



Natura 2000 Networking Programme  
on behalf of the European Commission



Natura 2000 Networking Programme managed in  
partnership by project partners EUROPARC Federation,  
Eurosites and European Landowners Organization (ELO)

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## Theme: Effective stakeholder management

### The importance of stakeholders to managing Natura 2000

The Natura 2000 network of protected areas is integrated within the fabric of a modern society, rather than isolated from the influences of the full range of human activities. The sites should work positively with the grain of peoples' aspirations and it is therefore the job of Natura 2000 ambassadors to engage in a way which builds support and manages expectations to coincide with the objectives of the network and its regulatory framework. This is the basis for the importance of effective stakeholder management, and is embodied in a quote from Margot Wallstrom, Commissioner for the Environment in the preface to *Managing Natura 2000 Sites* where she said, "Management of Natura 2000 sites is essential for their conservation. But to be successful it requires, in the first instance, the active involvement of the people who live in and depend upon these areas".

The constituency of stakeholders begins well outside the particular sites, and may encompass all the key economic sectors. At a political level decision-makers ought to understand what Natura 2000 aims to achieve and the benefits of a healthy protected areas network, they need to be aware of the regulatory framework and how to take proper account of it. Ministers, Government officials and national and regional specialist advisory bodies all need to play their part in supporting the principles which will allow Natura managers to ensure protection of the features on the ground. Those whose activities bring them into contact with a protected area such as developers, industry or recreation interests will need to be aware and influenced. Specialists from non-Governmental interest groups can advise and support, and the local community around each protected area will have a strong voice which will be understood and addressed by the successful Natura ambassador.

Further information: *Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/CEE* European Communities, 2000

### Principles of effective stakeholder engagement

There exists a strong principle of integrating the environment into other European Community policies, and this is carried into the management of Natura 2000 sites by ensuring that management plans are integrated into other development plans. In addition the principles of public consultation established by the Aarhus Convention are expected to be addressed in implementing the Habitats and Birds Directives.

There are a number of practical principles to adopt in engaging successfully with stakeholders:

1. Understand the context in which you operate.
  2. Define and prioritise the important stakeholder groups.
  3. Define clear objectives for the relationship.
  4. Establish and communicate clear messages.
  5. Plan the approach and who is accountable.
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1. In order for the Natura ambassador to be able to pitch appropriately the engagements with stakeholders it is important to understand the context in which successful Natura 2000 management operates. A straightforward tool to help with this is the PESTEL analysis, which analyses the external pressures on organisations and objectives. PESTEL stands for **P**olitical, **E**conomic, **S**ocial, **T**echnical, **E**nvironment and **L**egislative. This analysis is best carried out as a small group activity, and will provide very quickly an idea of all the main external pressures, which are impacting on a Natura 2000 protected area. It also helps to define the important stakeholders. A broader, more

complex tool for high-level decision makers is Scenario Planning. This is a method for learning about the future by understanding the nature and impact of the most uncertain and important driving forces affecting our future. The goal is to create a number of diverging stories, not to look for one solution.

Further information: PESTEL [www.improvementnetwork.gov.uk/imp/aio/1033478](http://www.improvementnetwork.gov.uk/imp/aio/1033478)  
Scenario planning [www.well.com/~mb/scenario\\_planning](http://www.well.com/~mb/scenario_planning)

2. In selecting the most important stakeholder groups it is often helpful to focus on three key areas: engagement with the wide social, economic and political agenda; ensuring strong alliances with the wider environmental movement, and; understanding the needs of the local community including landowners. The respective importance of each of these three groups will vary according to the level, national regional or local, at which the Natura ambassador is working. When prioritising stakeholders a useful tool can be an analysis of the sector, to understand the key impacts on nature conservation and to identify the most important players.
3. It is very important to define clear objectives for the engagement with a particular stakeholder. Common themes would be to build support, to promote commitment to a particular issue, to direct decision-makers to a (good) solution or to attract funding. It is clear from this short list that the objective will fundamentally affect the approach needed from the Natura ambassador.
4. Stakeholders will be better placed to offer positive interventions if they understand where you are coming from. It is important to communicate broadly about the context around a Natura 2000 site, in addition to crisp messages about exactly what you want to achieve. Clarity about the regulatory framework, including honesty and balance about both its constraints and benefits, is important. Being explicit about what you expect from them is crucial.
5. The objectives will, to some extent, define the approach (see 2 above). However it is always important early in the engagement to make strong and visible efforts to understand what is important to the stakeholder and their agenda. Too often in the past, the environmental case assumed its own importance, only to discover too late in the process that stakeholders felt undervalued and misunderstood. As well as defining the best approach it is useful to choose individuals with strong 'people' skills for effective negotiation, and to establish accountability for results.

Further information: [www.dialoguematters.co.uk](http://www.dialoguematters.co.uk)  
*Revealing the value of nature* English Nature, 2003

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*The opinion expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission*