

Regional PAME Assessments and Site-Specific Evaluations in the Natura 2000 Network in Spain

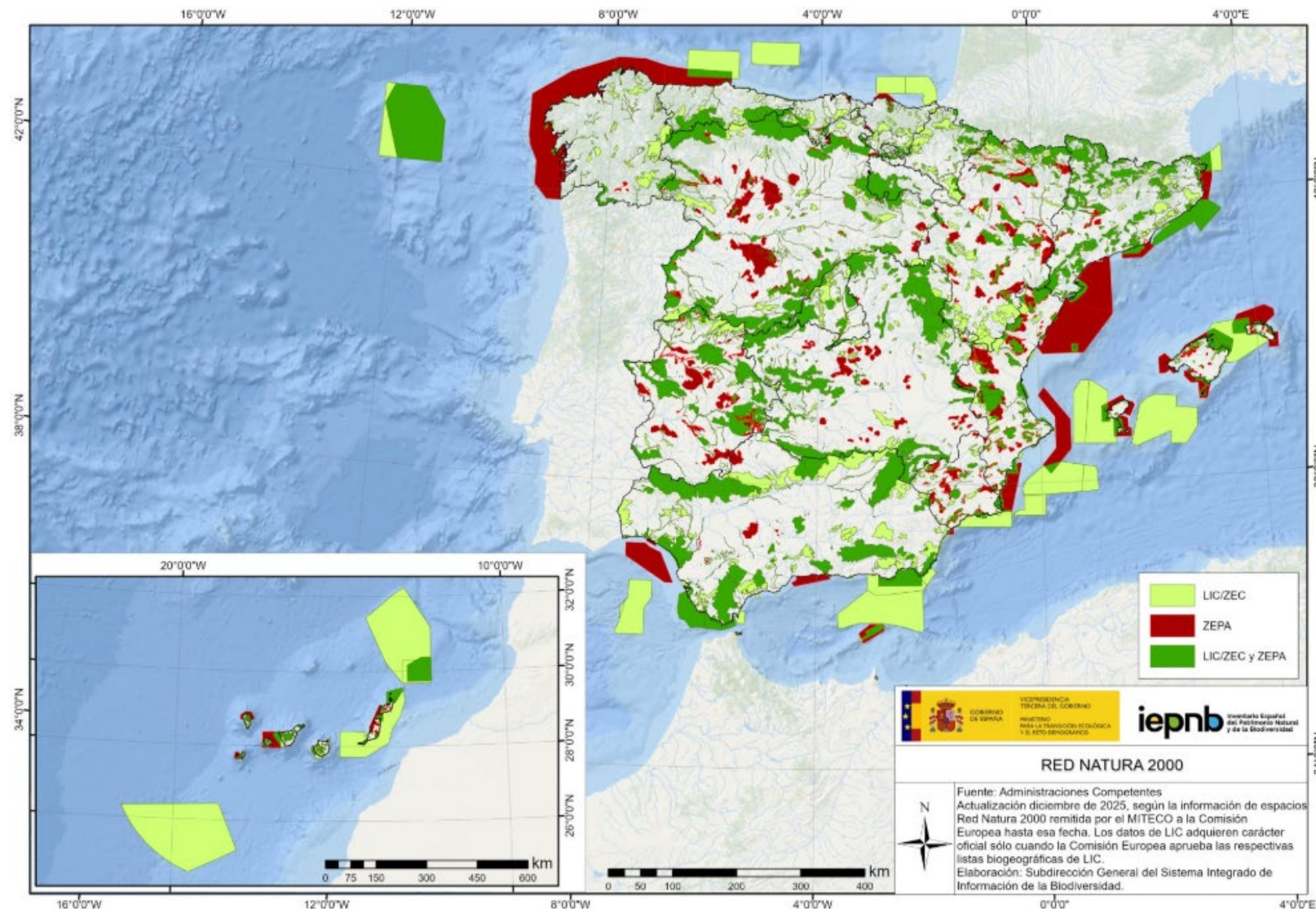
PAME Webinar - National Approaches to Protected Area Management Effectiveness

14 OCT 2026

Prior

- 27.3% of terrestrial Spain is in N2K
- ≈1900 N2K sites
- 17% terrestrial ES nationally protected
- ≈2500 national sites

- 21 managing authorities (highly decentralized)



Background

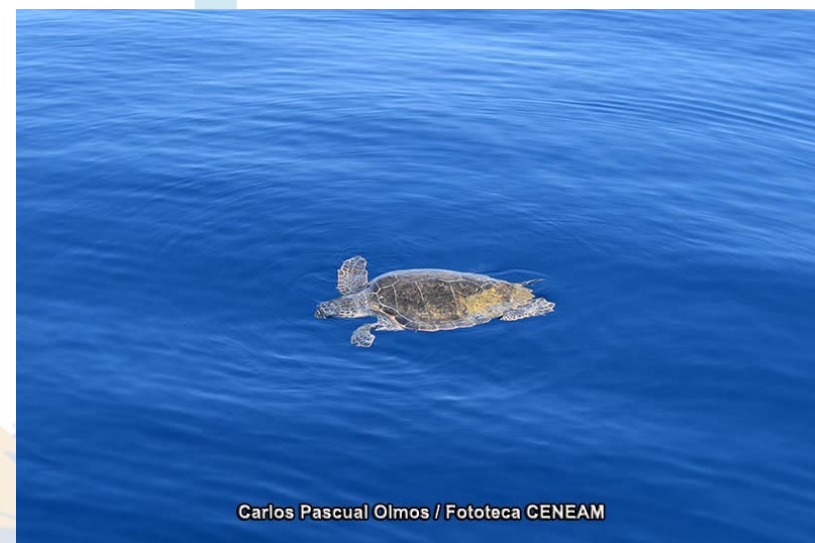
Methodological proposal considering

In early 2023, the **Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge (MITERD)** developed a methodological proposal to advance the assessment of **Natura 2000 management effectiveness** in Spain.

The methodology is based on a **2-level assessment approach**:

- **Network scale:** evaluation of Natura 2000 networks managed by the same competent authority.
- **Site scale:** evaluation of individual Natura 2000 sites.

To support these assessments, two specific **questionnaires** were designed and included in the annexes of the proposal, incorporating contributions from several public administrations responsible for Natura 2000 planning and management in Spain.



Background

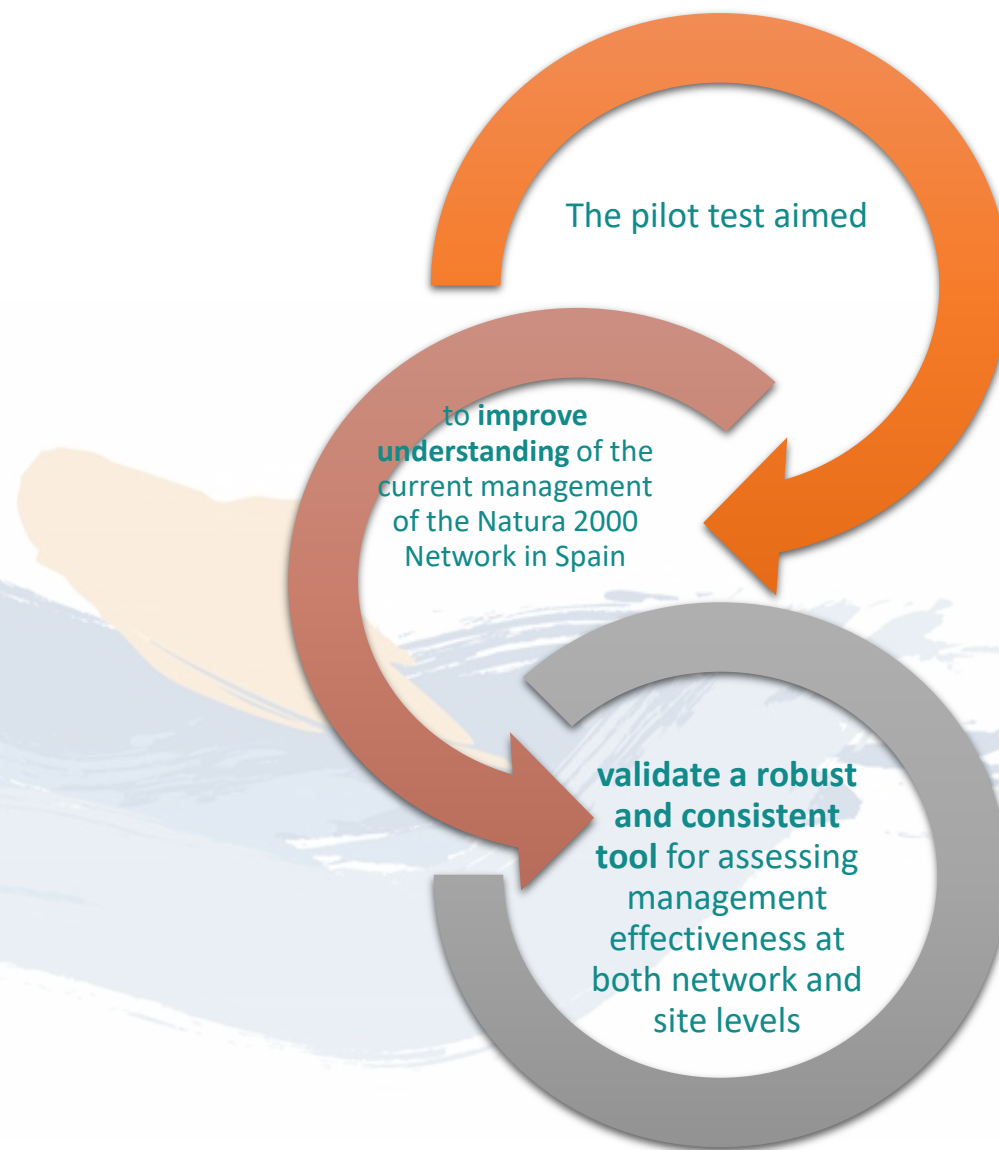
Objectives

1. Characterize Natura 2000 Management in Spain

- Collect information to conduct an initial analysis and characterization of Natura 2000 management.
- Use responses from the competent authorities responsible for protected-area planning, including the Autonomous Communities and the General State Administration.
- Identify strengths, challenges, and common management practices across the network.

2. Test the Natura 2000 Site Assessment Questionnaire

- Evaluate the usefulness and practicality of the questionnaire designed for site-level assessments.
- Identify implementation difficulties and information gaps.
- Support the review and refinement of the questionnaire prior to its potential application across all Natura 2000 sites in Spain.



Background

Methodological approach

To achieve the objectives of the pilot test, the following steps were undertaken:

1. Network Questionnaire Distribution

- The network-level questionnaire was sent to Natura 2000 coordinators in:
 - 17 Autonomous Communities
 - 2 Autonomous Cities
 - The General State Administration
- The purpose of the exercise and the importance of contributing to the development of a future management effectiveness assessment tool were clearly communicated.

2. Selection of Pilot Sites

- Network managers were asked to identify suitable Natura 2000 sites for testing the site-level questionnaire.
- Selection criteria included:
 - Different site designations (SPA, SAC, combined sites)
 - Sites overlapping with Natural Parks or National Parks
 - Existence of a site manager
 - Approved management plans
 - Ongoing conservation measures

3. Site Questionnaire Distribution

- The site-level questionnaire was sent to managers of the selected Natura 2000 sites.

4. Analysis and Reporting

- Results from both questionnaires were compiled and analyzed to prepare the final report.



Background

Methodological approach

A total of **16 questionnaires** were received from administrations responsible for Natura 2000 planning and management in Spain.

- ✓ **16 of 20 competent administrations participated**
- ✓ **80% participation rate**
- ✓ Responding administrations manage approximately **80% of all Natura 2000 sites in Spain**

The information collected can be considered **highly representative** of the current management status of the Natura 2000 Network in Spain

Administration	Number of Natura 2000 sites
General State Administration (MITECO)	53 SCIs, 47 SPAs (marine sites)
Aragón	156 SCIs, 49 SPAs
Castilla-La Mancha	73 SCIs, 39 SPAs
Castilla y León	120 SCIs, 70 SPAs
Cataluña	115 SCIs, 73 SPAs
Ceuta	2 SCIs, 2 SPAs
Comunidad de Madrid	7 SCIs, 7 SPAs
Comunidad Foral de Navarra	42 SCIs, 17 SPAs
Comunidad Valenciana	93 SCIs, 40 SPAs
Extremadura	89 SCIs, 71 SPAs
Galicia	59 SCIs, 16 SPAs
Islas Baleares	138 SCIs, 65 SPAs
La Rioja	49 SCIs, 13 SPAs
País Vasco	51 SCIs, 7 SPAs
Principado de Asturias	49 SCIs, 13 SPAs
Región de Murcia	49 SCIs, 13 SPAs

Administrations that responded to the survey and their Natura 2000 sites

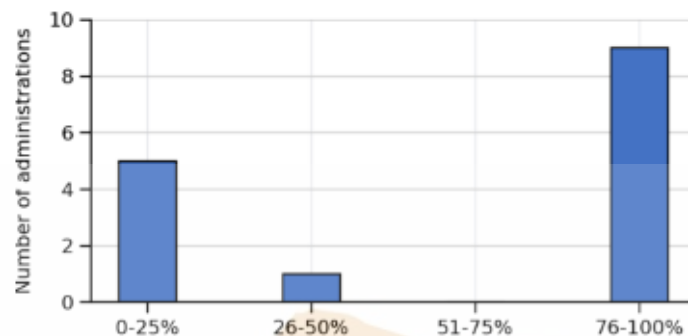
Results

Network-Level Assessment: Planning

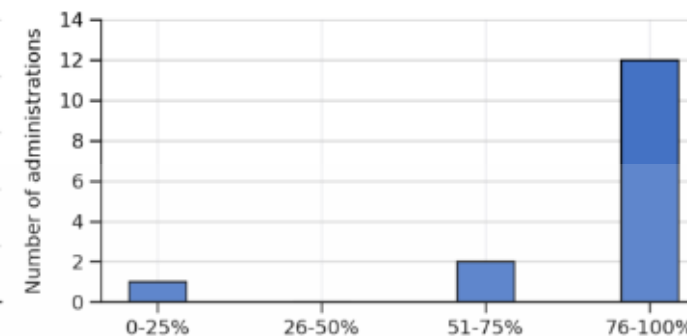
Although the **planning framework** for Natura 2000 sites is fairly advanced throughout Spain, the percentage of **SPAs (Special Protection Areas)** without a management plan is significantly higher than that of **SCIs (Sites of Community Importance)**.

In the case of sites overlapping with other protected-area designations, the majority have a management plan in place.

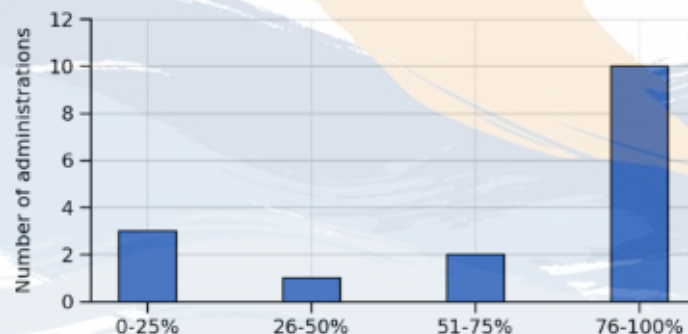
1. What proportion of Natura 2000 sites that are **ONLY SPAs** have a management plan?



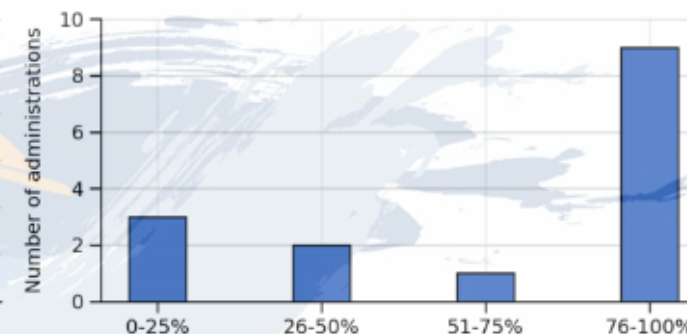
2. What proportion of Natura 2000 sites that are **ONLY SCIs** have a management plan?



3. What proportion of Natura 2000 sites that are **both SCI+SPA** have a management plan?



4. What proportion of Natura 2000 sites overlapping with other protected-area designations (e.g. Natural Parks) have a management plan?

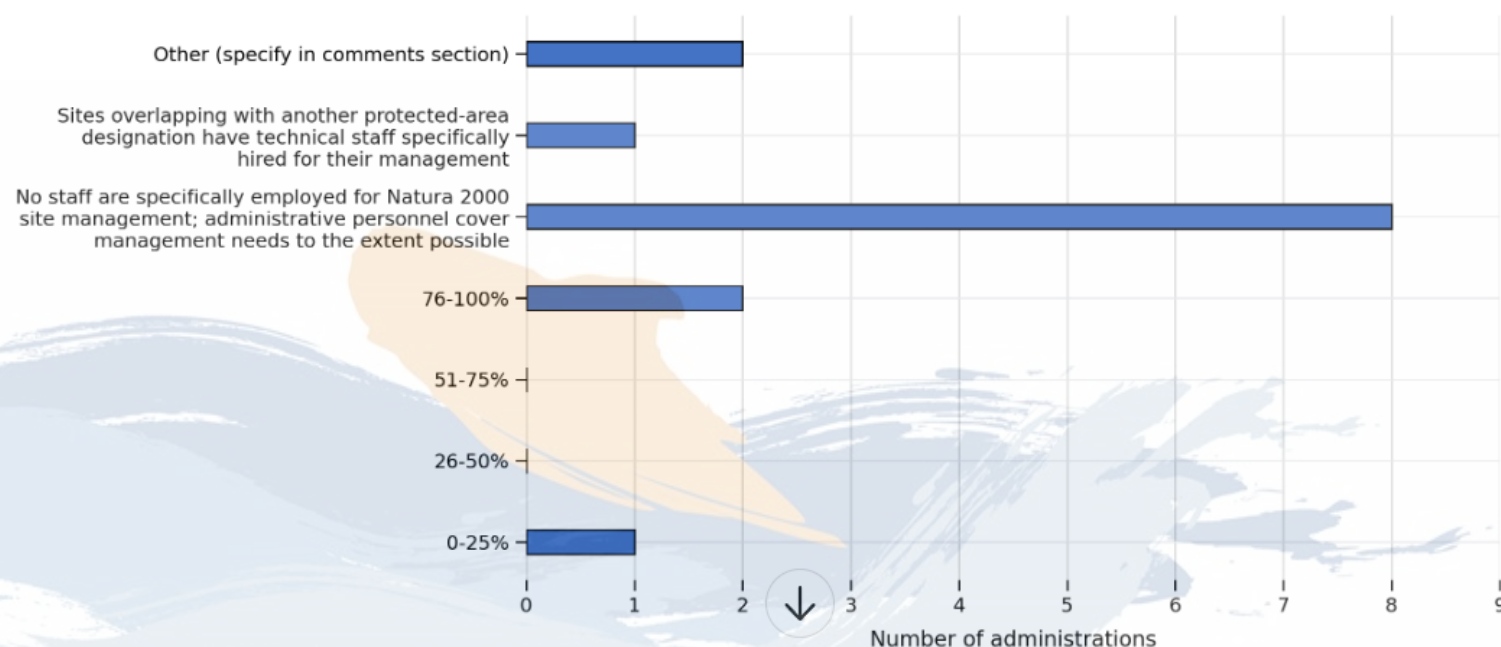


Results

Network-Level Assessment: Human resources

- **Variable management structures:** Most administrations rely on a single manager for the entire Natura 2000 network, while dedicated managers are mainly found in sites overlapping with other protected areas.
- **Lack of dedicated site staff:** Natura 2000 sites generally do not have personnel specifically assigned to their management, with administrative staff and environmental wardens covering management and surveillance needs.
- **Insufficient staffing capacity:** Most administrations consider staffing levels for network coordination, site management and monitoring activities to be inadequate, limiting management effectiveness.

7. Indicate the % of Natura 2000 sites with dedicated technical staff for site management (dedicated means no other duties are assigned)



Results



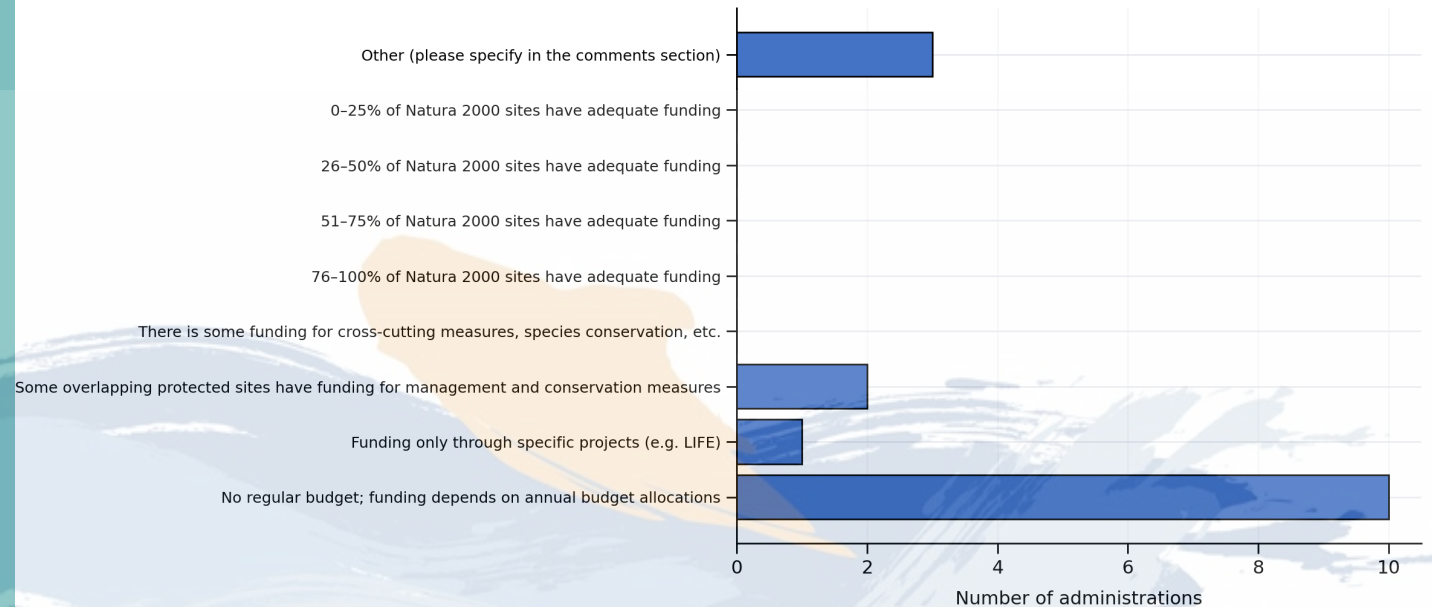
Red de Áreas
Marinas Protegidas



Network-Level Assessment: Financial resources

- **No stable funding:** Site management generally depends on annually approved budgets rather than regular, dedicated funding.
- **Funding below needs:** Budget execution is typically at or below the lower range of the financial needs identified in the **Prioritized Action Framework (PAF)**.
- **Main constraints:** Limited funding availability and insufficient staff capacity reduce the implementation of management and conservation actions.

16. To what extent does Natura 2000 site management have regular funding or a dedicated budget?



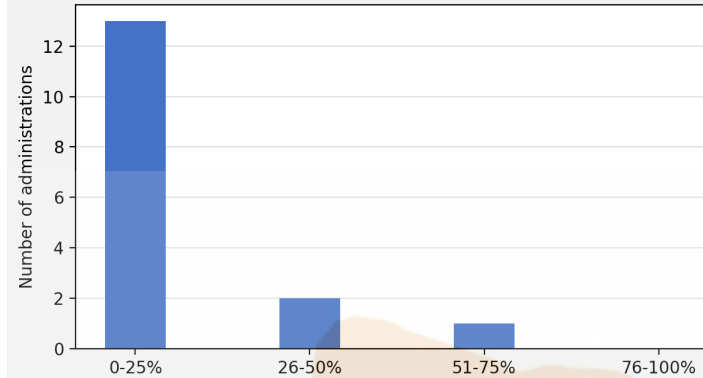
Results

Network-Level Assessment: Governance

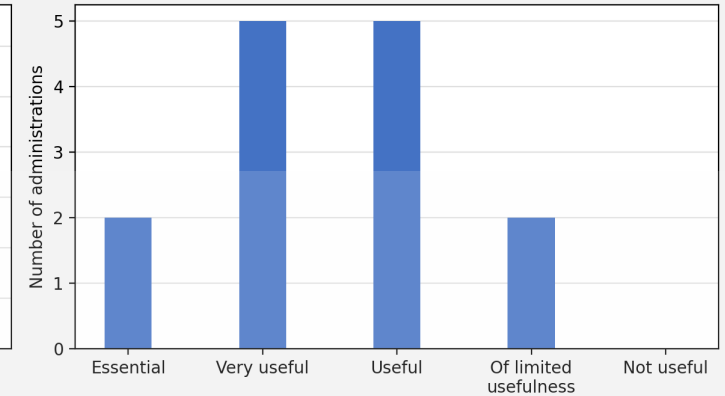
The proportion of Natura 2000 sites that have a **management committee for decision-making**, involving relevant local and/or sectoral stakeholders, is low.

Nevertheless, such committees are widely regarded as a **highly useful tool that should be implemented** in almost all sites.

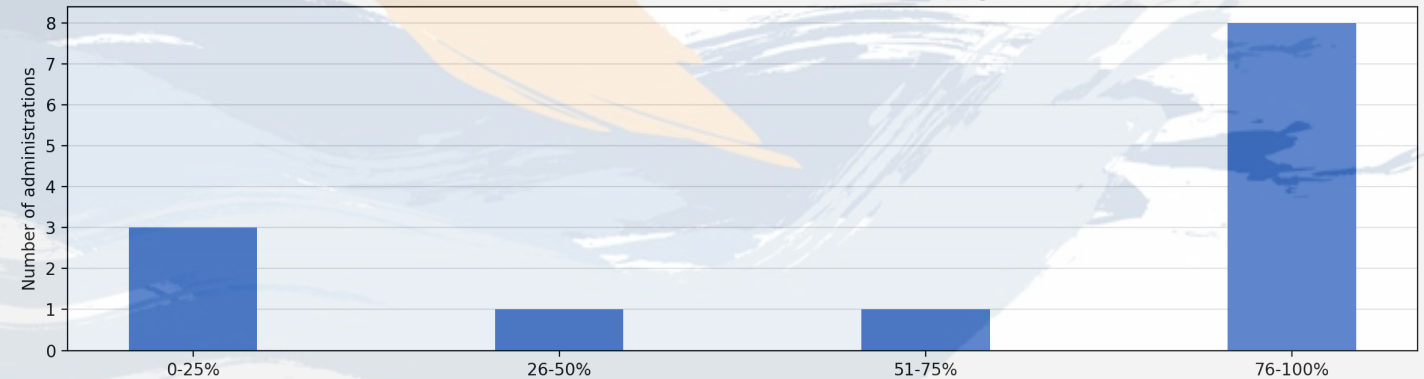
20. What percentage of Natura 2000 sites have a management committee (or similar body) involving relevant local and/or sectoral stakeholders in decision-making?



21. How useful do you consider having a management committee (or similar body) involving relevant local and/or sectoral stakeholders in decision-making?



22. What percentage of Natura 2000 sites should have a management committee (or similar body) involving relevant local and/or sectoral stakeholders in decision-making?

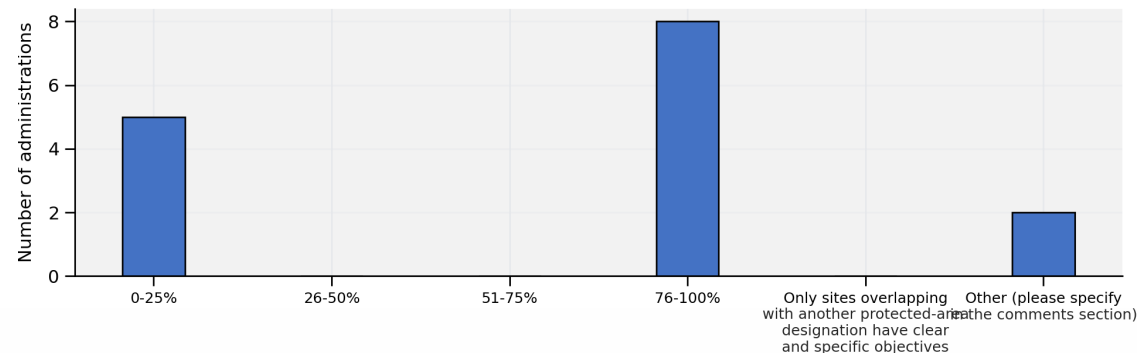


Results

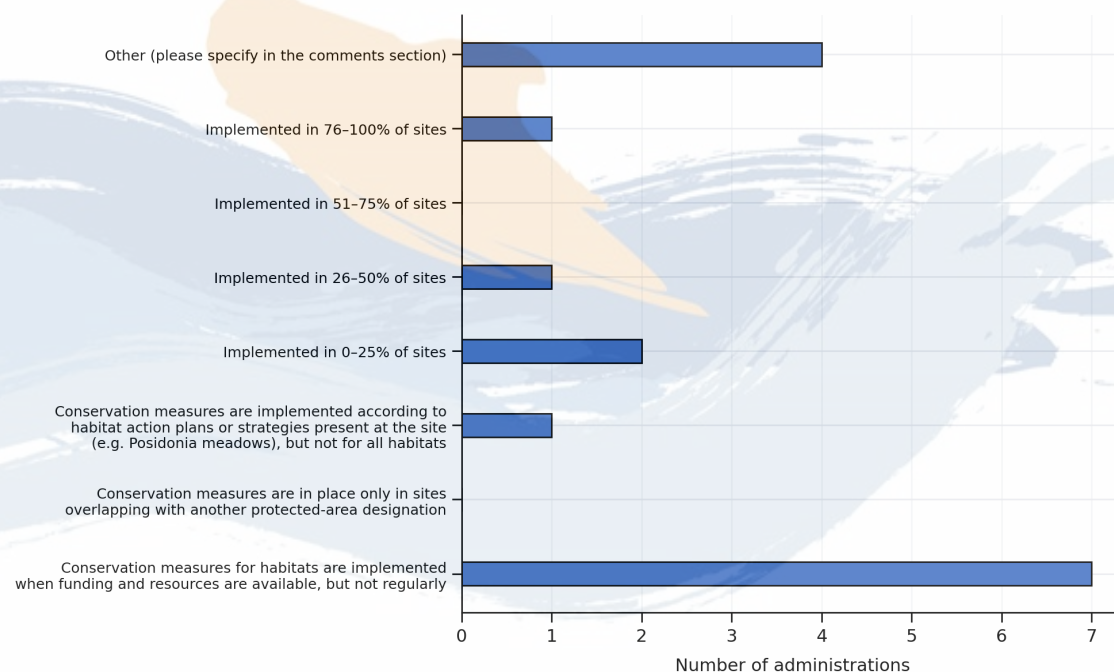
Network-Level Assessment: Conservation measures

- **Well-defined conservation objectives:**
Most Natura 2000 sites have clear and specific conservation objectives for both habitats and species, including the desired conservation status to be achieved.
- **Conservation measures in place:**
Management and conservation measures are generally implemented across Natura 2000 sites.
- **Implementation depends on resources:**
The application of conservation measures is often uneven and influenced by the availability of financial, technical and human resources.

24. To what extent do Natura 2000 sites have clear and specific conservation objectives defining the target condition for habitats present within the site?



26. To what extent are conservation measures related to conservation objectives implemented for habitats with significant presence within Natura 2000 sites?

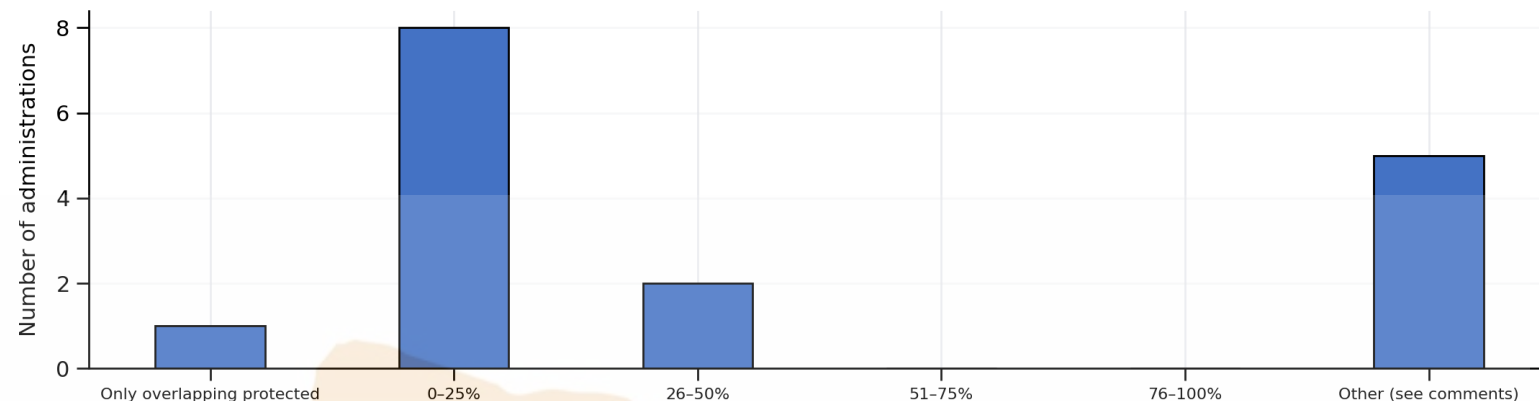


Results

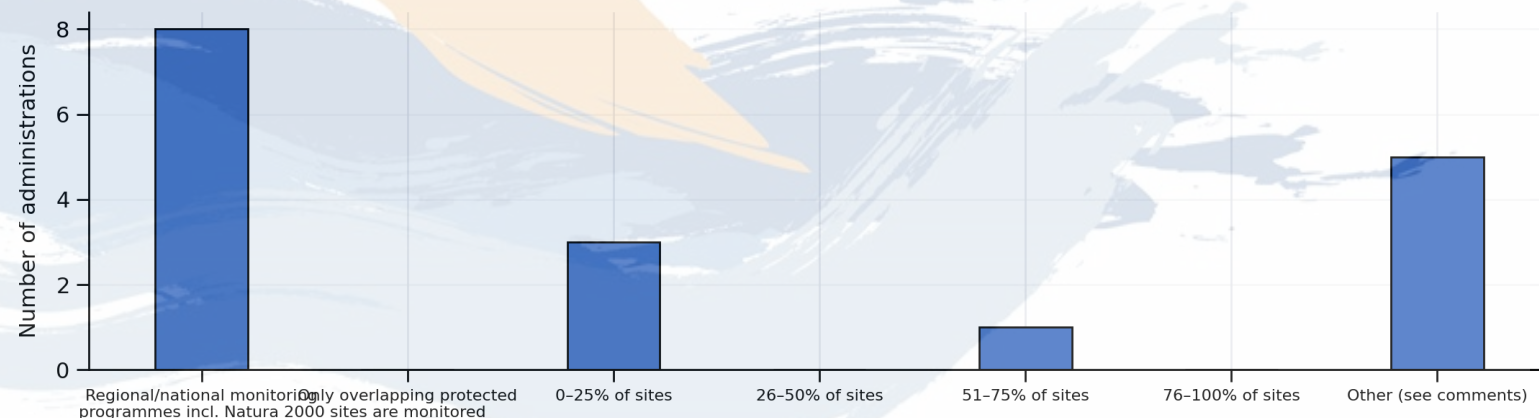
Network-Level Assessment: Monitoring and evaluation

- Limited monitoring and assessment:**
Monitoring of habitats and species is generally carried out at regional or national levels rather than at the individual Natura 2000 site level.
- Few sites evaluate conservation outcomes:**
Formal evaluation of conservation results is uncommon and mainly occurs in sites that overlap with other protected-area designations and already have established management assessment processes.
- Knowledge gaps remain:** The lack of regular monitoring and evaluation makes it difficult to determine whether conservation objectives and management measures are effectively achieving their intended outcomes.

29. Monitoring and evaluation of conservation measure outcomes for habitats



31. Regular habitat monitoring in Natura 2000 sites

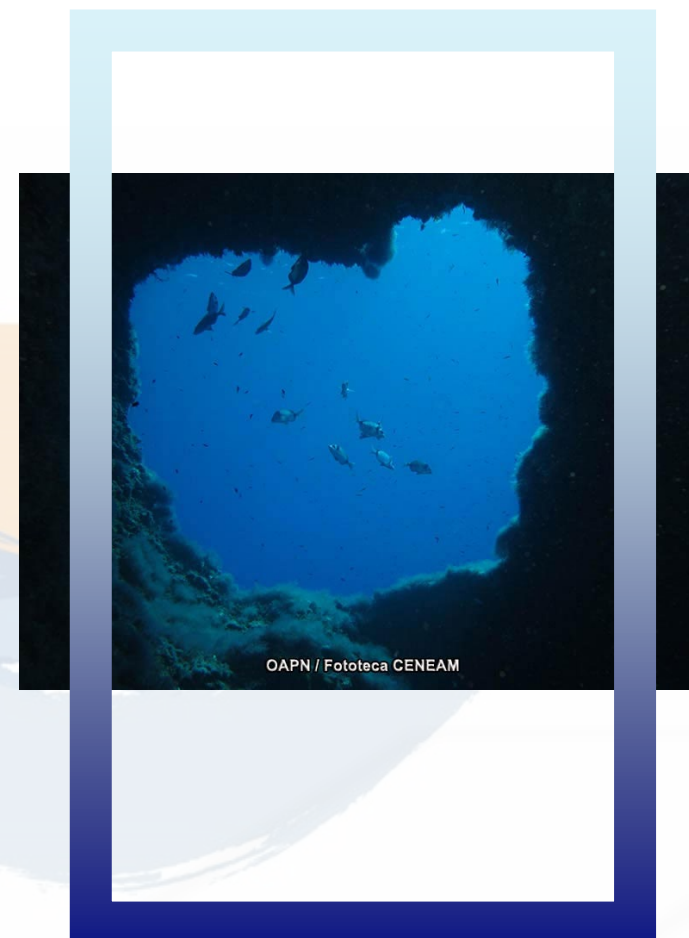


Results

Site-Level Assessment: Baseline Diagnosis and Planning

Natura 2000 sites generally have a solid diagnostic basis and defined conservation objectives, but objectives are often insufficiently quantified and lack measurable targets.

- **Habitats and key species are generally well identified**, although knowledge of their current conservation status remains uneven across sites.
- **Pressures and threats are generally well understood**, while climate change is only beginning to be systematically incorporated into site assessments.
- **Conservation objectives are defined** for priority habitats and species, but they are rarely quantitative, time-bound, or linked to a clearly defined target condition.
- Site-specific **objectives are usually established**, either through Natura 2000 management plans or integrated into broader protected-area planning instruments.



Results

Site-Level Assessment: Baseline Resources and Governance

Resource limitations and staffing shortages remain major constraints on effective Natura 2000 site management.

- **Financial and material resources are considered only partially sufficient** for effective management.
- Average estimated funding amounts to **€36.25/ha/year**.
- Around **half of the administrations** consider current staffing levels insufficient, particularly for:
 - Surveillance and enforcement
 - Ecological monitoring
 - Scientific advice
- Stakeholder participation mechanisms exist in some sites, but **conflicts of interest remain common**, and conflict-resolution mechanisms are often only partially effective.



Results

Site-Level Assessment: Effectiveness and Conservation Outcomes

Despite limited monitoring and evaluation systems, administrations generally perceive positive conservation outcomes associated with management actions

- **Periodic evaluation of management effectiveness is generally lacking.**
- Scientific information on conservation outcomes is often insufficient.
- Administrations report **positive trends in conservation results**, with improvements observed in a proportion of habitats and species.
- **Pressures and impacts have been partially reduced**, and most administrations attribute these improvements to implemented conservation measures.



J.M. Pérez de Ayala / GENEAM - MMA

Results

Questionnaire Testing and Performance Assessment

The pilot confirmed the usefulness of the questionnaire but highlighted practical challenges related to data availability, coordination, and quantification of management effectiveness.

- **Technical difficulties** were encountered when completing the FORMA network questionnaire.
- Average completion time was approximately **one hour**.
- Information required to answer the questionnaires often depended on **several departments** and staff members.
- Natura 2000 sites **overlapping** with other protected-area designations **were most frequently selected** for the site-level assessment.
- **Qualitative information** proved **highly valuable** due to the large number of comments and clarifications provided.
- Several administrations reported **difficulties quantifying** management measures and their effectiveness because of **limited data availability**.



Results

Recommendations for the Evaluation Tool

A simplified, automated and indicator-based assessment tool would improve consistency, reduce reporting burdens and strengthen the evaluation of Natura 2000 management effectiveness.

- Use the evaluation as a tool to identify **management gaps, challenges, and improvement needs**.
- Develop a more efficient digital platform with **automated integration of Natura 2000 data** (management plans, objectives, measures, etc.).
- Define response categories and ranges that allow **more robust quantification of management effectiveness indicators**.
- Reduce the number of questions and use **synthetic indicators** to simplify data collection.
- Require clear explanations for all **“Other”** response options.



Thank you very much for your attention



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