

# Protected Areas

National thematic report  
to the Convention on Biological Diversity



# AUSTRIA

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***Please provide summary information on the process by which this report has been prepared, including information on the types of stakeholders who have been actively involved in its preparation and on material which was used as a basis for the report***

The main inputs for this report have been received from the nine Provincial Governments of Austria, the Federal Environment Agency as well as the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management. On the basis of these inputs a draft report has been prepared and discussed within and adopted by the Austrian National Commission on Biodiversity. Members of this Commission are representatives of Federal Ministries, the Provincial Governments, interest groups (e.g. Forest Owner Associations, Federal Chamber of Commerce), Federal Agencies involved in biodiversity issues (e.g. Federal Environment Agency, Federal Office and Research Centre for Forests), NGOs (e.g. WWF, Greenpeace Austria, Arch Noah) as well as representatives from the scientific community (e.g. University of Vienna, Austrian Academy of Science).

Regarding protected areas it needs to be taken into account that nature protection policy, including the establishment and management of protected areas, primarily lies with the legal competence of the nine Federal Provinces of Austria (Bundesländer). Nine different Provincial Nature Protection Laws therefore govern issues pertaining to nature protection. As a consequence various different categories of protected areas can be found in Austria, with different criteria regarding the establishment and management according to the respective provincial law.

On federal level, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management is involved in the decision-making process with regard to the establishment and management of protected areas such as National Parks, Ramsar Sites, National Forest Reserves Programme and takes a facilitating role with regard to issues related to the establishment and management of the EU Network Natura 2000.

This specific situation of divided legal responsibilities leads to the fact that many of the questions contained in this format cannot be answered generally on the national level, but would need to reflect the specific provincial situations or regulations. Therefore, in case of varying situations more than one answer have been given in some of the respective boxes, indicating that the subject is dealt in a different way in various provinces.

Further information mainly has been drawn from the following WebPages:

[www.lebensministerium.at/umwelt](http://www.lebensministerium.at/umwelt)

[www.ris.bka.at](http://www.ris.bka.at)

[www.biodiv.at](http://www.biodiv.at)

[www.naturschutz.at](http://www.naturschutz.at)

as well as WebPages of provincial governments

*Protected areas*

*System of protected areas*

1. What is the relative priority afforded to development and implementation of a national system of protected areas in the context of other obligations arising from the Convention and COP Decisions?					
a) High	in particular with regard to Natura 2000	b) Medium	in general	c) Low	
2. Is there a systematic planning process for development and implementation of a national system of protected areas?					
a) no			There is no general national system in place, except with regard to the Network Natura 2000.  (see also d))		
b) in early stages of development					
c) in advanced stages of development					
d) yes (please provide copies of relevant documents describing the process)			On provincial level systematic planning processes for development and implementation of protected areas exist to some extend.		
3. Is there an assessment of the extent to which the existing network of protected areas covers all areas that are identified as being important for the conservation of biological diversity?					
a) no		x (in some provinces)			
b) an assessment is being planned for		x (in some provinces)			
c) an assessment is being undertaken					
d) yes (please provide copies of the assessments made)		x (in some provinces)			

**Regulatory framework**

4. Is there a policy framework and/or enabling legislation in place for the establishment and management of protected areas?	
a) no	
b) in early stages of development	
c) in advanced stages of development	
d) yes (please provide copies of relevant documents)	<p>The <u>establishment</u> of protected areas is governed by nature protection laws of the 9 Provincial Governments (Bundesländer), National Park Laws, but also by international frameworks, e.g. Ramsar Convention, Alpine Convention.</p> <p>Concerning the <u>management</u> of protected areas the National Park Laws as well as the EU Habitat Directive set out specific requirements.</p> <p>Both the management and the establishment of protected areas in the context of Natura 2000 is guided by the respective EU Directives of nature protection (Council Directive 79/409/EG on the conservation of wild birds and Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora)</p> <p>With regard to wetlands, the Austrian National Wetland Strategy builds a framework for the establishment and management of protected wetlands of international importance according to the provisions of the Ramsar Convention (further information: <a href="http://www.ramsar.at">www.ramsar.at</a>).</p> <p>Information on the various Nature Protection Laws can be drawn from the legal information system (WebPages) of Austria <a href="http://www.ris.bka.gv.at">www.ris.bka.gv.at</a> as well as the EU-nature protection homepage <a href="http://europa.eu.int">http://europa.eu.int</a></p>
5. Have guidelines, criteria and targets been adopted to support selection, establishment and management of protected areas?	
a) no	
b) in early stages of development	
c) in advanced stages of development	x (in some provinces)
d) yes (please provide copies of guidelines, criteria and targets)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The guidelines and criteria of the IUCN especially with regard to the establishment and management of national parks are applied in Austria (<a href="http://www.iucn.org">www.iucn.org</a>)</li> <li>- The EU Directives on the establishment of the Network Natura 2000 sites provide such criteria as these sites are to be established on the basis of habitats and species of common</li> </ul>

	<p>interest within the EU which are listed in the Annexes to the Directives and stipulate the development of guidelines for the assessment and maintenance of the “favourable conservations status” as well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Austrian National Ramsar Committee has endorsed the Ramsar Guidelines on management planning for Ramsar sites and other wetlands.</li> <li>- Furthermore, the respective guidelines with regard to European Biogenetic Reserves as well as European Diploma for Protected Areas are applied.</li> </ul>
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6. Does the management of protected areas involve the use of incentive measures, for instance, of entrance fees for park visitors, or of benefit-sharing arrangements with adjacent communities and other relevant stakeholders?	
a) no	
b) yes, incentive measures implemented for some protected areas (please provide some examples)	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nature protection areas established on the basis of private contracts between the owner of the site and the government;</li> <li>- Incentive measures for extensive farming practices regarding the conservation of agricultural areas of high value for biotopes or species protection</li> <li>- Entrance fees are taken e.g. in some Austrian Nature Parks</li> </ul>
c) yes, incentive measures implemented for all protected areas (please provide some examples)	

***Management approach***

7. Have the principal threats to protected areas and the biodiversity that they contain been assessed, so that programmes can be put in place to deal with the threats, their effects and to influence the key drivers?	
a) no	In many protected areas neither an inventory of habitats/species, nor a threat analysis is available
b) an assessment is being planned for	for some protected areas
c) an assessment is in process	for some protected areas
d) yes, an assessment has been completed	for some protected areas
e) programmes and policies to deal with threats are in place (please provide basic information on threats and actions taken)	for some protected areas (e.g. inventories of protected areas in “Valsertal”)

8. Are protected areas established and managed in the context of the wider region in which they are located, taking account of and contributing to other sectoral strategies?

a) no	
b) yes, in some areas	x (e.g. National Parks, Nature Parks, Biosphere Reserves, Ramsar Sites)
c) yes, in all areas (please provide details)	

9. Do protected areas vary in their nature, meeting a range of different management objectives and/or being operated through differing management regimes?

a) no, most areas are established for similar objectives and are under similar management regimes	
b) many areas have similar objectives/management regimes, but there are also some exceptions	
c) yes, protected areas vary in nature (please provide details)	The objectives/management regimes vary according to the protection category (National park, nature reserve, landscape protection area etc.): protection of biodiversity, threatened species, landscape protection, protection of geological features, unique landscape marks, etc.

10. Is there wide stakeholder involvement in the establishment and management of protected areas?

a) no	
b) with some, but not all protected areas	x
c) yes, always (please provide details of experience)	

11. Do protected areas established and managed by non-government bodies, citizen groups, private sector and individuals exist in your country, and are they recognized in any formal manner?

a) no, they do not exist	
b) yes, they exist, however are not formally recognized	Some of the protected areas established by NGOs are not formally recognized, such as the protected areas established on the basis of private contracts between the owner of the site and the NGO "BIOSA". However, it depends on the interpretation of "formally recognized", which could either mean recognized by the government and by a given legal status, or recognized by a legal contract between the NGO and the owner of the site.

<p>c) yes, they exist and are formally recognized (please provide further information)</p>	<p>Nearly all protected areas in Austria are privately owned, although most of these areas are established and managed on a legal basis.  <u>Examples:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- WWF areas within the National Park Donau-Auen or Ramsar Site March-Thaya-Auen,</li> <li>- WWF nature reserve in Marchegg (White stork colonies)</li> <li>- Wetland biotopes owned and managed by the Austrian League for Nature Conservation (Österreichischer Naturschutzbund);</li> <li>- Some smaller areas, e.g. ponds, living bogs, legally protected by the respective nature protection laws;</li> <li>- Natural forest reserves established under the Austrian National Forest Reserves Programme and based on private contracts between the forest owner and the government;</li> <li>- Forests dedicated to the conservation of genetic forest resources;</li> </ul>
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**Available resources**

<p>12. Are the human, institutional and financial resources available adequate for full implementation of the protected areas network, including for management of individual protected areas?</p>	
<p>a) no, they are severely limiting (please provide basic information on needs and shortfalls)</p>	
<p>b) no, they are limiting (please provide basic information on needs and shortfalls)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In general there is a lack of resources (human, institutional, financial) for all working fields inside protected areas.</li> <li>- Many protected areas demand intensive management strategies for meeting the conservation goals and would require a large financial input in order to get co-operation from the stakeholders concerned. However, budgetary lines within the competent bodies (Provincial Governments) are limited.</li> <li>- A national wide survey of the conservation status of protected areas is missing.</li> <li>- The splitted competence for nature protection, spatial planning, hunting and fishing (9 regional authorities) leads to complications regarding the implementation of international conventions as well as EU-legislation</li> </ul>
<p>c) Available resources are adequate (please provide basic information on needs and shortfalls)</p>	
<p>d) yes, good resources are available</p>	<p>x (with regard to some protected areas, in particular National Parks)</p>



13. Has your country requested/received financial assistance from the Global Environment Facility or other international sources for establishment/management of protected areas?

a) no	x (as regards GEF)
b) funding has been requested, but not received	
c) funding is currently being requested	x (not with regard to GEF, but other sources)
d) yes, funding has been received (please provide copies of appropriate documents)	E.g. funding for EU-LIFE-Projects (1995-2002: 23 Life Projects / 60 Mio Euro, contribution from the EU: 25 Mio Euro) as well as EU-INTERREG Projects and EU-Leader Projects (e.g. for nature parks)

### Assessment

14. Have constraints to implementation and management of an adequate system of protected areas been assessed, so that actions can be initiated to deal with these constraints?

a) no	
b) yes, constraints have been assessed (please provide further information)	In some cases constraints have been assessed by case studies. These are for example conflicting interests of different stakeholders at various levels (agriculture and forestry, industry, traffic, tourism, energy, exploitation of natural resources). Also within the performance of LIFE- or INTERREG-Projects constraints are assessed.
c) yes, actions to deal with constraints are in place (please provide further information)	x (in some provinces)

15. Is a programme in place or in development to regularly assess the effectiveness of protected areas management and to act on this information?

a) no	No general programme for all categories of protected areas in Austria (see explanation under b))
b) yes, a programme is under development (please provide further information)	Management plans (including monitoring schemes) for protected areas according to Natura 2000 are being drawn up. The EU-Habitats Directive stipulate a "favourable conservation status" of habitats and species of community importance within SACs. Currently a study is under way to assess this favourable conservation status in Austria's Natura 2000 sites.

c) yes, a programme is in place (please provide further information)	As regards National Parks an evaluation is carried out every five years. For protected areas holding the European Diploma (Council of Europe) an annual report has to be made, every five years an evaluation has to be carried out.
16. Has any assessment been made of the value of the material and non-material benefits and services that protected areas provide?	
a) no	
b) an assessment is planned	
c) an assessment is in process	
d) yes, an assessment has been made (please provide further information)	A general assessment has not been made, but case studies for some protected areas have been carried out: e.g. Case-study on applying incentive measures when establishing the National Park Neusiedler See-Seewinkel; Case study on the economic impacts of National Parks; Cost/benefit-Analysis of National Park Donau-Auen; Case-studies in National Parks dealing with the impacts on tourism, regional development and also the acceptance by the public; WWF Case studies regarding the socio-economic benefits of Natura 2000 in two different regions (Waldviertel, Lower Austria and Mura/Styria).

### ***Regional and international cooperation***

17. Is your country collaborating/communicating with neighbouring countries in the establishment and/or management of transboundary protected areas?	
a) no	
b) yes (please provide details)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Within EU-LIFE-projects and in the context of establishing the Network Natura 2000 co-operation takes place (e.g. co-operation with Slovenia on the management and improvement of a Natura 2000 site bordering Slovenia, with Italy (Southern Tyrol) and Bavaria/Germany)</li> <li>- In the context of the transboundary national parks co-operation on harmonizing management measures, visitor management or scientific research takes place: National Park Neusiedler See-Seewinkel (co-operation with Hungary), National Park Thayatal (co-operation with the Czech Republic and Narodni Park Podyji);</li> <li>- Co-operation on transboundary nature parks with Hungary &amp; Slovenia</li> <li>- Co-operation on transboundary Ramsar Sites (e.g. Donau-March-Thaya-Auen with Slovak and Czech Republic, Neusiedler See-Seewinkel – Fertő To with Hungary and Waldviertel ponds, peat bogs and rivers with Czech Republic)</li> <li>- Additionally, co-operation on scientific research takes place. e.g. in the "Alpenpark Karwendel" (with Germany, study on tourism and nature)</li> </ul>

18. Are key protected areas professionals in your country members of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas, thereby helping to foster the sharing of information and experience?

a) no	
b) yes	Key professionals are members of WCPA Europe Group
c) information is not available	

19. Has your country provided information on its protected areas to the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre in order to allow for a scientific assessment of the status of the world's protected areas?

a) no	
b) yes	x

20. If your country has protected areas or other sites recognised or designated under an international convention or programme (including regional conventions and programmes), please provide copies of reports submitted to those programmes or summaries of them.

- Ramsar Sites: 11 sites/118.000 ha, information can be drawn from [www.gis.ubavie.gv.at/austria/natur/feuchtgebiete](http://www.gis.ubavie.gv.at/austria/natur/feuchtgebiete) or [www.ramsar.at](http://www.ramsar.at) (Ramsar-sites)
- European Diploma for Protected Areas (Council of Europe): 2 sites
- European Network of Biogenetic Reserves (Council of Europe): 56 sites
- UNESCO: 5 Biosphere Reserves/468 km<sup>2</sup>, 3 World Heritage Sites/cultural landscapes
- Natura 2000 Network: 210 sites, 16% of national territory, not finalized yet, information can be drawn from [www.lebensministerium.at/umwelt](http://www.lebensministerium.at/umwelt) (Naturschutz/Natura2000/Liste der österreichischen Natura 2000 Gebiete)

21. Do you think that there are some activities on protected areas that your country has significant experience that will be of direct value to other Contracting Parties?

a) no	
b) yes (please provide details)	National Park Management, establishment and implementation of the EU Network Natura 2000 and experience with stakeholder involvement

### *Further comments*

#### General comment on the format of the report:

The report addresses the issue of protected areas in a very general way. In our view and in order to allow a comprehensive overview it would have been useful also to take into account more specifically the various different categories of protected areas, e.g. according to the IUCN Categories, as well as issues related to ecological corridors, conditions of protected areas, but also education and public awareness, research, etc..

Some questions are formulated in a quite unclear language, e.g. question 11.