourable state of conservation for habitats and species;
- other potential objectives, such as the reception of the public, research or for didactic and pedagogic purposes.

Article 36:

On the initiative of the minister, a COPIL steering committee for Natura 2000 can be created for one or a group of management plans. The role of these COPIL steering committees is to see to the realisation of these measures defined in the Natura 2000 management plans, as well as the promotion of the collaboration of the stakeholder. Every committee consists of, depending on the objectives and the socio-economic context of the affected zones, members from:

- the Ministry taking charge of the environment;
- the National Conservation Agency;
- the National Water Management Authority;
- the Ministry taking charge of the agriculture;

- the municipalities or syndicates of municipalities;
- private ground owners;
- infrastructure managers;
- professional organizations being active in the field of agriculture;
- professional organizations being active in the field of forestry;
- organizations being active in the field of fishing, hunting, sport or tourism;
- organizations being active in the field of conservation of cultural heritage or nature protection

Overall, Luxemburg is divided into 8 different Natura 2000 management regions (COPIL areas) whereby in comparison the COPIL Éislek (=the Peer Review region) is in size the largest Natura 2000 management area with around 16.700 ha of Natura 2000 surface. Due to its size, the COPIL Éislek region is also the Natura 2000 management area in Luxemburg, with the highest number (593) of different operational measures defined in the management plans.

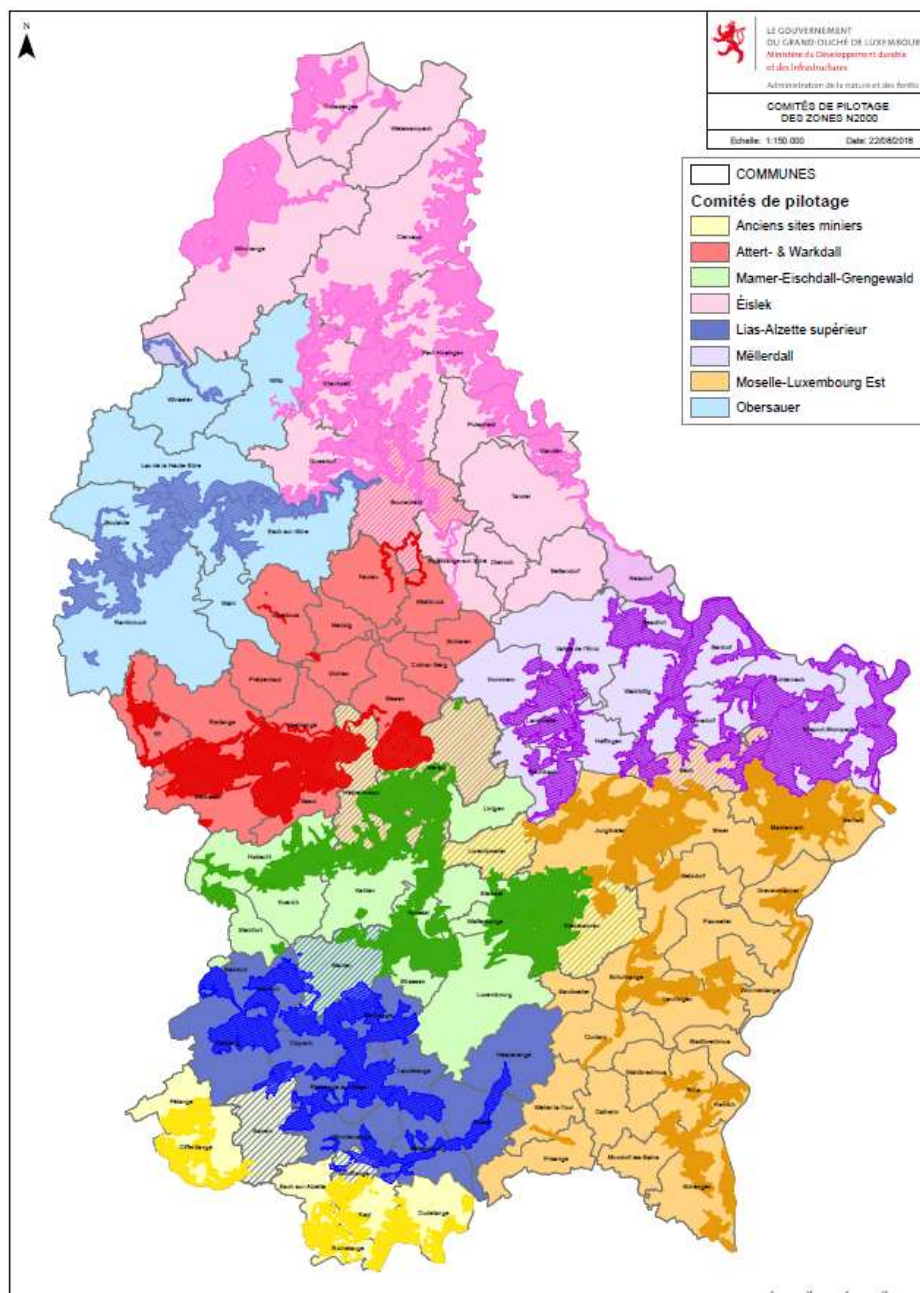


Fig. 1: The 8 different Natura 2000 management zones (COPIL areas) in Luxemburg (pink = the peer review region)

2 Insight into policy challenges

The challenges of this policy are the realisation of the long-term objectives which may seem ambitious but are necessary for the preservation of the Natura 2000 zones. Every management plan is divided into 3 main different zones, the alluvial zones, the open landscape and the forests. For each zone, several long-term objectives and operational measures have been foreseen. For example, the management plan of the valley of the Our river (2nd in terms of area) consists of:

- For the alluvial zones
 - o 3 general long-term objectives
 - o 19 specific long-term objectives (addressing certain habitats or species)
 - o 49 operational measures
- For the open landscape
 - o 3 general long-term objectives
 - o 12 specific long-term objectives
 - o 26 operational measures
- For the forests and rocks
 - o 10 general long-term objectives
 - o 25 specific long-term objectives
 - o 24 operational measures

It has also been stated that people often are not aware of the Natura 2000 Network. Therefore, every management plan also contains objectives for Natura 2000 sensitization.

As most of the measures need a specific location and area to be implemented and as over 80% of the properties are in private hands, the realisation of the objectives depends on the collaboration of the different stakeholders. The steering committee acting in concert will help sensitizing the interest groups and thus get the needed acceptance throughout the population.

While most of the operational measures are already linked to a specific budget, finding innovative instruments for those which are not, will be a challenge for this policy, too. Known ways of financing these measures are on one side 2 major national funds, the fund for water protection, co-financing projects aiming the renaturation of water courses, and the fund for environment protection, co-financing generally projects responding to the national environmental goals which also include some of the long-term goals of the management plans. On the other side, there are possibilities to introduce projects with a European co-funding, like Interreg or LIFE. Finally, a handy tool for financing extensification on agricultural parcels are the agri-environmental contracts being supported by national and European side.

Finally, several measures foreseen in the management plans along the country-border will only be expedient if executed in cross-border collaboration. While this collaboration is already in place for specific projects like the water-course partnerships, promoting exchange between regions, or the Otter After-Life project, in which the different participants help each other during the annual search for otter tracks, it could be amplified for the given objectives of the Natura 2000 management plans.

3 Questions raised for the Peer Review

Before this background the COPIL Éislek identified three main topics and defined several questions to be discussed during the Peer Review:

1. Stakeholder coordination

- *How to involve the very heterogeneous group of stakeholders in the challenging implementation of the management plans?*
- *How to work with a large steering committee (32 members) and manage often conflicting interests?*
- *Are there experiences in conflict management in other regions and how were interests of different stakeholder groups mitigated?*

2. Financial instruments

- *Are there innovative financial instruments as well as low-budget or even no-cost solutions that can help to implement the necessary protection measures?*
- *Are there successful approaches in raising awareness and acceptance for the project?*

3. Cross-Border Management

- *Experience in cross-border management and monitoring of Natura 2000 areas would be of added value especially regarding cross-border measures on water course renaturation and integrated strategies to deal with invasive species. How are other well-established cross-border projects implemented?*

4 Participants of the Peer Review

Based on the background paper and the questions, defined for the Peer Review, the thematic experts from the Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform, made a selection of peers from the Netherlands, Greece, Romania, U.K. and Estonia.

Beside their own steering committee members, the COPIL Éislek as host region also invited representatives from all the other COPIL regions in Luxembourg, because they are all confronted with the same questions and problems that have been identified for the peer region of the COPIL Éislek and could as well profit from the discussions and conclusions of the Peer Review Process.

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Thorsten KOLISCH	Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform
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PEER EXPERTS	
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NATURA 2000 STAKEHOLDERS	
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Thierry KOZLIK	Ministry of the Environment
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Philippe LUTTY	National Water Management Administration
Roger ZANTER	COPIL Éislek (steering committee member)
Christian KAYSER	Director Nature Park Our
Judith BOVELAND	Coordinator Natura 2000 COPIL Mëllerdall
Ben PAULY	Coordinator Natura 2000 COPIL Mamer-Äischdall
Patrick THOMMES	Coordinator Natura 2000 COPIL Öewersauer
Alain KLEIN	Nature Park Our / Department of Biology
Rachel KRIER	Nature Park Mëllerdall
Claude SCHILTZ	natur & ëmwelt
Kevin JANS	natur & ëmwelt
Frank RICHARZ	Nature Park Öewersauer
Ben GEIB	Chamber of Agriculture



Fig. 2: The Peer Review participants

5 Main Conclusions and Recommendations

During the two days of the Peer Review in Luxembourg a lot of very interesting and lively discussions emerged between the peer experts and the participants of the Peer Review which led to the following conclusions and recommendations towards the implementation of the Natura 2000 management plans in the COPIL Éislek region.

5.1 Stakeholder coordination

- Develop an **engagement strategy** including:
 - Operational/Action plan
 - Communication strategy
 - Timeline, sequencing of events
 - Business plan
- Better **stakeholder analysis/mapping**:
 - Stakeholder characteristics
 - Roles & Responsibilities => share responsibilities
 - Definition of needs and motivations, goals & targets, capacity, resources and priorities
 - Identify stakeholders that can be door-openers
- **Tailored approach to stakeholders**:
 - Understanding private sector: 83% ownership
 - Collaboration with farmers: one-on-one meetings to raise acceptance
 - Get government departments better involved
- **Communication**:
 - To raise awareness, visibility and better acceptance by the public
 - To better understand benefits and added-value
 - Surveys among stakeholders and public to better understand needs
 - COPIL Branding (mascot, merchandising)
 - Use of different communication channels for the target audiences (social-media, award-schemes, suitable events like field trips, monthly networking receptions..., integration of educational activities)
- **First projects**:
 - Identify **low-hanging fruits** that can obtain permits/authorization easily
 - Identify **low-risk projects** that can demonstrate success pretty fast
 - Involve **“critical” stakeholders** in these projects to build their ownership
 - **Grant successes** to stakeholders supporting/leading these projects
 - Widely promote /exploit the results of these first projects
 - **Start exchange** with other Natura 2000 coordinators at different levels, e.g. at coordinator’s level, networking level, president’s level
- **Cutting red tape**:
 - Pro-actively address government to **simplify administrative procedures**
 - **Better coordination** between different administrations
 - Check suitability of organizational set-up for **greater financial flexibility** and decision-making power to facilitate implementation

- Budget not only for conservation activities but also for **awareness raising and networking activities**
- More **integrated management plan**/change management (better coordination to speed up the authorization processes), inter alia by considering the establishment of “Ms. or Mr. Natura 2000” as an ambassador in each organisation to help deliver government policy and serve as regular contact person

5.2 Financial instruments

- **Government finance:**
 - Integrate continuity after implementation of a pilot action
 - Integrate sustainability and exploitation aspects from the first day of the project development
 - Use the project to develop a sustainability plan
 - In the implementation plan envisage also budget for maintenance
- **Consider funds for small-scale activities**
 - Lump sums, innovation vouchers – easy access and administration
- Assess possibilities for revenues that can be generated from **innovative activities**
- Consider funding from **donation**
- Explore further the examples of **different tools** (e.g. charitable tools, sponsorship and commercial in Norfolk county, UK)
- Consider **guests and visitors as contributors**
- **Analyse opportunities for applying payment for Ecosystem Services:**
 - Prepare an inventory of ecosystem services
 - Raise awareness about Payment for Ecosystem Services
 - Identify opportunities under the different types of Payment for Ecosystem Services

5.3 Cross-border management

- **How to find right partners?**
 - Combine **bottom-up approaches with priority setting** and contacts at national/intergovernmental level (top-down)
- Use Interreg to **test innovative approaches and run pilot actions**
- Define the **concrete thematic** priorities in the cross-border area that can be financed by EU programmes in the next programming period
- Use the **opportunities of Interreg funds**. Examples of project ideas:
 - GIS facilities in a cross-border area for nature conservation and monitoring
 - Explore opportunities of citizen science approaches with regards to Invasive Alien Species in cross-border area
- Mobilise the **private resources**, develop **entrepreneurial support scheme** (e.g. cross-border tourism marketing, developing tourism products)

6 Impressions from the Peer Review process

- The Peer Review was a very good instrument for our Natura 2000 management group and delivered us many good new ideas and practical examples.
- A good opportunity to deeply discuss problems in the implementation of Natura 2000 management plans with colleagues from Luxembourg but also with experts from different European countries.
- As the COPIL Éislek is still at the beginning of the implementation process, the timing of the Peer Review was perfect to integrate the recommendations and new ideas into our daily work.
- The Peer Review also showed us, that we – the COPIL Éislek - are already on a good way concerning the implementation of the Natura 2000 management plans.
- A very good opportunity to communicate to local authorities and administrations that it is of great evidence to facilitate administrative hurdles and to improve the communication between the involved stakeholders – especially between administrations and ministries. It adds much more weight to an issue if a “3rd Person” (in this case the peer experts) identifies and names existing deficits.
- The atmosphere during the whole Peer Review was great and the moderation and the organisation on the part of the of the representatives from policy learning platform was professional, combined with a good sense of humor.
- Finally: we really appreciated the whole Peer Review and would highly recommend the usage of this instrument to other potential Peer Review candidates.

7 Next steps

According to the conclusions and recommendations raised during the Peer Review, the steering committee of the COPIL Éislek has elaborated a priority task-list and a road map to implement these tasks on a national level in the follow-up process.

7.1 Stakeholder coordination

Year	Partner	Objective(s)
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of the Environment Ministry of Agriculture involved administrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depute one Natura 2000 Person in each involved Ministry and Administration to obtain permits and authorizations easily and in a short time of max. 3 months. Improve the communication between the Ministries and involved Administrations to push the implementation of Natura 2000 projects. Generally: simplify administrative procedures
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of Agriculture Farming Associations (e.g. CONVIS, Chamber of Agriculture, ...) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing Natura 2000 projects by direct inclusion of the different farming associations to raise more acceptance for Natura 2000 (key openers) Farmers should see Natura 2000 in a less negative way (more a chance than a threat) Establish Natura 2000 columns in the members' magazines of the different farming associations.
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of the Environment Other COPIL regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elaboration of a national communication strategy to raise visibility for Natura 2000 in Luxembourg.

7.2 Financial instruments

Year	Partner	Objective(s)
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of the Environment Ministry of Agriculture involved administrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a solution to guarantee financial continuity after the implementation of a pilot project.
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of the Environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elaboration of a study about Ecosystem Services to identify them and to raise awareness about payment for Ecosystem Services.

7.3 Cross-border management

Year	Partner	Objective(s)
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• COPIL Éislek• Natura 2000 partners from Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Actively develop a cross-border project for the Valley of the Our (Natura 2000 Management Plan) in collaboration with Natura 2000 partners from the German side.• Start with a small-scale project to gain practical experiences concerning cross-border projects.