



Nature
Conservation Agency
Republic of Latvia

Nature conservation governance in Latvia: achievements and challenges ahead

EUROPARC WEBINAR ON EU POLICIES

by Juris Jātnieks, director general of the NCA





Dabas aizsardzības
pārvalde

The Nature Conservation Agency



The Nature Conservation Agency ensures implementation of unified nature conservation policy in Latvia.



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Main functions of Nature Conservation Agency

- **coordinate and ensure good governance and efficient management of protected nature areas in Latvia;**
- **coordinate and supervise elaboration of nature management plans for protected areas and protected species;**
- **organise, supervise and implement restoration, management and conservation activities to reach favorable conservation status of protected habitats and species;**
- **promote nature interpretation and awareness of society, provide and disseminate information on protected areas, nature management and conservation aspects;**
- **implement requirements of the CITES convention as the administrative authority and a focal point.**



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Protected Nature Areas of Latvia



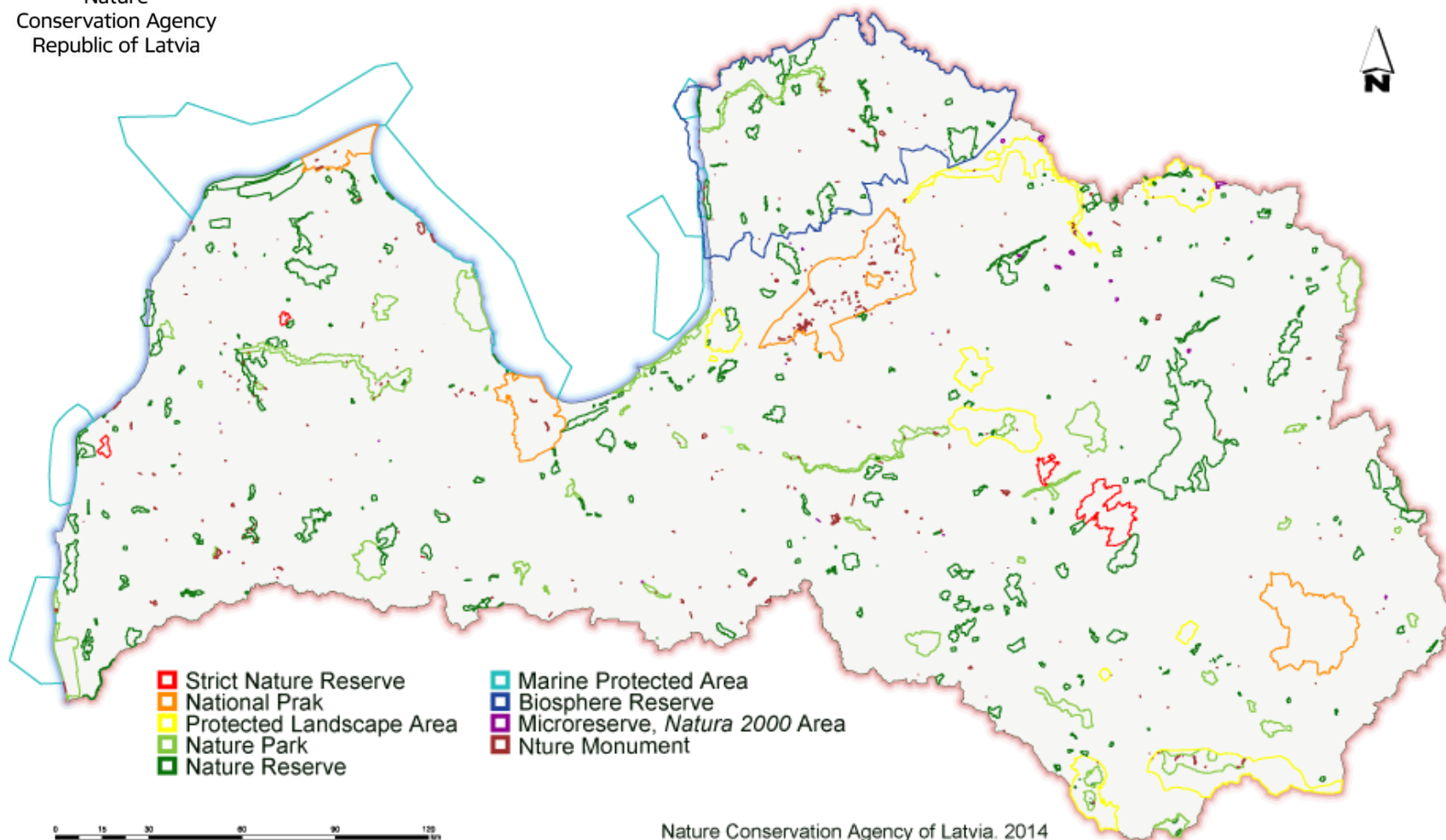
There are **683 protected nature areas** in Latvia established by National laws or Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia.

333 of them are **NATURA 2000**



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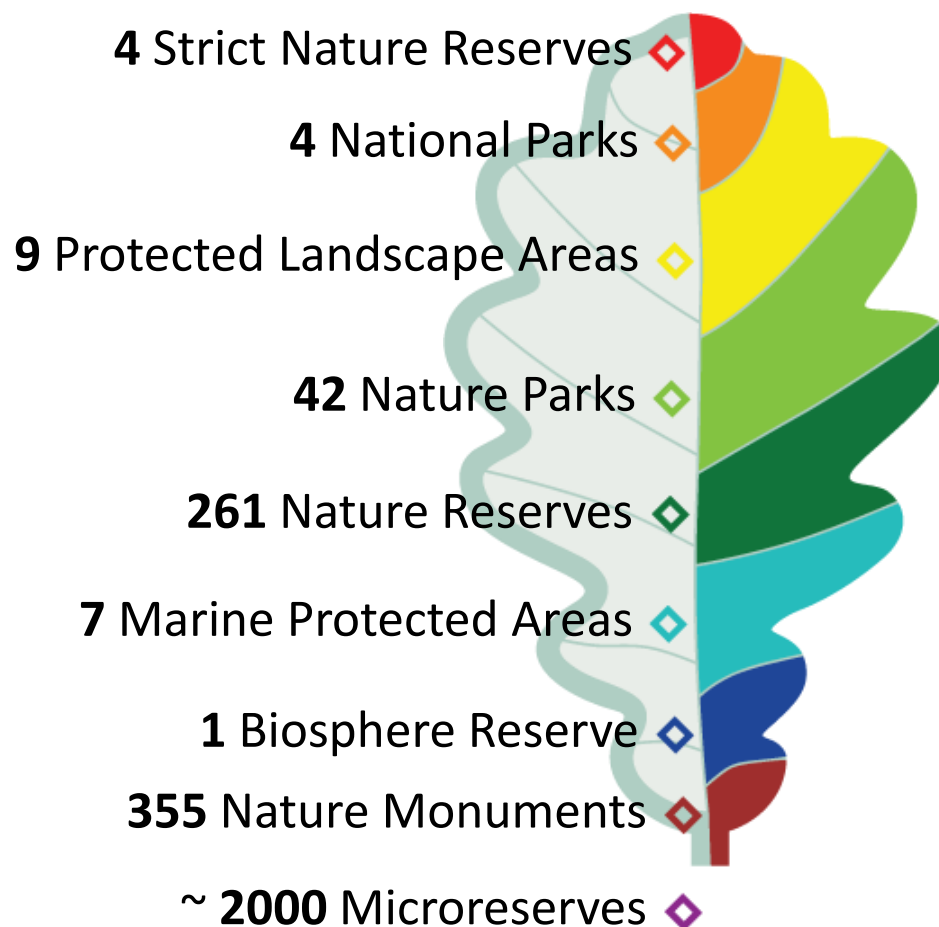
Protected Nature Areas of Latvia





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Protected Nature Areas of Latvia





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NCA: Administration and Management of Protected Areas of Latvia

Maintain and restore the protected habitats (forests, meadows, wetlands and others) by carrying out or supervise the work, i.e. :

- grassland habitats – remove grass and bushes, deplete invasive species, regulate hydrology;
- freshwater habitats - clear streams, remove beaver dams, etc.
- wetland habitats – regulate waterlevel, remove biomass – bushes, reeds, etc.- even place the artificial nests for birds of prey.

Maintain visitor`s infrastructure in Protected areas, organize and implement co-operation with landowners, government institutions, NGO and businesses,





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NCA: Implement the CITES convention

The Nature Protection Agency is the Managing Authority of CITES convention in Latvia and ensure implementation of EU regulations , issuing corresponding permits and certificates.





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Communication and Nature tourism infrastructure



Anthropogenic Load Decreasing and Informative
Infrastructure Development in *Natura 2000* Sites

Observation towers and high platforms – **21**

Platforms on trails – **17**

Nature trails with various hard surfaces - **81,234 km**

parking lots - **31/18411** No./m²

Access roads - **11/7825** No./m²

Various sheds – **40**

Camp sites for water tourists – **18**

Toilets – **51**

Information boards – **349**

Border signes/landmarks – **1850**



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Communication and Nature tourism infrastructure



Anthropogenic Load Decreasing and Informative
Infrastructure Developing in *Natura 2000* Sites



21



17



81234



31/18411



11/7825



40



18



51



249



1850



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Communication and awareness – “The Nature Concerthall”

The concept and the event “Nature as a concert hall” is [awarded by European Commission as the best project of the year 2016](#) for Nature education and interpretation in EU.





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The President of Latvia is a patron of the “Nature Concerthall”



- 11 years,
- 6000 – 10 000 visitors yearly,
Including Politicians, Ministers,
Parlamentarians, Majors and
media representatives.

“The National Conservation and Management Program for Natura 2000 sites in Latvia 2018 - 2030”

The prioritised list of management measures for all terrestrial NATURA 2000 area of Latvia — 800 pages in Latvian and English

“**NATPROGRAMM**” is the detailed follow-up of the National PAF 2012, setting **the location, the scale and priority** of habitat management measures to be implemented:



- precious enough to **address priority measures for the qualifying features** and the main conservation values of each particular NATURA2000 site.
- flexible enough to be applicable **for the period up to 2030**.
- **knowledge base for developers** of site management plans, protected area site managers, spatial and development planners of municipalities and project managers.



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Current and future use of "NATPROGRAMM"

**National Conservation and Management
Programme for Natura 2000 sites in Latvia
(2018. - 2030.)**



- **Priorities for detailed management action planning of NATURA 2000,**
- **Priority actions for habitat management granted from Cohesion Fund,**
- **Priorities for strategy of NCA, and yearly action plans.**
- **Priorities for National co-financing of LIFE programme, INTERREG, bilateral and other nature conservation projects.**
- **Knowledge Base for Integrated LIFE programme projects in Latvia,**
- **Together with actual data from EU habitat mapping project will serve the development of PAF for Natura 2000 of Latvia and Agrienviromental Schemes.**
- **Update of Natura 2000 database**



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The protected habitat management guidelines for Latvia



For coastal habitats, freshwater habitats, grasslands, wetlands and forests, rocky habitats and caves

Published as a set of 6 handbooks 1300 pages in Latvian and English

- The **Guidelines** describe field methods, suggest **HOW** to manage the existing habitat to improve status, or restore the habitat whenever it is possible and necessary.
- User-friendly indicators included to evaluate state of habitat for land users&managers, municipality planners and decisionmakers.
- Conclusions from experiments of management methods for dunes, grasslands, freshwater, mire and forest habitats.
- Broad public involvement - workshops, seminars, discussions, voluntary work and trainings of municipality staff responsible for sea cost to implement management measures.



The guidelines are largest
Nature Books during past
100 years in Latvia!

<http://nat-programme.daba.gov.lv/public/>





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Cross-sectoral Synergies established



1. Guidelines for management of **coastal habitats** are incorporated in «**National long-term thematic plan for the coastal area of the Baltic Sea**» to develop tourism infrastructure on seacoast of Latvia.
2. First time since Latvia joined EU, the Nature conservation **priorities** for habitat management and restoration are clearly defined on the **National PAF** and included in National Operational Program (2014- 2020).



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Cross-sectoral Synergies (2)

3. Guidelines for management of **freshwater habitats** are suggested by the Ministry of Environment and Regional Development to be applied by Municipalities governing public waters.
4. **Guidelines for management of grassland habitats** are accepted by the Ministry of Agriculture (!) as a official handbook for all farmers and land managers in country, to receive support payments according Rural Development Program of Latvia.



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Cross-sectoral Synergies (3)

All farmers should pass obligatory 16 hours course of grassland management according the guidelines to receive EU support.

The grassland management guidelines are elaborated by **Nature Conservation Agency**, the LIFE NATPROGRAMME project.

The certificate on the course of proper management of EU grassland habitats.





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NCA Biodiversity Monitoring system

- Nearly all groups of organisms included,
- Synergies established between different monitoring programmes, for example - freshwater habitat biodiversity and water quality monitoring.
- Biodiversity monitoring as a tool to evaluate efficiency and benefits:
 - from the measures of Agri-environmental support schemes,
 - of other measures implemented under numerous projects and the site management plans.

Threats – forestry sector going to start their own forest biodiversity monitoring, supporting industry related decisions and questioning existing biodiversity monitoring data.

Challenge – ensure that the government financing for monitoring will not be cutted or cancelled.



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NCA National certification system of nature conservation experts

The National regulation on expert certification determine the obligatory requirements that must be included in the conclusion of nature conservation expert.

The system provides balance between nature conservation needs and managements activities.

An expert on conservation of habitats and species should be certified:

- to give conclusion on the establishment of micro-reserves;
- to give recognition or evaluate biologically valuable grassland;
- to elaborate the site management plans for Natura 2000 area;
- to carry out the environmental impact assessment work that may be performed only by a certified expert.



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NCA National GIS system of nature data "OZOLS"



Since 2011, all the nature Data* in Latvia –habitats, species, management measures, infrastructure, micro reserves, etc. are entered, stored in and analysed with the **GIS portal for nature data "OZOLS"**

(the Oak).

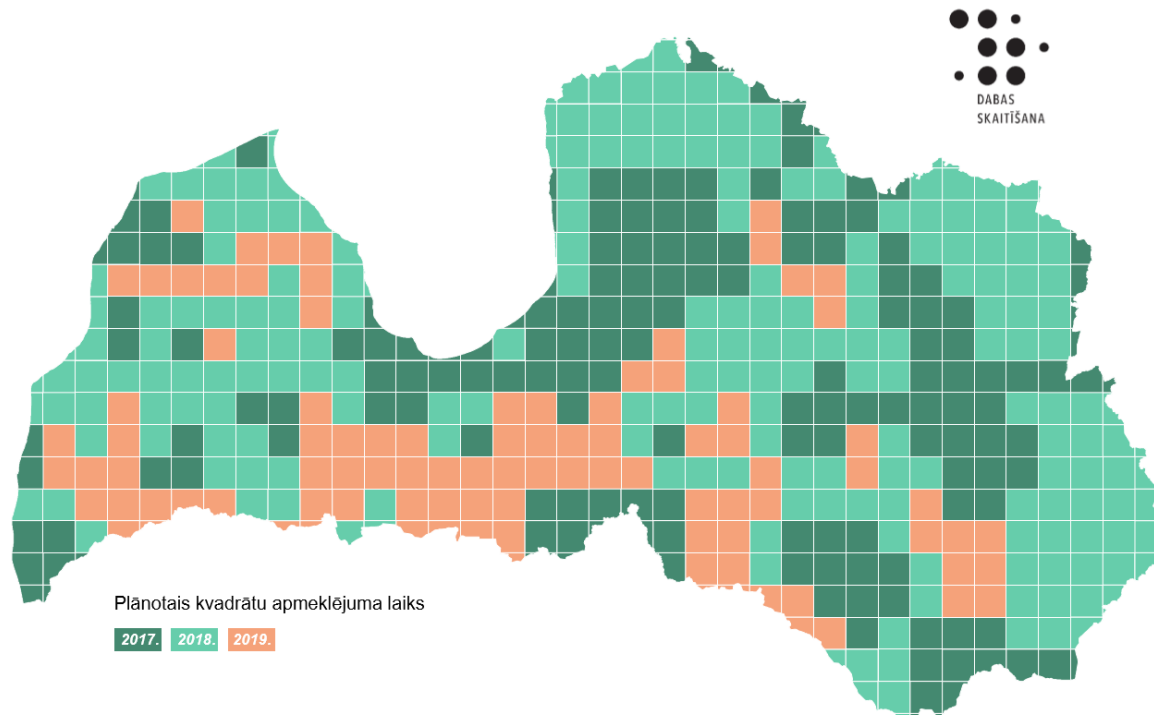
* Information available in Latvian only

<http://ozols.daba.gov.lv>



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The habitat inventory of Latvia



European Union Cohesion Fund projekts

NACIONĀLAIS
ATTĪSTĪBAS
PLĀNS 2020



EIROPAS SAVIENĪBA
Kohēzijas fonds



IEGULDĪJUMS TAVĀ NĀKOTNĒ

Preconditions for better biodiversity preservation and ecosystem protection in Latvia

jeb "*Nature Census*"

5.4.2.1/16/II/001

Six types of habitats surveyed



- coastal
- caves & outcrops



- mires and springs
- forests



- rivers & lakes
- grasslands





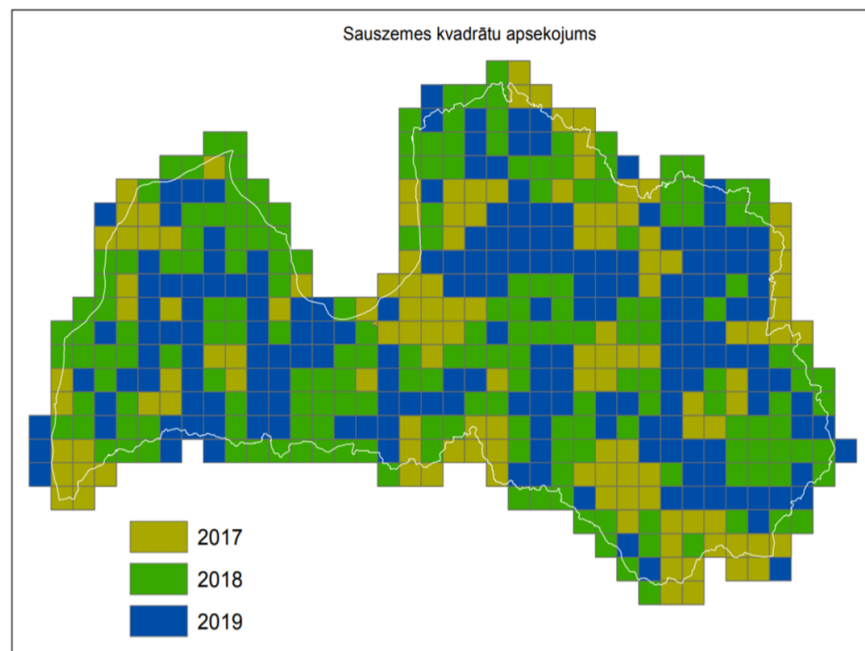
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Habitat inventory

- ☐ To obtain high level, scientifically justified and high detalization level information on nature values by performing inventory of **habitats of the EU importance** across the country
- ☐ To **digitalize** data and integrate them into national geospatial information system www.geolatvija.lv and nature protection system “Ozols”(*Oak tree*)
- ☐ To analyze obtained data&information and use them for **better policy** for protection of biodiversity and ecosystems, and related measures&support instruments;
- ☐ To develop nature **conservation plans** for 20 existing specially protected nature territories and protection (management) plans for 5 species.

Habitat inventory

- 495 square mapping units
- Information letter to landowners
- Field surveys (based on biophysical mapping) done by habitat/species **experts** (each has ID card) (>350 experts for 2017-2018 mapping season)
- A **checklist information** habitat:
habitat structure, functions, process indicators, impacts and threats, necessary management activities; mapping the polygonal borders of the habitat
- Quality control** (10% of each square next year).





The national TV produced a documentary film on nature survey process and work of experts.



E-mail: skaitamdabu@daba.gov.lv,

Websites: www.skaitamdabu.gov.lv
www.daba.gov.lv



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Initial conclusions from habitat mapping

- ❑ 2017 – 2018 data - habitats have been identified only on 17% - 18% from the surveyed territory (4921 km²)
- ❑ Grasslands are the most threatened habitats in Latvia:
 - ❑ Total size drops due to lack of management because requirements for extensive farming were doubled but Agri-environment support decreased significantly during period 2014 - 2020
 - ❑ Average habitat quality is low to medium
- ❑ The reasonable parts of coastal dune forests, meadows, and grey dunes are invaded by aggressive or alien species (*Amelanchier spicata*; *Rosa rugosa* Thunb.; *Impatiens glandulifera* Royle);
- ❑ Anthropogenic pollution (construction remnants and other waste) were identified in 20 % of cave habitats;
- ❑ Forest habitat spots are rather small and highly fragmented, because mechanisms to compensate nature conservation restrictions to landowners are insufficient.
- ❑ New moss and mushroom species, as well as 2 new caves have been recognized in Latvia during survey.
- ❑ Freshwater habitats are found in better state, than others, but growing threats by runoff from conventional agriculture fields are recognised.



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We have developed full set of efficient instruments to reach the EU policy targets for nature conservation.

- **A unified GIS system** for nature data – portal “the Oak”
- **National certification and supervision system** of nature experts, > 1000 conclusions and acts analysed by NCA already.
- **The Guidelines of habitat management and restoration** – handbooks with methods and best praxis how to save, restore and create habitats, how to reach favorable conservation status for protected habitats.
- **The National Conservation and Management Programme** for Natura 2000 sites in Latvia, (detailed PAF) where the necessary management measures for habitats are prioritised for each of 333 Natura 2000 area.
- **The Biodiversity monitoring programm**, implemented and representative nature data continuously analysed and integrated in nature data system.



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The urgent needs of nature conservation in Latvia

the main threats and future challenges ahead

- The Forestry policy stucked to the short term benefits; Forestry sector and corresponding opinion leaders, rising income from forrest industry, continuously questioning biodiversity monitoring data and results of habitat inventory,

- Policy level support for nature conservation is insufficient.

First question during the nature session from current OECD mission: "Isn`t the biodiversity conservation targets too low for Latvia? And why...?"

- Efficient and evident sinergies with nature conservation targets (stated on PAF) shoud be strictly requested by the European Commission from the National authorities when developing Agri-environement support schemes for next planning period.



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The urgent needs of nature conservation in Latvia (2)

the main threats and future challenges ahead

- The first pillar of new CAP (direct payments) going to be not in a balance with rural development needs and nature conservation requirements. If this happens again, the conventional farming will be even more oversubsidized in next EU planning period.
- The National Agriculture policy is oriented towards intensification, so the bulk part of support financing is redirected accordingly and available for large industrial farms.
- Rural development, especially small scale bio-farming should be supported to gain fast and evident benefits for rural society (i.e. employment of youth) and strong synergies with nature conservation objectives.
- Farmers and foresters who accept conservation restrictions shall be compensated and supported to stimulate voluntary conservation and habitat restoration actions.



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