

# Nature Conservation in Europe: Approaches and Lessons

## Annex FR.2. Management of Natura 2000 Sites in France

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An 'Objective Document' is the official reference document for the management of each Natura 2000 site. Standards have been developed for these documents and include rules for establishing maps, documenting present knowledge, defining appropriate approaches for setting acceptable disturbance levels and the coherence between the requirements of the Nature Directives for the site and other public policies. It must also prioritise and describe precisely the conservation measures that should be undertaken. Almost all sites have a complete Objective Document and their preparation and revision uses 20% of the annual budget dedicated to Natura 2000.

Two contractual tools may then be used to implement the necessary conservation measures. Firstly, the Natura 2000 charters (see Annex FR.1) apply for engaging land-owners, land managers and land users in good practices. They are based on free consent. They can be formulated at the level of the site, in which case management guidelines are fairly general. Or they can be formulated by habitat types, in which landowners who sign the charter have a right to claim tax exemptions. Finally, they can be formulated by types of human activity, such as silviculture or organisation of sport events, in which case those who sign the charter are exempt from providing impact assessments for those activities that are covered by the charter. The charters only last for five years before being revised on a compulsory basis.

Secondly, land users can have contracts for Natura 2000 payments through agri-environment-climate schemes that have been prioritised for Natura 2000 sites in Rural Development Programmes (RDPs), as well as non-productive forest investments or other RDP measures funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). Each site has its own governance system including a steering committee (with priority given to elected officials for its chairmanship), and a designated organisation in charge of its management (an 'animator'), which is preferably a local authority. The managing organisation receives grants for providing information, advice, contract preparation and other expertise. Its role is instrumental in establishing relationships with local stakeholders as well as leveraging funding outside EAFRD, including other EU funds. They employ c. 800 staff.

Finally, it is important to note that a major legal modification was approved in 2023. The State devolved the management of governance of sites and the approval of Objective documents to the Regional authorities. This may have a strong impact on the use of charters and contracts and, as a consequence, on the management of sites.

### Source

Adapted from Barthod, C., Allag-Dhuisme, F., Velluet, R., Domallain, D. Reichert, P., & Jourdier, G. (2015) *Analyse du dispositif Natura 2000 en France*. Rapport CGEDD n° 009538-01, CGAAER n° 15029. Paris: Ministère de l'environnement.

### Further sources of information

Delannoy, J., Beuret, J-E., Cadoret, A., Chlous, F., Lesueur, M. et al. (2020) *Caractériser, Améliorer, Suivre et Evaluer la gouvernance des sites Natura 2000 en mer*. Agrocampus Ouest; Université de Montpellier; Università di Corsica; MNHN; Aix Marseille University.

Rouveyrol, P. & Leroy, M. (2021) *L'efficacité du réseau Natura 2000 terrestre en France*. Paris: UMS PatriNat (OFB/CNRS/MNHN).

The national resource centre for Natura 2000 has an accessible online repository at [www.natura2000.fr/](http://www.natura2000.fr/)

Additional resources for marine sites can be accessed at [www.milieumarinfrance.fr/](http://www.milieumarinfrance.fr/)

***Recommended citation***

Commenville, P. (2023) Management of Natura 2000 Sites in France. In *Nature Conservation in Europe: Approaches and Lessons*, ed. G. Tucker, online Annex FR.2. Cambridge, United Kingdom / New York: Cambridge University Press. [www.cambridge.org/natureconservation](http://www.cambridge.org/natureconservation)

