



E-Learning  
TRAINING



Building  
CAPACITY



LIFE e-Natura2000.edu



# LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

to improve Natura 2000  
management

# eNatura2000

The project and all actions are made possible with support from the LIFE financial instrument of the European Community



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Supporting e-learning and capacity building for Natura 2000 Managers

LIFE e-Natura2000.edu is an innovative three-year project which explores new tools and learning methods to improve knowledge and build practical capacity amongst Natura 2000 managers.

#eNatura2000

This brochure is a deliverable of the LIFE Preparatory project 'LIFE e-Natura 2000.edu' (LIFE17PREDE003). The project is funded by LIFE financial instrument of the European Community and implemented by EUROPARC Federation with support of five partners: ProPark, Fungobe/ EUROPARC Spain, TESAF University of Padova, the European Landowners Organization, and the Kullaberg Nature Reserve.

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# Introduction

LIFE e-Natura 2000.edu focuses on capacity building for Natura 2000 managers. Taking a **competence-based approach**, the project enables peers to connect and learn about what managers need to know and be able to do in practical terms to improve Natura 2000 management. The project **analyses training needs and makes available new tools** to access information and learn about the skills required for Natura 2000 management and policy implementation.

The project is rooted in the European Union's Action Plan for Nature, People and Economy. The Action Plan was adopted following a thorough evaluation of the Birds and Habitats Directives, the so-called 'Fitness Check'. The evaluation demonstrated that,

there is an urgent need to pick up the pace of Natura 2000 implementation by **improving the quality of management practices** and the **effectiveness** of nature conservation objectives and measures.

Our Approach: **6 ambitious and interconnected implementation actions** that will contribute measurably to stronger and improved implementation of Natura 2000.

The LIFE e-Natura2000.edu project recognises that the professional knowledge, experience, expertise and skills of Natura 2000 site managers and Protected Area practitioners require tailor-made capacity building support .

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The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the European Commission.

All project partners work extensively with Natura 2000 and Protected Area managers, including private landowners, site managers, field staff, local communities, public administrations, environmental agencies and non-governmental organisations. The partners recognise the changing methods of training delivery and the opportunities to engage greater numbers of Natura 2000 site managers, whilst taking advantage of new technology.

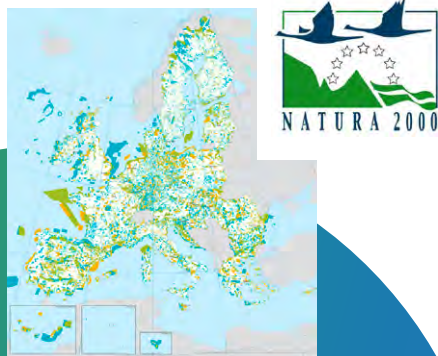


# Why build capacity for Natura 2000?

The Natura 2000 network of protected sites is unique in the world.

With over 27,000 terrestrial and marine sites covering more than 1.3m Km<sup>2</sup>, the Natura 2000 network is designated under the Birds & Habitats Directives of the European Union – these Directives are also known as the Nature Directives.

All EU Member States are legally required to maintain and manage sites for the species and habitats for which they are designated. In late 2016, a thorough evaluation of the Birds & Habitats Directives – the so called ‘Fitness Check’ – confirmed that the Nature Directives are fit for purpose.



The Natura 2000 is the largest network of Protected Areas in the world, encompassing 784.252 km<sup>2</sup> of European land area and 551.899 km<sup>2</sup> of marine area. Currently, there are 27.863 Natura 2000 sites, including Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Sites of Community Importance (SCIs).

Discover the Natura 2000 network at [natura2000.eea.europa.eu](http://natura2000.eea.europa.eu)

However, challenges remain, including ineffective and poor quality management practices for Natura 2000 sites, knowledge gaps, and limited stakeholder and public engagement.

The resulting Action Plan for Nature, People and Economy confirmed the need for greater integration of nature conservation as a priority across diverse sectors. Specifically, it confirmed that Natura 2000 delivers benefits for citizens and sustainable economic growth.

The Natura 2000 network is as much **a network of people** as it is of specially designated sites.

## What is capacity building?

LIFE e-Natura2000.edu focuses on building Natura 2000 site managers’ **capacity to do their work better, smarter and more efficiently**. The project targets the full spectrum of individuals involved in Natura 2000 management in both public and privately owned land, across the EU. The project aims to **actively involve site managers, private landowners and rangers**, whether they come from park authorities or non-governmental organisations, to improve the knowledge, skills and attributes they need as Natura 2000 managers.



## What are the challenges for capacity building?

Natura 2000 sites and Protected Areas need to be managed responsibly in ways that address specific management needs and objectives. **There is no ‘one size fits all’ approach**. Challenges impacting on Natura 2000 management come in many forms - for example, political, cultural and societal attitudes affect Natura 2000 management, whilst interactions with residents, landowners and visitors require specific management interventions. Each management challenge or set of issues requires specific capacity building initiatives. The aim of such initiatives must be to develop new knowledge and insights about what works, so that management practices can be applied according to needs and to meet local contexts.

**The need to reconcile economic, social, cultural and environmental objectives requires constant and skilful attention**. There is a huge onus on Natura 2000 managers to take the social-economic context of a site into account in the development of management plans: this involves implementing nature conservation priorities in an effective way, seeking consensus and minimising conflict, while creating broad social acceptance.

Across Europe, there are wide divergences in terms of social cultures and expectations about active participation of citizens or NGOs. Even where there are structured forms of social engagement and proactive policies towards inclusion, **knowing how to facilitate participatory management and inclusive stakeholder engagement approaches are areas of core capacity building need**.



These challenges place specific emphasis on the need for Natura 2000 site managers, not only to be technical experts and nature conservation specialists, but also to be **expert managers of people**.

**Multilingualism** also poses a real challenge for pan-European capacity building initiatives.

On top of pressures on operating budgets, especially for NGOs, **core funding and funding for capacity building, especially traditional face-to-face workshops and conferences, are scarce**. Across Europe, austerity policies have resulted in cuts for many governmental and non-governmental organisations, which has seriously impacted on nature conservation budgets.

Many Natura 2000 sites are designated on privately owned land and **private landowners are key stakeholders**. Although many are making use of innovative management tools, compared with others engaged in Natura 2000, they often work in relative isolation – as individual experts they have less opportunities to share experiences, increase knowledge and build the practical capacities they require.

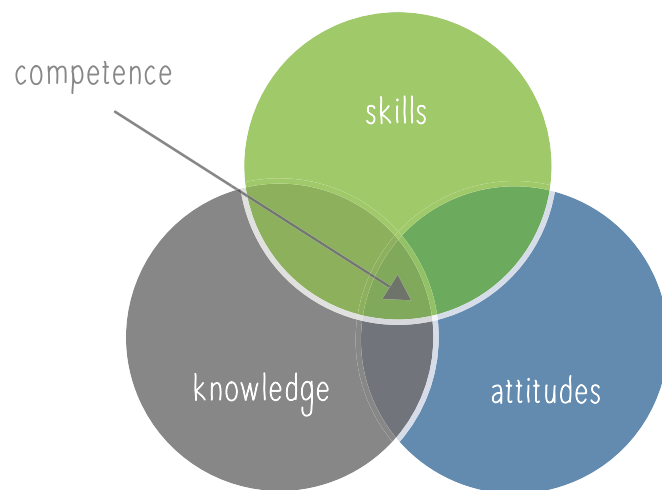




# What do we mean by a competence-based approach?

This project builds on the concepts and tools presented in the IUCN 'Global Register of Competencies for Protected Area Practitioners'. The Register has transformed thinking about competence-based capacity building approaches for nature conservation practitioners.

Competence-based approaches to capacity building are based around the acquisition of the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed for effective implementation of tasks and functions.



Within the context of this LIFE Preparatory project, the competence-based approach to capacity building refers to providing learning opportunities that enable Natura 2000 site managers to develop or acquire the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to effectively implement the Nature Directives.

Mobilising the experience of project partners and external experts, we analysed the requirements of the Nature Directives to identify core functions expected to be fulfilled by Natura 2000 site managers.



[download the full report](#)  
"Identification and assessment  
of competencies for management of Natura 2000."



## How will this project respond to the challenges?

LIFE e-Natura2000.edu is designed to serve the practical learning needs of Natura 2000 managers.

The project focuses on specific capacity building needs and identified core competencies which Natura 2000 managers require.

Working together, project participants will be encouraged to apply what they have learned to benefit the Natura 2000 sites they have responsibilities for.

## What learning opportunities will this project offer?

Natura 2000 managers have to be more than technical specialists – they need to be able to engage and work with local communities and diverse stakeholders in order to achieve their nature conservation objectives. **Above all, Natura 2000 managers need to be empathetic negotiators and communicators.** They need be able to know HOW to ...

- **Develop effective governance mechanisms** and establish inclusive participatory processes to achieve the objectives of their Natura 2000 sites.
- **Engage stakeholders in management processes** which involves respecting the needs of local communities, economic expectations and the related interests of stakeholders, such as local authorities or farmers for example.
- **Communicate effectively with a variety of audiences** so that nature's priorities become integrated with the fabric of wider society.

Not only will the project develop and use learning methods and tools to build practical capacities in such areas, but also as part of the learning process, the project will encourage (and expect) the learning to be used and applied by Natura 2000 managers in their daily work.

The experiences and feedback gathered from all involved in the project will enable project partners to measure and report results in highly visible ways as part of the evaluation process.



# Why should you be interested in this project?



For Natura 2000 management to be effective, technical specialist knowledge is essential, but it is not enough.

LIFE e-Natura2000.edu aims to build Natura 2000 managers' practical capacities in specific core competencies that they require for their work. The project aims to support Natura 2000 managers and demonstrate that...

**1** Communication & stakeholder engagement are **core fields of expertise**

**2** Natura 2000 management is essentially a **participatory process**

**3** Participatory management **needs to be learned**

## What can you learn?

Project partners have elaborated a 'common framework' for Natura 2000 management -the project will provide a range of blended learning experiences across **three core competence modules**, which cover:

### Modules

**Biodiversity conservation, policy, planning & project management skills**

led by the **ProPark Foundation** in Romanian

**How to work & collaborate effectively with local communities and respect cultural traditions**

led by **FUNGOBE / EUROPARC Spain** in Spanish

**How to communicate confidently about & advocate for Natura 2000**

led by the **EUROPARC Federation** in English



Neil McIntosh from the EUROPARC Federation gives an overview of the project



Watch on: [europarc.org/life-e-natura2000-edu](https://europarc.org/life-e-natura2000-edu)

LIFE e-Natura2000.edu aims to **test new approaches to professionalise capacity building** for people with responsibilities for Natura 2000 management. The project aims to make learning more accessible and efficient to deliver to all participants.

Working with a core group of **60 participants** and a wider audience of **500+ participants**, the project applies a 'competence-based' approach to focus on what Natura 2000 managers need to know and be able to do to improve their management practices.

In addition, the three core competence modules will be complemented by a **mini-module** which advances a range of personal competencies essential for effective Natura 2000 management: these include core communication skills, such as empathetic working, active listening and effective writing.

Although the main working language for the overall project will be English, the three core competence modules will be delivered in Romanian, Spanish and English to maximise the project's outreach.

“ Essentially, effective Natura 2000 management is an inclusive, participatory, cooperative and learnt process. ”

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# Blended learning

Nature conservation professionals require support and access to capacity building opportunities that meet their specific needs. Project partners already have considerable experience and knowledge about the content to be delivered by the project. However, new technologies and online learning can engage greater numbers of people with responsibilities for Natura 2000 management.

**Our blended learning approach** enables participants to learn together in a variety of settings, where they share experiences, apply knowledge gains and work towards practical solutions for their Natura 2000 management challenges. At all times, the focus in the project is on generating maximum impacts at local levels by empowering Natura 2000 managers to improve their management practices.

We aim to see what works best within the project and evaluate the impacts based on the experience of the participants.



# Project impacts

LIFE e-Natura2000.edu holds valuable learning opportunities for all engaged in the management of Europe's nature: whilst the focus of this project is on Natura 2000 managers, we know that the lessons learnt can be applied in a wide variety of settings and nature conservation contexts, including (in future) at the level of organisational capacity building.

“ Based on the project's results, we aim to demonstrate the benefits of competence-based approaches to capacity building, as that will be required to meet the major challenges impacting Europe's nature in the 21st century. ”



## Tools & approaches

- Webinars
- Demonstration videos
- Filmed 'master class' tutorials
- Highlight effective management practices
- Workshops
- Summer school
- Practical assignments
- Think through problems to develop workable solutions
- New smartphone app 'virtual (twinning) hub'

Working in groups, learning experiences will be delivered by a mix of face-to-face workshops and a summer school, as well as a range of online and digital tools such as webinars, interactive online exercises, demonstration videos and a smartphone 'virtual twinning' app.



The faces behind the project

Elena Bazhenova from the Kullaberg Nature Reserve, describes the practical benefits Natura 2000 managers can expect to gain from the project.



Watch on:  
[europarc.org/life-e-natura2000-edu](http://europarc.org/life-e-natura2000-edu)



With the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy about to conclude and a new 8th Environmental Action Programme about to start, we need to ensure appropriate capacities are in place.

Our longer term goal, based on the project's results, is that there will be greater recognition of the need to develop and provide more consistent and cohesive quality approaches to capacity building. That is, we aim through this project to make the case for greater recognition of Natura 2000 management as a profession.

## The LIFE Programme



In 2018, the LIFE Programme allocated €196.2 million to projects in the fields of environment and resource efficiency, nature and biodiversity, and environmental governance and information. It is used to lever significant additional funds from multiple sources for nature.

LIFE funding helps support climate change mitigation and adaptation projects including those that assist farming and forestry adaptation to climate change and improve communities' resilience to extreme weather events, from floods and heatwaves. The LIFE Programme is generally considered to be a vital resource, especially to support and strengthen implementation of the Natura 2000 network of sites.

More at: [ec.europa.eu/easme/en/life](http://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/life)





## Get involved!

We want as many Natura 2000 managers and Protected Area practitioners as possible to participate in the project and use the materials and e-learning tools. We're keen to hear your ideas and views - your opinions and feedback matter!

[europarc.org/life-e-natura2000-edu](http://europarc.org/life-e-natura2000-edu)

Sign-up for the project's newsletter and keep an eye on the project's webpages and social media posts!

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### PROJECT IN A NUTSHELL

(Project ref. LIFE17PREDE003)

**Total budget:** € 845 k

**Period:** April 2018 to July 2021

6 partners from 6 countries

Participants from across the EU

6 implementation actions

5 Communication actions

5 Project management actions

23 deliverable outputs

3 **blended-learning courses** (held in English, Spanish and Romanian)

