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SOCIO- ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT



Supporting e-learning
and capacity building
for Natura 2000 Managers



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

This report is a project 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 is implemented by EUROPARC Federation with the support of five partners: ProPark, Fungobe/EUROPARC-Spain, TESAF-University of Padova, the European Landowners Organisation, and the Kullaberg Nature Reserve.

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



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ❖ Assessing the socio-economic significance of a project with the scope and aspirations of LIFE e-Natura2000.edu is not an easy task. The cost-benefits analysis presented in this report aims to demonstrate the impacts of the project for the individuals and organisations directly involved. In addition, based on the project's impacts, this report signals how greater impacts can be realised for all Natura 2000 managers from larger-scale competence-based capacity building initiatives in future. The achievements and results from the project demonstrate why long-term, tailor-made capacity building programmes are required to improve the effectiveness of Natura 2000 management and its positive achievements on the ground.

- ❖ All the information provided both by project participants and partners (surveys, final reports, etc.) has been used for this purpose. A specific case study in Kullaberg Nature Reserve (both SAC & SPA) has also been carried out for assessing socio-economic impacts on the ground.

- ❖ To briefly summarize, clear positive impacts of the project presented in this report include:
 - 🗨 **50% of participants in the project training actions will launch new activities linked to Natura 2000 management capacities as a direct result of the project. This demonstrates the importance of proper identification of core competencies to improve the effectiveness of training & capacity building programmes.**

 - 🗨 **The training activities & innovative tools are easily replicable and up-scalable, with a high value of usefulness. The project's deliverables demonstrate measurable potential to reach greater numbers of participants with relatively small investments of time and money.**

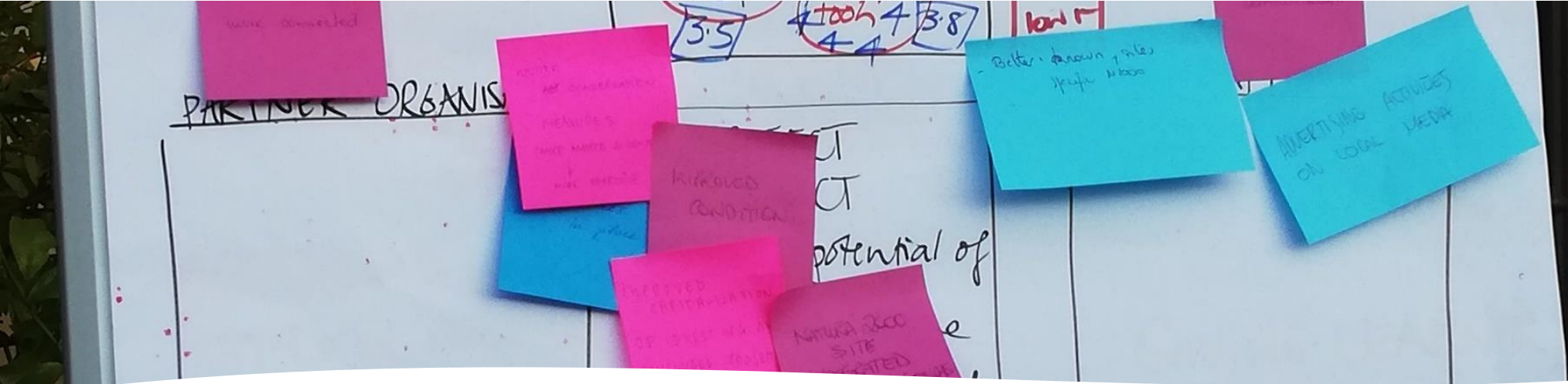
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 🗨️ **All project partners have modified or will modify their training frameworks to incorporate the project tools and outcomes.**
- 🗨️ **Communication and information about Natura 2000 has and will continue to improve from Kullaberg Nature Reserve's participation as a project partner. Showcasing their work and experience is particularly important as the Reserve's two Natura 2000 sites have to be managed for high levels of visitor pressure, balanced with co-dependent tourism and its high importance for the local economy.**
- ❖ **As a preparatory project, LIFE e-Natura2000.edu aspires to be replicated on a large scale across the European Union. A new project, LIFE ENABLE, will continue to build on the legacy and results achieved. Starting in August 2021, LIFE ENABLE aims to provide continuous professional development for Natura 2000 and other nature protection managers working at all levels through the creation and consolidation of a European Natura Academy.**

1. About the project

- ❖ [LIFE e-Natura2000.edu](http://LIFE_e-Natura2000.edu) explores the potential of building new approaches and learning methods to **improve knowledge and capacity amongst Natura 2000 managers across the EU**. The project targets the full spectrum of individuals involved in Natura 2000 management in a broad sense, including both public and private stakeholders involved in European nature conservation.
- ❖ Due to the huge variety of ecological, social and cultural management contexts of Natura 2000 sites, 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 for managing Natura 2000 better, smarter and more efficiently**, so that management practices can be applied according to needs and to meet local contexts.
- ❖ The project has examined the competencies needed by a range of actors to manage Natura 2000 more effectively. To do this, the project has tested a mix of **blended learning innovative tools, e-learning methods and approaches** to delivering capacity building, aiming to reach the widest possible audience.





2. Aims & objectives

- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Taking a **competence-based approach**, the project has enabled peers to connect and learn about what managers need to know and be able to do. The competence-based approach to capacity building refers to providing learning opportunities that enable Natura 2000 site managers to develop or acquire these skills, knowledge and attitudes identified as being specifically needed to effectively implement the Nature Directives. Accordingly, the project has analyzed training needs and made available new ways of accessing information about the multiple skills required for Natura 2000 management and policy implementation.

Main project objectives:

- ✓ *To develop a targeted set of mechanisms for competencies gap analysis, such as a Training Needs Analysis tool (TNA), and Natura 2000 capacity building framework amongst public and private Natura 2000 site managers across the European Union territory.*
- ✓ *To deliver a new, innovative and relevant toolbox of learning experiences, designed to meet the needs of all involved in Natura 2000 management combining digital technology, media and some traditional education methods (face to face workshops).*
- ✓ *To improve project participants' capacities and competencies, enabling Natura 2000 sites managers to feel confident and capable to implement the Nature Directives in their territories: in turn, improve effectiveness in the practical management of Natura 2000 sites.*

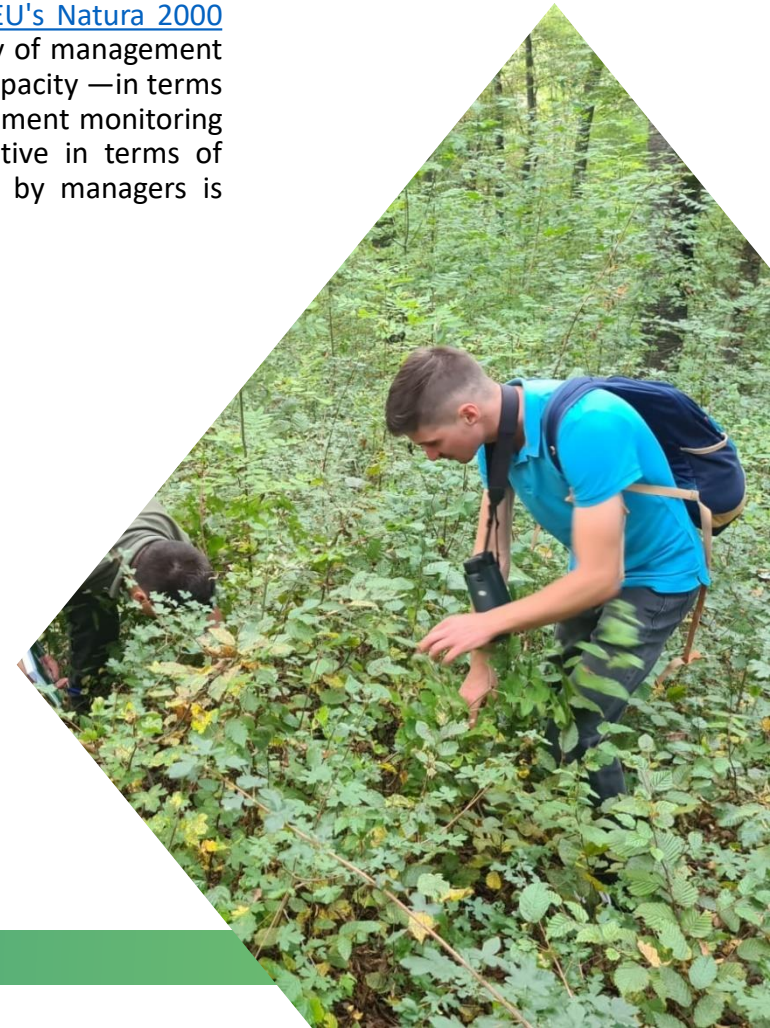


3. Training for better management: a question of effectiveness

- ❖ Since the Habitats Directive came into force, there have been many challenges that protected area managers have faced over the years. In most of the EU Member States, the practical experience applied by protected area management (National Parks, Reserves,...) was used 'as is' to deal with Natura 2000 Network management.
- ❖ However, the incorporation of Natura 2000 management responsibilities into the protected area landscape has often not been accompanied by the corresponding changes both in management capacities (as indicated by the [European Court of Auditors](#)) or in training for managers in the specific competencies that they require to develop and apply. The study [Management effectiveness in the EU's Natura 2000 network of protected areas](#) shows that there is "inadequate investment in the capacity of management authorities and in practical site management". This document also points out a lack of capacity —in terms of both knowledge and staff time — as a key barrier to systematic Natura 2000 management monitoring and assessment. For investments in capacity building to be cost-efficient and effective in terms of improved Natura 2000 management, training in the specific competencies required by managers is crucial.
- ❖ Despite the work carried out by European authorities to establish guidelines and action lines to integrate Natura 2000 into Member States' agendas, the cultural and administrative complexity of Europe implies a greater effort in the development of tools and common spaces to achieve effective management of the Network, which has direct consequences on biodiversity conservation and people's well-being. This is one of the three key commitments by 2030 of the [European Biodiversity Strategy](#) to consolidate a coherent network of (expanded) protected areas.

OUR TRAINEES SAID:

"For many years I did not do any real training in my work. I spend most of my time implementing projects and projects and projects... How silly not to invest in communication competencies all those years!"



3. Training for better management: a question of effectiveness

- ❖ Management of Natura 2000 sites must be understood as the management of living spaces where humans and nature interact and in which the achievement of objectives (conservation of European biodiversity) is achieved thanks to the implementation of a series of management capacities (IUCN, 2004). This must be inclusive of multiple stakeholders who are involved (not just managers). The implementation of necessary site conservation measures, including the development and implementation of management plans is, after all, fundamentally a participatory process which requires skillful working with nature and people at the same time (Figure 1).

From a socio-economic perspective, effective management of Natura 2000 sites has to be understood as:

- ✓ *Management that maximizes goal achievement (conservation of European biodiversity) and minimizes the cost of achieving them.*
- ✓ *Management that facilitates access and development of new funding and employment opportunities.*
- ✓ *Management that contributes to people's well-being; and,*
- ✓ *Management which is competence-based*

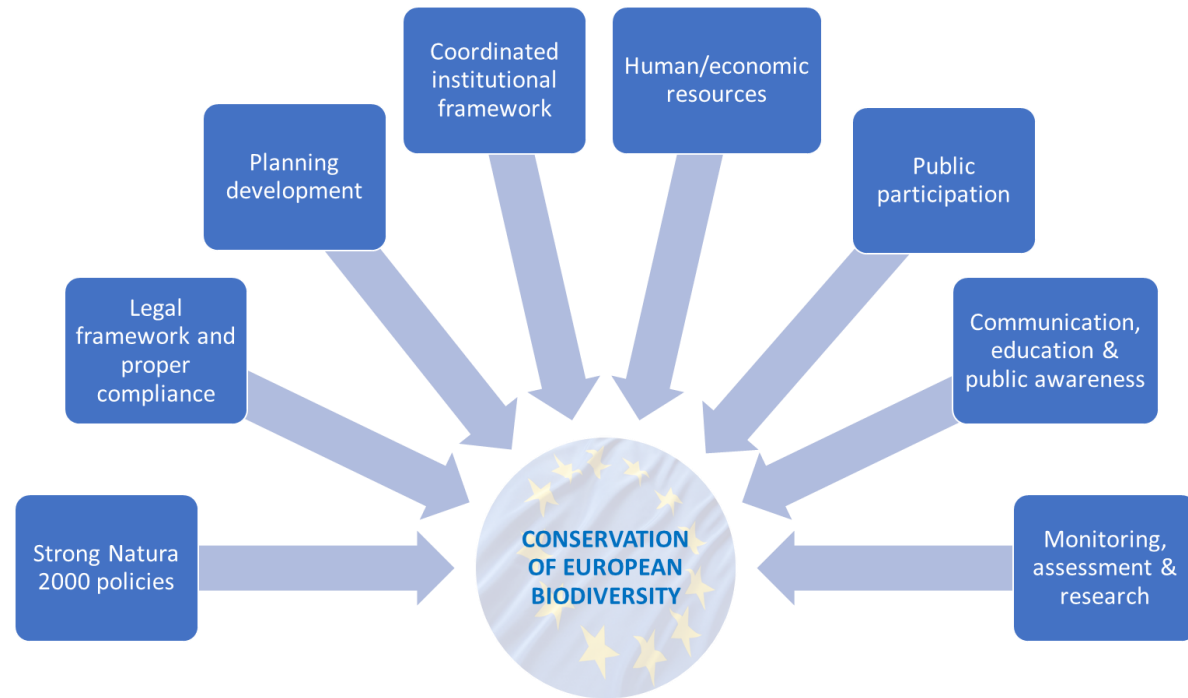
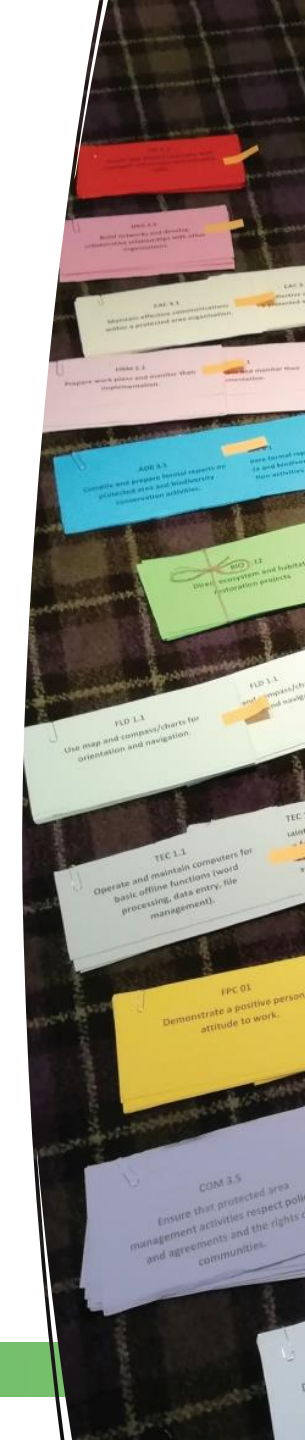


Figure 1. Management capacities required for Natura 2000 management. *Adapted from IUCN (2004).*

4. Management capacities & project outcomes

- ❖ In LIFE e-Natura 2000.edu, the preparatory actions of the project (identification of core competencies required for effective Natura management, development of a new online Training Needs Analysis (TNA) tool, design and delivery of innovative learning events -3 courses and a virtual summer school- and the production of a new networking and knowledge-building App) are tools that aim to increase training actions and the projects' impacts. On the basis of the core competencies, skills and specific functions identified, the project worked to develop and test this range of learning tools so that their replicability would be enhanced and in ways that could be incorporated into future project management and capacity building training initiatives.
- ❖ Understanding Natura 2000 as a cooperative process, where management responsibilities are learnt, consulted upon and shared on the basis of mutual respect and trust, effective Natura 2000 management requires specific knowledge, skills and competencies mainly in the core competence areas identified in project action A1, 'Identification and assessment of competencies for Natura 2000 management' – these are:
 - 📖 **Technical nature conservation knowledge**, where an individual Natura 2000 site manager should be able to demonstrate skills in setting appropriate conservation measures, management planning and implementation of required actions and monitoring, for example, based on strong ecological knowledge.
 - 📖 **Management of people and place, skills and knowledge in governance arrangements and applied management**, such as planning, management and administration of projects, financial, human and technical resources, organisations, as well as policy making, leadership, communication and partnership development.
 - 📖 **Communication and outreach**, where Natura 2000 site managers interact with and involve a range of stakeholders by raising awareness, providing information and creating inclusive relationships for Natura 2000.
 - 📖 **General personal competencies**, specifically the fundamental personal skills and attitudes, such as ethics, communication, a positive attitude towards work, the capacity to address problems and make decisions, which have an equal importance in nature conservation.



4. Management capacities & project outcomes

- ❖ The identification of core competencies and their development through the training actions by the project partners make it possible to reinforce the management capacities of Natura 2000 sites, which has obvious socio-economic consequences.
- ❖ The evaluation of the project's results (action A5) points positively to a high socio-economic impact derived from its actions (see table 1). Among other results, it should be noted that **50% of participants in project training actions will launch new activities linked to Natura 2000 management capacities as a result of the project.**
- ❖ Table 1 shows the relationship between core competencies developed in the project's training actions and the capacities for management identified by IUCN (see Figure 1). In turn, it is possible to attribute several socio-economic impacts of direct benefit to Natura 2000 management bodies and society as a whole: these stem from the project participants' evaluation feedback and are listed below as reported project outcomes.



OUR TRAINEES SAID:

“The techniques will help with writing proposals and making reports on environmental conservation related to Natura 2000 management.”



Table 1. Evidencing the links between the socio-economic impacts of competence-based management capacities and LIFE e-Natura2000.edu project outcomes.

CORE COMPETENCIES	CAPACITIES FOR N2000 MANAGEMENT RELATED TO (IUCN, 2004)	SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT	PROJECT OUTCOMES
Biodiversity conservation (BIO)	Monitoring, assessment & research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase and valuation of ecosystem services. • Effective management assessment: transparency and return of results to society. • Improved management practices, avoiding cost risks associated with (repeating) bad practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 participants will develop new research and field studies.
Policy, Planning & Projects (PPP)	<p>Strong Natura 2000 policies</p> <p>Legal framework and proper application</p> <p>Planning development</p> <p>Human/Economic resources</p> <p>Coordinated institutional framework</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better funding access (avoiding improvisation; opening opportunities for integrated funding) . • Cascade planning: coherence between planning tools at different scales. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 participants will develop new management plans & identification of new Natura 2000 sites.
Communication & Collaboration (CAC)	<p>Communication, education & public awareness</p> <p>Public participation</p> <p>Human/Economic resources</p> <p>Coordinated institutional framework</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding job networks. • Improving access to job opportunities in Natura 2000 management . • Reducing costs of preventive surveillance, as a consequence of improved communication and compliance of N2000 site rules. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learning experience provided additional networking opportunities when compared to the baseline. Additional categories of stakeholders related to the Natura 2000 network (governmental institutions, NGOs, fishing/ hunter associations) were included. • 40% of participants in learning activities think that have higher job/employment opportunities. • 6 participants apply for a new job position.
Local Communities and cultures (COM)	<p>Communication, education & public awareness</p> <p>Public participation</p> <p>Strong Natura 2000 policies</p> <p>Legal framework and proper application</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of governance models adapted to social and territorial Natura 2000 site context. • Avoiding conflict with/between local communities. • Increasing acceptance of Natura 2000 conservation policies and programmes. • New green job opportunities and economic initiatives for local communities. • Reinforcing links to local environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 participants will develop new engagement techniques. • 5 participants will arrange new communication strategies/materials.



5. From the classroom to the ground: The Kullaberg Nature Reserve experience

- ❖ Kullaberg is a small Nature Reserve of 1,358 hectares located in the north-west corner of Scania province (Sweden). It is part of Natura 2000 both as Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC), protecting 12 species and 19 habitats of community interest.
- ❖ The Nature Reserve is one of the most well-known & visited protected areas in Sweden, principally in summer. This implies important efforts to manage public use and tourism (visitor's impacts, fluxes and mobility, sustainability of tourism activities). For this reason, Kullaberg was motivated by and is the first Swedish protected area to achieve the [European Charter of Sustainable Tourism](#).
- ❖ Kullaberg has been a testing ground for most of LIFE e-Natura 2000.edu project actions. Management staff have participated as testers of the Training Needs Analysis tool (TNA), as users of capacity building e-learning tools and as trainees in several learning activities. Their opinions have been collected through a structured interview in order to get a multiscale cost-benefit analysis of their participation in the project .



KULLABERG MANAGERS SAID:

"I am using some tools introduced in EUROPARC on-line course 'Competent Inclusive Communication for Natura 2000 Managers' in my daily work, i.e. stakeholder mapping tools, as well as psychological profiling and empathy map from Modules 2 and 3."



5. From the classroom to the ground: The Kullaberg Nature Reserve experience

❖ Despite the time costs of being involved in the project's training activities and other actions, Kullaberg management staff have identified the following positive impacts of LIFE e-Natura2000.edu at various levels:

AT INDIVIDUAL LEVEL:

- ☒ Extending professional networks through EUROPARC, project partners and fellow students in the on-line courses.
- ☒ Better understanding of Natura 2000 legal background and different country specific contexts across the EU.
- ☒ Reality check and shift in attitude about current levels of knowledge and skills as well as professional development opportunities available in-house (after filling out TNA and reflecting on peers' professional situations during the on-line course).

AT MANAGEMENT BODY LEVEL:

- ☒ Application of knowledge and skills gained through participation in the on-line course.
- ☒ Awareness about gaps in Natura 2000 management locally and in Sweden in general.
- ☒ Promoting better dialogue with all stakeholders and practical insights to highlight the importance of Natura 2000 through management work and the Kullaberg Forum, in particular as a sustainable tourism destination (EUROPARC European Charter for Sustainable Tourism).

AT TERRITORIAL LEVEL:

- ☒ Kullaberg key stakeholders will be better informed about the status of Natura 2000 and associated management activities from managers' side, as well as anticipated or desired actions expected from stakeholders' side. This will hopefully lead to better informed and more inclusive decision-making from both sides.
- ☒ Managers will be better placed to communicate the Natura 2000 network in a proper way, making it easier to understand.



6. Impact of training activities & innovative tools

- ❖ The project has demonstrated the value of online learning as a means to **reach greater numbers of participants** than through traditional face-to-face capacity building events.
- ❖ Online learning is **easily replicable and up-scalable**: once created, online tools (e.g. learning platforms and app) hold significant potential to enlarge the audience of Natura 2000 managers and related projects without expensive travel/facilities costs and their carbon footprint.
- ❖ This proves that, for relatively **small investments of time and money**, new and improved skills can be developed which improve 'on-the-job' effectiveness and efficiency.
- ❖ The project's approach and the experience of participants demonstrate that **resistance by administrative offices** to permit in-field activities from their public employees **can be more easily overcome** when capacity building takes place online.
- ❖ Six months after the end of the courses, 96% of participants of the online courses started to apply the learning (or would soon) to their work context, which is consistent with the **high value of usefulness of the learning experience** (8,4 in a 0-10 scoring scale).
- ❖ This demonstrates that the project's competence-based approach is, not only immediately applicable, but it is replicable in the short term for individuals and also in the medium term for teams and organisations.
- ❖ Due to COVID-19 restrictions, face-to-face workshops (two out of three) were not carried out and this also limited opportunities for networking with other Natura 2000 managers at the interregional/ international level.
- ❖ On the other hand, the proliferation of online meetings, webinars, and other learning and communication techniques during the lockdown strengthened the project's piloting purpose, increasing the interest and frequency of use of the proposed online learning tools.



6. Impact of training activities & innovative tools

- ❖ Time and costs are significant barriers for many individuals' and organisations' capacity building activities. Often training and capacity building are seen as costs not investments in people, their work and the organisations' operations. Also, although there are specific courses and networking events that may meet certain learning needs, there is limited access to capacity building or training opportunities that are purpose-built for Natura 2000 managers.
- ❖ Social impact assessment methodologies applied for training activities (Social Return of Investment – SROI) recommend a cost-benefit analysis not only at organizational but also at personal scale.
- ❖ Figure 2 shows this analysis for LIFE e-Natura 2000.edu based both on the results of the impact exercises completed by partners and also the participants' evaluation feedback. This highlights a clear confirmation that benefits outweigh costs at both individual and organisational levels.

OUR TRAINEES SAID:

“All the digital documents, presentations, references, videos have been very useful and I am already using them as a working material for other projects, teaching, and sharing.”

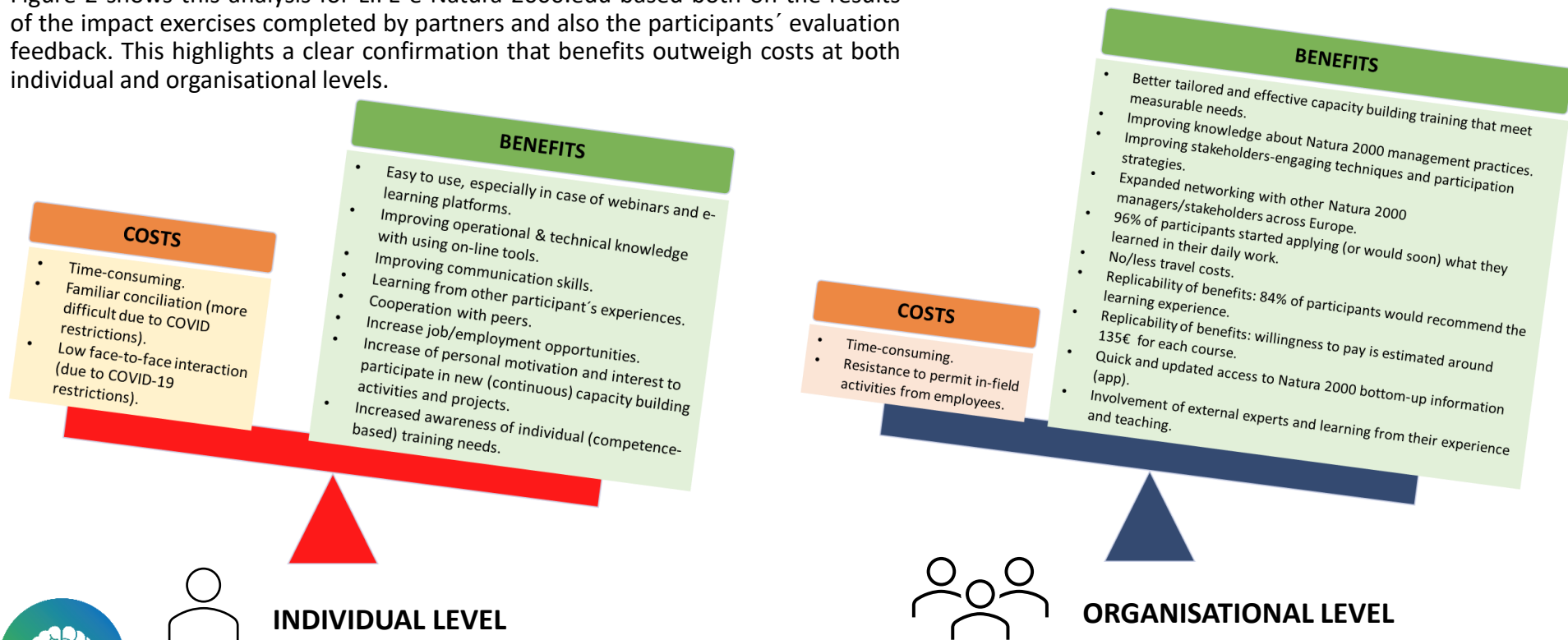


Figure 2. Cost-benefit analysis of the project both at individual and organisational levels.

7. Sowing seeds for the future: creating a European capacity building network

- ❖ The results of the LIFE e-Natura 2000.edu project aim to lay the foundations for a replicable and transferable blended learning framework which can be applied and further developed in existing training structures and future capacity building projects for Natura 2000 managers. The Guidelines for Replicability report produced by the project are purposefully designed to promote sustainable professional training and career development pathways for today and tomorrow's Natura 2000 managers.

OUR PARTNERS SAID:



With 22 editions and the participation of 700 trainees, FUNGOBE's [MSc in Protected Areas](#) is the only post-graduate training programme in Spain specifically focused on capacity building for current/future protected area managers.

LIFE e-Natura 2000.edu has helped to develop and improve not only the MSc but also other short training and educational programmes run by FUNGOBE for protected area managers (in the form of on-line platforms, webinars, short videos, 'skill pills',...). In addition, the project has been influential in the acquisition and refinement of new online teaching capabilities: also, these have been helpful in the development of the online version of the MSc in Protected Areas, which will be fully implemented in 2022.

Following participation in the on-line course offered by EUROPARC within LIFE e-Natura 2000.edu, Kullaberg Nature Reserve staff reached out to the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) aiming to explore opportunities for collaboration in order to start implementation of [Healthy parks, Healthy People Programme](#) in Kullaberg Nature Reserve. Upon pitching the idea to SLU researchers, Kullaberg has drafted a pilot project proposal and is currently working on securing external funding to implement the initiative (as of June 2021).

The main objective is to develop (and test) a new model promoting outdoor and nature related activities among healthcare professionals and social care workers in need of mental and physical recovery due to increased workload caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the aim is to build a collaborative network of stakeholders to establish an innovative set of services for promoting public health. The proposed project is a community-based collaboration between the County Administrative Board of Scania, local community, private small enterprises operating in outdoor and nature tourism (yoga, hiking, forest bathing and birdwatching) and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU).



Länsstyrelsen
Skåne



7. Sowing seeds for the future: creating a European capacity building network



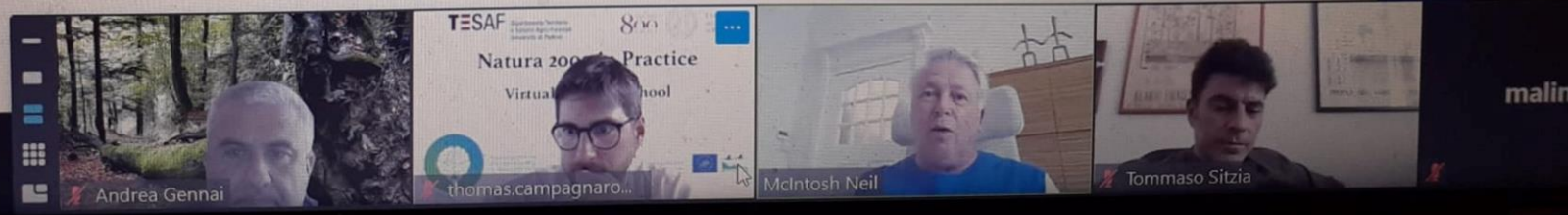
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The University of Padova has recently launched a curricular course in Natura 2000 management, taught by the scientific coordinator of the project for TESAF. It is very innovative and almost unique in the current Italian university-level educational offer. All activities of the LIFE e-Natura2000.edu project had and will have an important impact on the preparation and methods used in the specific module *Natura 2000 management*. The skills and knowledge gained in using online tools will also benefit other European projects such as the virtual training activities foreseen in the [WildSkills EU Erasmus +](#) project.

The use of the mobile App of the project by some members of TESAF has been used to support continuous updates about Natura 2000-related technical and research outcomes.

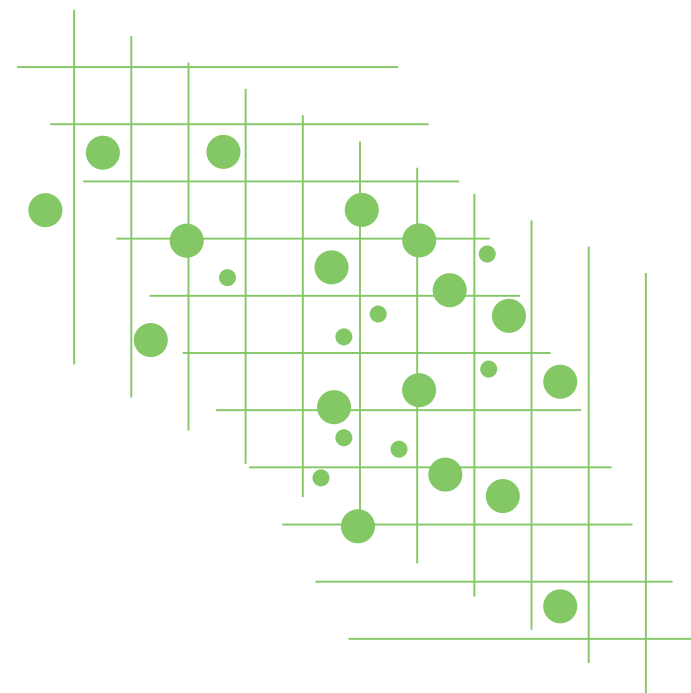
Our participation in LIFE e-Natura 2000.edu helped to widen TESAF's network and create new future potential collaborations with participants in the Virtual Summer School.

Natura 2000 in Practice Virtual Summer School



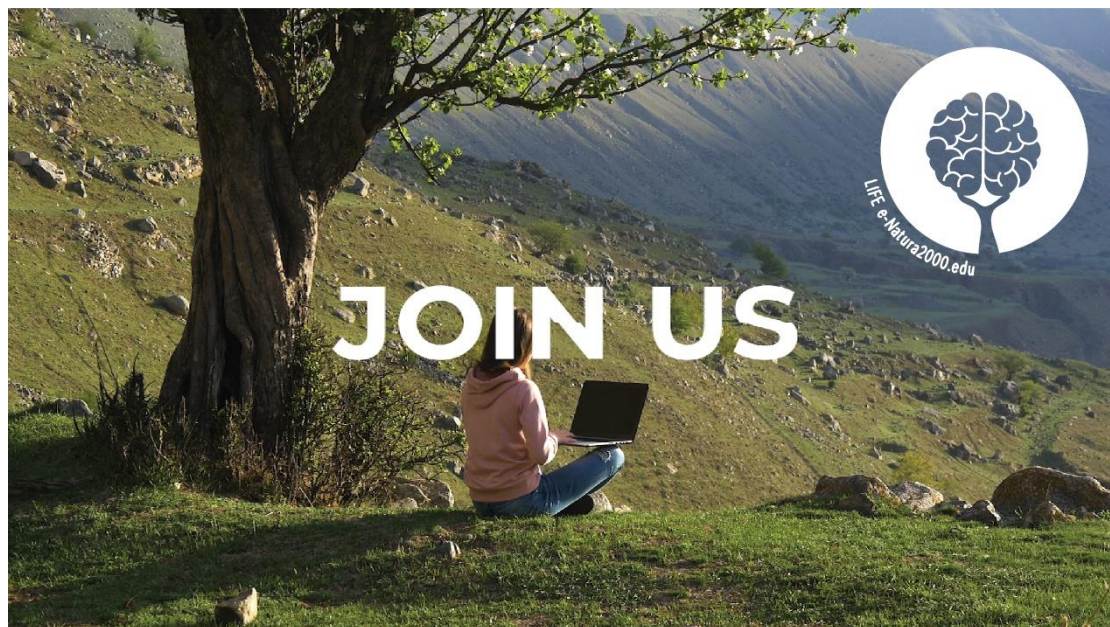
7. Sowing seeds for the future: creating a European capacity building network

- ❖ One of the main and most ambitious project outcomes will be the creation and consolidation of a European Natura Academy, through the **LIFE ENABLE** project. This project will be developed and implemented to support continuous professional development programmes for nature protection managers working at all levels across the EU. The future management challenges of the Natura 2000 Network set out in the European Biodiversity Strategy require Natura 2000 managers to be enabled to become more effective, competent and confident in their work: also, especially given the ambitions to expand the network and include new protected areas, nature managers will need to be equipped with the specific competencies they require to do that work.
- ❖ Effective nature management is not just about being technically competent in specific areas of study or specialisms: also, the process of managing nature well requires continuous development of skills-sets and implementation of new ideas so that managers can make gains for nature. This is especially true given the increasing importance of and need for integrated and collaborative working with stakeholders from multiple sectors. Combining the necessary technical site management knowledge with the required core competencies is central to management effectiveness. In order to achieve progress towards the goals and targets of the [EU 2030 Biodiversity Strategy](#) and the [European Skills Agenda](#), tailored and purpose-built competence-based capacity building programmes need to be developed and provided in the coming years so that nature managers have the learning opportunities they need to do their work.
 - ❖ On the basis of the lessons learned in LIFE e-Natura 2000.edu, LIFE ENABLE will further develop blended learning training tools whilst continuing to value field-based face-to-face training as a necessity. However, the project will also be implemented recognising the limits of such traditional training in terms of costs, time and participation numbers. At the same time, the project specifically addresses the need to act with some urgency in order to scale-up capacity building provision and reach greater numbers of nature managers than ever before. Therefore, to be more sustainable, accessible, cost-effective and still produce effective learning outcomes for Natura 2000 managers, LIFE ENABLE will prioritize the creation of quality online tools, reserving face-to-face training events to those that are strictly necessary, contributing to great cost efficiency and reduced carbon footprint.
 - ❖ The opportunities for and need to grow knowledge and apply practical solutions to nature's priorities and secure society's co-dependence on our natural resources, as well as meet face-on the growing pressures and threats from climate change (among others), underpin the need for consolidation of this European Natura Academy.



CONCLUDING REMARKS

- ❖ LIFE e-Natura 2000.edu has demonstrated that investing in innovative tools for capacity building improves the effectiveness of Natura 2000 management with low costs of time and money. Previous application of Training Need Analysis (TNA) tools to incoming training activities tailors the contents to the real needs of Natura 2000 managers.
- ❖ From a **socio-economic perspective**, the project has had a clear impact at various levels:
 - 🗨 At individual level, participants in project's training activities have declared to have better employment perspectives due to the improvement of their communication skills and their operational & technical knowledge with using on-line tools. Their job networks have been expanded and their personal motivation has increased, which has resulted in the launch of new projects related to Natura 2000 management and the participation in new training activities.
 - 🗨 At organisational level, all the project's partners have incorporated the project's methodologies and tools into their training frameworks as a measure to improve their results with lower execution costs. Their networks have been extended and their access to Natura 2000 info is better and faster, which results, among others, in a better access to new funding opportunities.
 - 🗨 At site level, improving communications skills among Natura 2000 key stakeholders will lead to an increase in social acceptance of Natura 2000 conservation policies and a decrease in potential conflicts associated with their implementation. Improving Natura 2000 stakeholders' training will allow access to new funding & green job opportunities for local communities.



www.europarc.org/tools-and-training/life-e-natura2000-edu/

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