

**IMPLEMENTING NATURA 2000 IN
THE CZECH REPUBLIC**

**INTRODUCTION TO THE SITES
COVERED BY THE THEMATIC
REPORTS**

December 2004

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1. Introduction

Within the Phare project ‘Implementation of Natura 2000 in the Czech Republic’, a series of five reports has been produced covering five main themes, as follows:

- mistakes and problems in Natura 2000 management;
- national sources of Natura 2000 financing;
- conservation management approaches;
- capacity building; and
- transposition and implementation of site management provisions.

The aim of the thematic reports is to identify and make available, concrete, up to date and accessible information on how the 15 ‘old’ EU Member States have approached Natura 2000, including both good and bad practice and lessons learned in the process. In order to do so, the five reports focus on practice in a number of selected sites as follows: the Causses du Quercy and Haguenau in France, the Rhön in Germany, Alduide in Navarra Spain and the New Forest in the UK. The site-based analysis is also placed within the broader context of regional/national experiences and approaches.

This report is a background document which provides a basic introduction to the sites and their regional and national contexts. A general overview of EU-wide progress and issues is provided at the end of the report. The report is based on information provided by a series of country-based reports written by ACER (France), IDRiSi (Spain) and IEEP (Germany and UK), and supplemented by additional information from Ecosystems Ltd.

2. France

2.1. *The French context*

French territory includes sites in four of the seven biogeographic regions defined under the habitats Directive – the Atlantic, Alpine, Continental and Mediterranean. It is home to 64 per cent of the bird species on Annex I of the birds Directive, and 70 per cent of the 222 types of habitats of Community interest. In December 2004, France had proposed 1,219 sites under the habitats Directive, comprising 4,219,106 hectares (approximately 7.7 per cent of its national territory).

The particularity of the French implementation of Natura 2000 is the requirement for a management plan, or '*document d'objectifs*' (DOCOB) for each Natura 2000 site. This consists of a description of the site (flora-fauna inventories, cultural heritage, etc) and of a definition of the most common means to preserve and adjust the existing site management.

DOCOBs are established under the responsibility of the Prefect of the Department, assisted by a technical operator. A great deal of emphasis is placed on local consultation: a steering committee gathers, under the authority of the Prefect, the partners concerned by the management of the site (local government, farmers, associations, users, etc) or their representatives. The document defines the management orientations and the contractual conservation measures, and indicates, when needed, the statutory measures to implement on the site. Management contracts are established on the basis of the DOCOB.

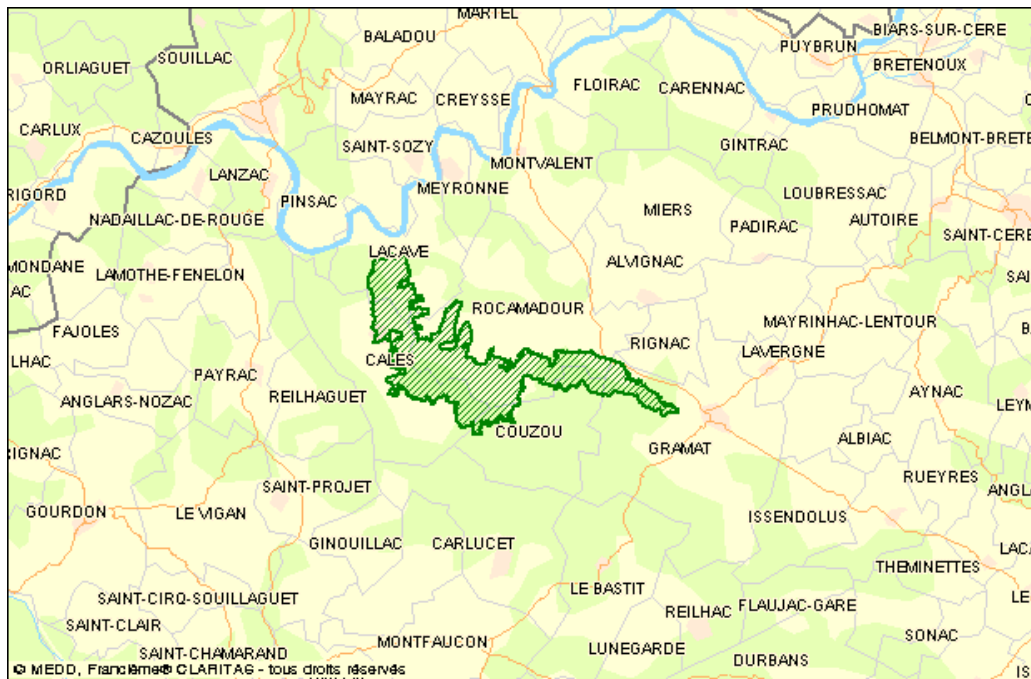
2.2. *Causse du Quercy*

For the site located in Causse du Quercy, two specific Natura 2000 sites have been chosen for examination:

- Vallées de l'Ouzysse et de l'Alzou; and
- Vallées de la Rauze et du Vers et vallons tributaires.

Both sites are situated in the Natural Regional Park of the Causse du Quercy, in the Lot Department, near the town of Cahors. They have been proposed to the European Commission as Sites of Community Importance (SCIs) in May 2002. The first site has been chosen because the habitats really match the Czech situation. Unfortunately the management plan is just being developed, however, so it will not inform Czech development of management issues. For this reason, a second site has also been studied, where the management plan is in place though not yet implemented.

The ‘Vallées de l’Ouyse et de l’Alzou’ site covers 2,993 ha, at an altitude of between 100 m and 314 m.



The narrow, steep-sided valleys, in hard Jurassic limestone, locally present remarkable aspects of a canyon. There is a network of hedges and low walls made of stone, which significantly contributes to the biodiversity of open environments. There are also remarkable springs in the Ouyse valley, fed by the third karstic system of France.

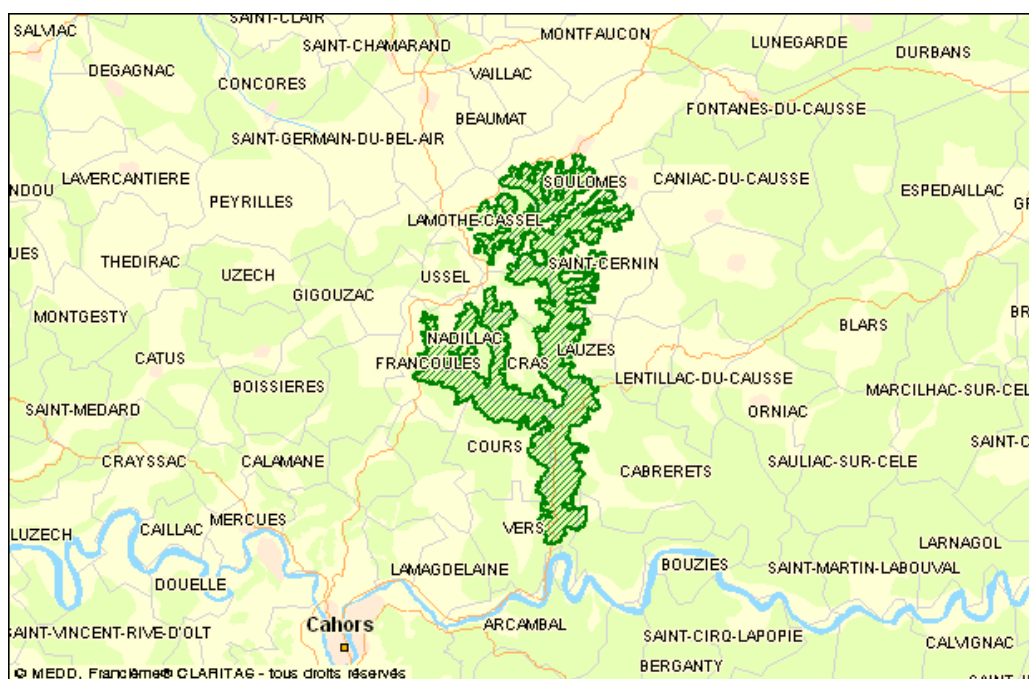
The main activity on this site is tourism. Agriculture is also present but not at the same level as on the other site. The major issues will be the excess visitor numbers to the site and the abandonment of the exploitation of agri-pastoral environments of Community interest, due to an abandonment of agriculture.

The following table provides an overview of key habitats, species and issues in the site.

EU Code	Annex I and Annex II Habitats and Species of Community interest *priority	Issues
5110	Stable xerothermophilous formations with Buxus sempervirens on rock slopes (Berberidion p.p.) 5%	The discontinuation of farming is the main management issues at the moment; however rock climbing may become a problem if numbers increase. The site 'management plan' (<i>document d'objectifs</i>) has only just been adopted and implementation is the next priority. The site is relatively uninfluenced by land development and/or infrastructure development.
5130	Thermo-Mediterranean and pre-desert scrub 5%	
6210	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) 5%	
6430	Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels 1%	
6510	Lowland hay meadows (Alopecurus pratensis, Sanguisorba officinalis) 1%	
8210	Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation 1%	
8310	Caves not open to the public 1%	
91E0	Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)* 1%	

6220	Pseudo-steppe with grasses and annuals of the Thero-Brachypodietea*	
9180	Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines*	
1044	Southern Damselfly (Coenagrion mercuriale)	
1060	Large Copper (Lycaena dispar)	
1078	Callimorpha quadripunctaria*	
1092	Freshwater White-clawed Crayfish (Austropotamobius pallipes)	
1088	Cerambyx cerdo	
1083	Stag beetle (Lucanus cervus)	
1304	Greater Horseshoe Bat (Rhinolophus ferrum-equinum)	
1303	Lesser Horseshoe Bat (Rhinolophus hipposideros)	

The ‘Vallées de la Rauze et du Vers et vallons tributaires’ site covers 4,820 ha, at an altitude of between 135 m and 360 m.



The preserved group of small valleys with permanent or temporary flow are in Jurassic calcareous and marlo-calcareous sedimentary formations. The forest floor, widely dominant on slopes, mainly consists of juvenile oak groves with Buxo-Quercetum and by a type of calcicole hornbeam grove. There is a network of hedges and low walls made of stone, which significantly participates in the biodiversity of open environments.

The main activity on this site is agriculture. Sheep breeding is the principal agricultural activity. In a lesser extent some outdoor activities are also present on the site (fishing, hiking, climbing, hunting, etc.). The main problem for the conservation of habitats of Community interest is connected to the abandonment of agriculture, which is very advanced on certain parts of the site (Vallée de la Rauze in particular). The protection of the shelter of bats of Community interest is also a major issue for this site.

The following table provides an overview of key habitats, species and issues in the site.

EU	Annex I and Annex II Habitats and Species of	Issues
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Code	Community interest *priority	
6210 8210 5130 6510 6110 6220 8130 8310 9150 91E0 3150 9180 3260 5110 1220 1041 1060 1065 1078 1088 1308 1324 1304 1355 1310 1303 1305 1831 1163 1096	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) 19 % Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation 5 % Thermo-Mediterranean and pre-desert scrub 4 % Lowland hay meadows (Alopecurus pratensis, Sanguisorba officinalis) 3 % Rupicolous calcareous or basophilic grasslands of the Alysso-Sedion albi* 1 % Pseudo-steppe with grasses and annuals of the Thero-Brachypodietea* 1 % Western Mediterranean and thermophilous scree 1 % Caves not open to the public 1 % Medio-European limestone beech forests of the Cephalanthero-Fagion 1 % Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)* 1 % Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition – type vegetation Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines* Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation Stable xerothermophilous formations with Buxus sempervirens on rock slopes(Berberidion p.p.) European Pond Turtle (Emys orbicularis) Oxygastra curtisii Large Copper (Lycaena dispar) Marsh Fritillary (Euphydryas aurinia) Callimorpha quadripunctaria* Cerambyx cerdo Barbastelle Bat (Barbastella barbastellus) Greater Mouse-eared Bat (Myotis myotis) Greater Horseshoe Bat (Rhinolophus ferrum-equinum) Otter (Lutra lutra) Schreiber's Bat (Miniopterus schreibersi) Lesser Horseshoe Bat (Rhinolophus hipposideros) Mediterranean Horseshoe Bat (Rhinolophus euryale) Floating Water Plantain (Luronium natans) Bullhead (Cottus gobio) (Lampetra planeri)	The discontinuation of farming and visitor pressure are the main management issues. The setting up of the site's 'management plan' (document d'objective) has only just begun, finalising this is the main priority and more detail will be established in the process. The site is relatively uninfluenced by land development and/or infrastructure development.

2.3. The forest of Haguenau

The site covers 1,675 ha, at an altitude of between 115 m and 200 m. It was proposed as a SCI in March 1999.



This forest has a particular status: it is undivided, that means that the whole forest belongs, at the same time, to the town of Haguenau and to the ONF (National Office of the Forests). The forest of Haguenau is the unique French example of mixed forests of a middle-European type, with natural hardwood and softwood. The undivided forest of Haguenau is the sixth largest in terms of surface area, and remains preserved from large infrastructures.

The following table provides an overview of key habitats, species and issues in Haguenau.

EU Code	Annex I and Annex II Habitats and Species of Community interest *priority
9110	Luzulo-Fagetum beech forests 20 %
9130	Asperulo-Fagetum beech forests 7 %
9160	Sub-Atlantic and medio-European oak or oak-hornbeam forests of the <i>Carpinus betuli</i> 7 %
91E0	Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i>)* 7 %
9190	Old acidophilous oak woods with <i>Quercus robur</i> on sandy plains 5 %
6430	Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels 4 %
91D0	Bog woodland* 3 %
91F0	Riparian mixed forests of <i>Quercus robur</i> , <i>Ulmus laevis</i> and <i>Ulmus minor</i> , <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> or <i>Fraxinus angustifolia</i> , along the great rivers (<i>Ulmion minoris</i>) 2 %
6510	Lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i> , <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>) 2 %
6410	Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>) 1 %
6120	Xeric sand calcareous grasslands* 1 %

1193	Yellow-bellied toad (<i>Bombina variegata</i>)
1166	Great Crested Newt (<i>Triturus cristatus</i>)
1083	Stag beetle (<i>Lucanus cervus</i>)
1324	Greater Mouse-eared Bat (<i>Myotis myotis</i>)
1321	Geoffroy's Bat (<i>Myotis emarginatus</i>)
1323	Bechstein's bat (<i>Myotis bechsteini</i>)
1163	Bullhead (<i>Cottus gobio</i>)
1096	Brook lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>)

3. Germany

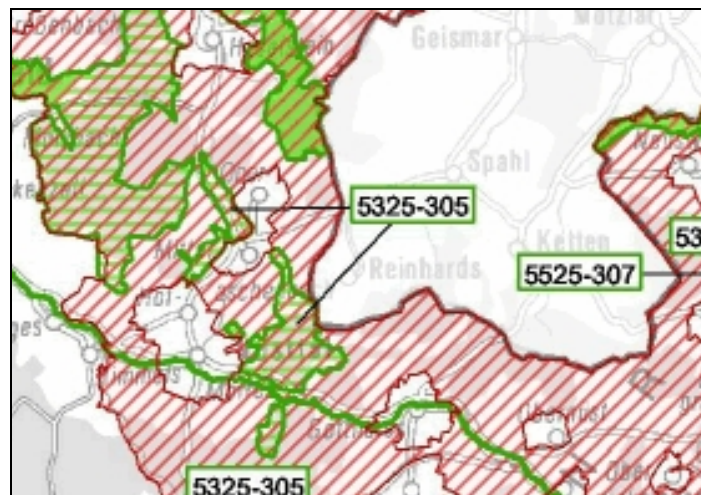
3.1. *The German context*

In Germany, nature conservation responsibilities are devolved to the *Länder*. However, the Federal conservation law (Bundesnaturschutzgesetz - BuNa) sets the framework for the laws of the *Länder*. The latter then have the responsibility and competency to legislate on nature conservation, including Natura 2000.

According to the Federal Environment Ministry, by June 2002, the total number of proposed SCIs in Germany was 3,533, covering approximately 6.7 per cent of its national territory (2,385,211 ha terrestrial plus 814,454 ha offshore).¹ Additional sites were proposed in 2004, and these bring the Natura 2000 coverage in Germany to around 9.2 per cent. German territory includes sites in the Atlantic and Continental biogeographic regions.

3.2. *The Rhön*

The *Hohe Rhön* proposed Site of Community Importance (pSCI) is situated within the 185,000 ha Rhön Biosphere Reserve, straddling three German *Länder*: Hessen, Thuringia and Bavaria. Around 60,000 ha of the Reserve are situated in Hessen, of which the *Hohe Rhön* pSCI covers approximately 10 per cent. Thuringia and Bavaria have designated respective areas in their territories, adding to what is effectively one large transboundary pSCI. That said, each *Bundesland* is only responsible for the management of areas under their jurisdiction.



There are important socio-economic differences between the three *Länder*, which reflect in the land use and hence landscape, and in the stakeholder acceptance of Natura 2000. Most apparent are differences in economic status and land-use history, with farm structures in Thuringia, for instance, different to those in Hessen and Bavaria. Thuringia,

¹ http://www.bmu.de/sachthemen/natbio/ffh_tabelle.php (accessed 23 July 2002)

a former member of the GDR, has much larger farms and field units, relics of a collective farm structure in Communist Germany. Many of these farms are now run as limited shareholder companies (GmbHs), with only some smaller farms set up by private individuals after 1990. Hessen, on the contrary, has always had small farms owned or leased by individual farmers. As a consequence of these differences, management planning in each *Land* will require a different approach. This report will only consider the situation in Hessen.

Hessen first notified a selection of sites to the European Commission in June 1998. Since then, the government revised their site proposal three times to respond to shortcomings criticised by the Commission. As elsewhere in Germany, there was much opposition to site designation from local stakeholders, and more significantly from the regional government itself. Public opposition meant that stakeholder consultation procedures were often slow and difficult, although no major delays were reported as a consequence. However, the lack of support for Natura 2000 at ministerial level (ie in Hessen's government) was considered to be the cause of significant delays, first in forwarding site proposals to the German Federal Ministry, and consequently to the European Commission. Particularly in Hessen's cabinet, which adopts the lists of proposed sites for Hessen, support for Natura 2000 was weak.

The Rhön pSCI was put forward within the Continental biogeographical region, for which the Commission is due to adopt a final list in 2004/5. The *Hohe Rhön* is topographically complex, spanning heights from 420 to 900 meters above sea level. The landscape is characteristically open, with wide vistas and a patchwork of habitats. Few habitats cover more than 1 per cent of the overall area. Asperulo-Fagetum beech forests (9130), mountain hay meadows (6520) and species-rich *Nardus* grasslands, on silicious substrates in mountain/submountain areas (6230, priority habitat type) are most dominant, covering around 28 per cent, 6 per cent and 3 per cent of the area, respectively. Livestock and some arable farming are the dominant forms of land use, but forestry is also important in places. The *Hohe Rhön* is also an important destination for those with an interest in outdoor activities, in particular hang gliding and model aircraft flying. Around one quarter of the pSCI is used as a military training ground.

In Hessen, management has focused on the restoration of abandoned and overgrown grassland habitats, on securing continued extensive land management, on the eradication of invasive species and on visitor guidance. Moreover, compensation has been paid to support the cessation of certain activities, such as certain forestry activities. A wide range of EU and national funds has been used to ensure appropriate land management. Most important, however, is the use of agri-environment payments (HELP scheme). In terms of promoting the wider region and the biosphere reserve, a key initiative has also been the marketing of local produce that respects good land management practices. This has not, however, been specifically linked to the Natura 2000 site.

The following table provides an overview of key habitats, species and issues in the Rhön.

Annex I habitats	% of 60,000 ha total LIFE	Issues
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	area	
34.31-34.34/6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia)	5% (of which 10% has important orchid sites)	Land abandonment, overgrowth
35.1/ 6230 Species-rich Nardus grasslands on siliceous substrates in mountain and submountain areas	6%	idem
38.3/6520 Mountain hay meadows	4%	Idem, also intensification of use
31.88/5130 Juniperus communis formations on calcareous heaths or grasslands	0.1%	
41.13/ 9130 Asperulo-Fagetum beech forests	10.5%	Inappropriate forestry practices (focus on certain tree species and age classes means loss of species and structural diversity)
41.4/9180 Tilio-Acerion ravine forests	1.4%	Idem
44.3/91E0 Residual alluvial forests (Alnion glutinoso-incanae)	0.4%	Degradation by grazing cattle (inadequate fencing of gallery woods), felling of trees
41.11/9110 Luzulo-Fagetum beech forests	0.3%	Inappropriate forestry practices (focus on certain tree species and age classes means loss of species and structural diversity)
41.16/9150 Calcareous beech forests (Cephalanthero-Fagion)	0.1%	Idem
44.A1-44.A4/91D0 Bog woodland	0.2%	Idem
51.1/7110 active raised bogs 51.2/7120 degraded raised bogs still capable of regeneration	0.2%	Desiccation as result of past drainage and peat excavation; also eutrophication from run-off from surrounding land
54.5/7140 transition mires and quaking bogs	Less than 0.1%	Idem
53.3/7210 calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and Carex davalliana 54.2/7230 alkaline fens	Together 0.2%	Negative effects of surrounding land use (eutrophication, drainage etc)
37.7-37.8 /6430 eutrophic tall herbs	0.3%	Degradation by grazing cattle (inadequate fencing)
54.12/7220 petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)	Less than 0.1%	Invading woody vegetation; use of some springs as water supply (artificial installations built)
61.5/8150 Medio-European siliceous scree	0.15%	

4. Spain

4.1. *The Spanish Context*

In June 2004, Spain had proposed sites under the habitats Directive that equated to around 23.5 per cent of its land area. Spanish territory includes sites in the Macaronesian, Alpine, Continental and Mediterranean biogeographical regions.

Spain has a federal system of government. The State sets framework legislation but the 17 regions have considerable autonomy in many areas of policy, including nature conservation. A common process was agreed between the State and the regions for identifying and proposing SCIs to the EC, and this has worked quite effectively. However, within this common framework, there have been some notable differences between regions in terms of the way the process has been pursued, the staff and technical resources allocated, etc. Differences are even more apparent now that authorities are beginning to address the question of site protection and management.

In the opinion of Ministry of Environment staff and others involved in the Natura 2000 process in Spain, Navarra is one of the better examples amongst Spanish regions. Although there have been problems (generally similar to those faced by other regions), the Natura 2000 team in the Navarra government has been relatively well equipped to take the process forward and has been particularly forward thinking and active in the area of site management. Some other Spanish regions have made very much less progress in this area.

4.2. *The Regional Context - Navarra*

Navarra has put forward 42 pSCIs which cover 24.18% of the region's land area (251 979 has). Uniquely, three biogeographical regions merge in the region, Atlantic, Alpine and Mediterranean. Habitats include alpine zones, rivers, wetlands/bogs, forest, matorral, grasslands, rocky areas, steppe and salt marshes. The region has a biodiversity strategy (1999-2004), a forestry strategy and a management plan for hunting. The region supports 236 species of bird (47% of those found in the EU), 75 species of mammal (50% of those found in the EU) and 52 habitats of Community Interest (23% of those found in the EU).

4.3. *Alduide pSCI*

Situated on the Spanish – French border, where the Atlantic and Alpine zones meet, Alduide (9038 has) is largely composed of beech woodland (58%). Extensive livestock grazing in higher altitudes has created acidic mountain pastures and heathland above the upper limit occupied by beech. A network of waterways and small wetland areas are dispersed throughout the site. Situated between two other forested pSCIs, Alduide plays an important role in connecting Navarra's Natura 2000 network. Being lower than other parts of the Pyrenees, Alduide also provides an important migratory route for birds and bats.

The rural area of the Alduide is currently in crisis with an ageing, declining and increasingly male population. The forestry sector is declining and creates little employment. Water and electricity are the resources which generate the largest income. The livestock sector is strongly dependent on support and its viability in the medium to long term is uncertain. Ecotourism may provide opportunities but is currently poorly developed. The Natura 2000 team within the government believe that the link between nature conservation and sustainable rural development could have positive socio-economic benefits for the area and local population.

59% of the area is owned by Local Authorities (Mancomunidad), 39% is common land and 2% is private land. The majority of the private land is divided into parcels of less than 2 hectares most of which are located on the northern slopes of Quinto Real. One of the most significant issues for the management of the site is 'El tratado de limites' signed by both the Spanish and French in 1856. This established the right in perpetuity for the inhabitants of Valle de Baigorri to graze the pastures on the northern slopes of the Quinto Real.

The following table provides an overview of key habitats, species and issues in Alduide. Shading indicates that the habitat or species has been identified as a key feature of the site in the management plan.

EU Code *priority	Habitats of Community interest	Associated Annex II / Annex I species	Issues
9120	Atlantic acidophilus beech forests with <i>Ilex</i>	Black woodpecker (<i>Dryocopius martius</i>), White backed woodpecker (<i>Dendrocopus leucotus</i>), Honey buzzard (<i>Pernis apivorus</i>), Red kite (<i>Milvus milvus</i>), Black kite (<i>Milvus migrans</i>), Golden eagle (<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>), and Short toed eagle (<i>Cicetus gallicus</i>).	Commercial management of the beech woodland has created large homogenous stands lacking structure, age diversity, dead wood etc
9150	Medio European limestone beech forests of the <i>Cephalanthero-Fagion</i> (very small area)		
91E0	Aluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsor</i>	Barbastelle bat <i>Barbastella barbastellus</i> <i>Rosalina alpine</i>	
4030	European dry heaths	Red backed shrike (<i>Lanius collurio</i>) and Woodlark (<i>Lullula arborea</i>)	Management of species rich grasslands depends on the continuation of traditional extensive livestock grazing which is under threat due to lack of profitability, an ageing population, 'improvement' of pastures in some areas (ploughing, scrub removal, use of fertilisers &
4090	Endemic oro-Mediterranean heaths with gorse		
*6230	Species rich <i>Nardus</i> grasslands on silicious substrates in mountain areas	Rocky areas: Lammergeyer (<i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>), Egyptian vulture (<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>), Griffon vulture (<i>Gyps fulvus</i>) and	

6212	Semi natural dry grassland and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (very small area)	Peregrine falcon (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>).	pesticides), introduction of more productive non traditional breeds etc. Use of grazing areas on the northern slopes of Quinto Real is related to traditional unwritten family land distribution rather than the composition and quality of forage. This leads to areas which are overgrazed and others which are undergrazed. Traditional fires create erosion problems in some areas.
*7130	Active raised blanket bog		
8310	Caves not open to the public	Greater horseshoe bat (<i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i>), Lesser horseshoe bat (<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>) and Schreibers bat (<i>Miniopterus schreibersi</i>)	
	Other habitats assessed to be key features of the site		
	Wetlands and pools		Local population manage some pools to encourage breeding frogs which they then catch.
	Rivers, streams and springs associated with priority species	Pyrenean desman (<i>Galemys pyrenaicus</i>), otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>), European mink (<i>Mustela lutreola</i>) - latter two species not confirmed in the site but should recolonise. Kingfisher (<i>Althedo atthis</i>)	Rubbish dumping, pollution, destruction of vegetation at headwaters.

5. UK

5.1. *The UK context*

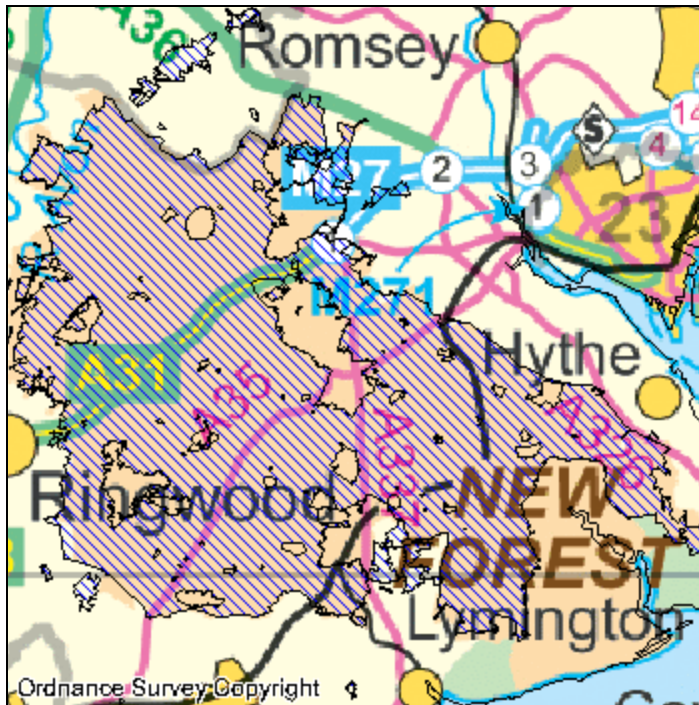
Until 1999, overall responsibility for implementing the habitats Directive and approving proposed SCIs in the UK rested with the former Department of the Environment. Since 1999, devolution has altered the political landscape of the UK. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, implementation of the habitats Directive (including site selection) is now a devolved matter for each of the country administrations (the Scottish Executive, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Northern Ireland Executive); The Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs is responsible for implementation of the Directive in England. Ultimately, relations with the European Union and obligations arising out of the Treaties remain the responsibility of the UK Government.

Advice to government on the site selection has been provided by the statutory nature conservation agencies (the Countryside Council for Wales, English Nature and Scottish Natural Heritage, together with the Environment and Heritage Service in Northern Ireland). The work of the agencies is co-ordinated through the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), ensuring that common standards for site selection are maintained throughout the UK.

The UK is situated entirely within the Atlantic biogeographical region. In July 2004, 76 of the habitat types listed in the habitats Directive were known to occur within the UK (excluding Gibraltar), and 43 species were known to occur (or to have occurred in recent times) as native populations within UK territory (again, excluding Gibraltar). The UK has proposed 608 candidate sites covering a total area of over 2 504 000 ha.

5.2. *The New Forest cSAC*

The New Forest proposed Site of Community Importance - or 'candidate Special Area of Conservation' (cSAC) - covers 29,000 ha, and forms part of the very recently created 58,000 ha New Forest National Park. It is one of the most important sites for wildlife in the UK. The site has been put forward to the European Commission within the Atlantic biogeographical region. The list for this region is due to be adopted by the Commission in 2004/5.



The cSAC supports a complex mosaic of wildlife habitats formerly common in lowland western Europe, but now rare and fragmented. The major components are the extensive wet and dry heaths with their rich valley mires and associated wet and dry grasslands, the ancient pasture and enclosed woodlands, the network of clean rivers and streams, and frequent permanent and temporary ponds. The New Forest also hosts one of only four sites of bog woodland in the UK considered to be of sufficient size, structure and function to merit selection, and one of the best sites of ancient residual alluvial forests in the UK. Outstanding examples of an additional eleven habitats of European interest are also present.

Over 90 per cent of the cSAC is former Crown land, now owned by the Minister of Agriculture (ie the State) and managed by the Forestry Commission. About two-thirds of this land is managed under the Rights of Common by the 'Verderers' of the New Forest. Less than 100 private owners and occupiers manage most of the rest of the land, with smaller plots managed by English Nature, Hampshire County Council, the National Trust and Hampshire Wildlife Trust (non-governmental).

The New Forest cSAC is dependent upon the management activities of the various owners and occupiers, and – perhaps most importantly - the Commoners. Of fundamental importance throughout the former Crown lands and adjacent area is the continued existence of a pastoral economy based on Rights of Common and Mast. There are six different Rights of Common in the New Forest, of which the Common Right of Pasture (the right to turn out ponies, horses, cattle and donkeys) and the Common Right of Mast (the right to turn out pigs in the pannage season in autumn to collect acorns and beech nuts) are the most relevant today. The Commoners' stock - mainly cattle and ponies - roam freely over extensive areas of the New Forest's unenclosed lands, thus playing a

vital role in maintaining open habitats free of scrub. In particular, they control the more aggressive species such as bracken and purple-moor grass, maintaining the richness and variety of heathland and woodpasture habitats.

In 1997, Hampshire County Council - the responsible local authority - set up the New Forest Partnership, involving all key interest groups and authorities, to develop a comprehensive management plan for the New Forest cSAC. While English Nature took the lead in drawing up Part I to IV of the management plan, outlining the site specific and technical information, the other relevant bodies produced management schemes for each of the sub-units under their respective responsibility. Part V of the management plan comprises these sub-management schemes. Most of the information for the management plan was compiled on the basis of detailed inventories and surveys, and much of the information was compiled for the first time in a single document.

While the notification of part of the New Forest as a European site (cSAC) has probably brought the biggest change in the area in terms of nature conservation in recent years, the New Forest's new national park status (28 June 2004), is likely to bring further important changes in terms of management. Most significant is likely to be the creation of a national park authority, which will also become the statutory planning authority of the area.

The following table provides an overview of key habitats, species and issues in the New Forest.

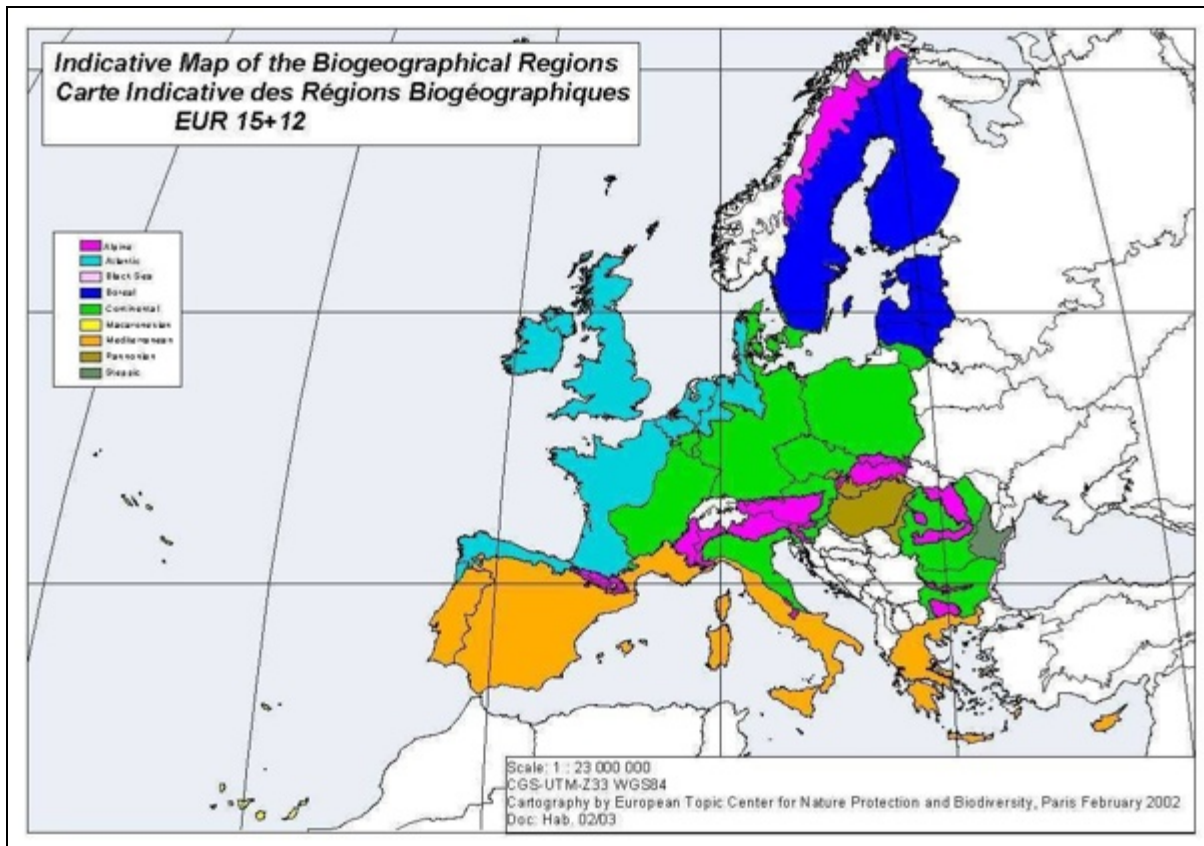
EU Code *priority	Annex I and Annex II Habitats and Species of Community interest	Issues
3110 3130 4010 4030 6410 7150 9120 9130 9190 91D0 91E0 7140 7230 1044 1083 1166	Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or of the Isoëto-Nanojuncetea Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix European dry heaths Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion Atlantic acidophilous beech forests with Ilex and sometimes also Taxus in the shrublayer (Quercion robori-petraeae or Ilici-Fagenion) Asperulo-Fagetum beech forests Old acidophilous oak woods with Quercus robur on sandy plains Bog woodland Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) Transition mires and quaking bogs Alkaline fens Southern damselfly Coenagrion mercuriale Stag beetle Lucanus cervus	Issues that affect habitat condition are as follows: · Drainage of wetland habitats for improved grazing and forestry · Afforestation of heathland habitats with conifers and other non-native species · Essential grazing by commoners' animals is vulnerable to current economic trends · Increased recreational pressures. Land managers are addressing these issues through the emerging cSAC Management Plan, through the proposed National Park, and through supplementary funding for restoration, e.g. LIFE funding. Preliminary actions are being taken to carry out restoration measures over the next 20-50 years.

	Great crested newt <i>Triturus cristatus</i>	
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6. The wider EU 15 context

The lists of sites foreseen in the habitats Directive are divided in seven bio-geographic regions (Pannonian, Boreal, Continental, Atlantic, Alpine, Macaronesian and Mediterranean, see map below) within the territory of the Union. The first list for the Macaronesian region (Madeira, Azores and Canary islands) was agreed in December 2001. The second list was adopted in December 2003 for the Alpine region. In December 2004, lists were adopted for the Atlantic and Continental regions, and in January 2005 the Boreal list was adopted. The lists are established on the basis of proposals made by the Member States, which are subsequently evaluated with the assistance of the European Environmental Agency.

In June 2004, all of the EU15 Member States had submitted lists of proposed Sites of Community Importance (pSCI) under the habitats Directive. The average coverage of national territories by proposed sites was around 14 per cent. There was considerable variation between Member States. Coverage ranged from around 7.5 per cent in France or 9 per cent in Germany to more substantial lists from Greece (20.9 per cent), Spain (23.5 per cent) and Denmark (23.8 per cent). However only the national list of the Netherlands was assessed as largely complete. All the other national lists still had shortcomings and needed to be completed.



The next step for the networks is the designation of all the sites by the Member States under their national law, including the granting of an appropriate national protection status and establishing a necessary management regime. The Commission's decisions on the site lists stress that for a number of habitat types and species, Member States still need to complete the list with further site proposals. This last fine-tuning of the list will make the network even more efficient in the future. The lists will be completed at a later stage for these habitat types and species in the light of additional knowledge.

Some of the new Member States have begun to submit site lists, but these have not yet been considered by the Commission. Consideration of these new lists will be another major step in the establishment of the Natura 2000 network.