

Action Plan for Implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity's Programme of Work on Protected Areas



Hungary

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Protected area information:

PoWPA Focal Point:

Mrs. Rozália Érdi

Nature Conservation Department, State Secretariat of Environment Affairs, Ministry of Rural Development,

Address: Kossuth tér 11., Budapest H-1055, Hungary

Tel: +36 1 795 2397

E-mail: rozalia.szekeres.erdine@vm.gov.hu

Lead implementing agency:

State Secretariat of Environment Affairs, Ministry of Rural Development

Address: Kossuth tér 11., Budapest H-1055, Hungary

Multi-stakeholder committee:

In 2005 a ministerial order was issued to establish National Park Councils (NPC) at all National Park Directorates (NPD). The National Park Councils are initiated and operated by the NPDs. According to the size of the NPD each NPC has 5-9 members, including local scientific, technical and educational experts. The main objective of the NPC is to give scientific and technical assistance and advice to the NPD, especially regarding strategic issues where greater public involvement is necessary. More information about the operation of the NPCs is available at the website of each NPD.

Description of protected area system

National Targets and Vision for Protected Areas

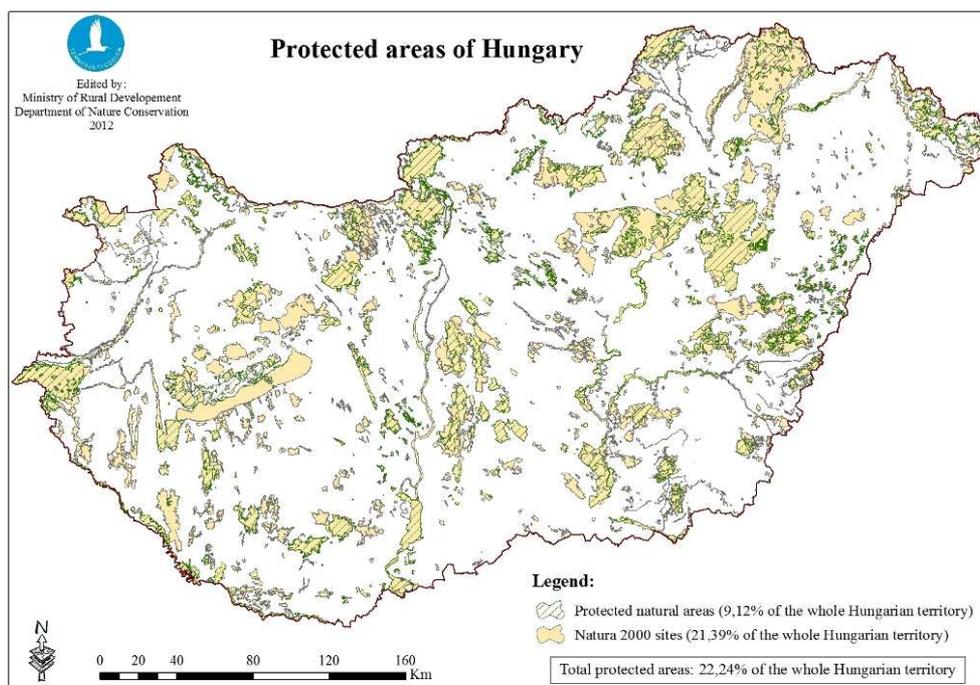
According to a gap assessment carried out by the European Commission in the frame of the biogeographic seminar process, the designation of Hungary's protected area system of European importance – the Natura 2000 network – has been accomplished in Hungary and in 2011 the Natura 2000 network was declared complete.

Therefore, the national targets for the period by 2020 are:

- to maintain the current extension (22.24%) of the protected area system in Hungary; and
- to develop and issue in legislation widely-consulted management plans for at least 50% of the protected areas of national importance.

Coverage

The **total area protected** either by national or EU legislation is **22.24%** of the territory of Hungary. Considering the different types of protection, the area protected by **national law** is **9.12%**. The nature conservation sites of **local importance** cover **almost 0.5%** of the country. The area **protected by EU legislation** – the Natura 2000 network – is **21.39%** of the country; however this network to a great extent (90%) overlaps with the areas protected by national legislation.



Description and background

At present the protected natural areas of **national importance** consist of the 10 national parks, 38 landscape protection areas, and 168 nature conservation areas of national importance. In Hungary, bogs, mires, alkaline lakes and all caves are protected “*ex lege*” (by force of the law). There are 2 015 protected natural areas of **local importance**.

Hungary joined the European Union in 2004, and the EU Birds Directive and Habitats Directive entered into force on accession. On the basis of these EU directives, Hungary had to **designate the Natura 2000 network for the habitats and species of European importance**. The designation of the Natura 2000 network took place in Hungary in **2004**, which led to a significant increase of the protected areas. Then the gap assessment showed that for 16% of the habitats and species under the Habitats Directive the coverage was insufficient, meaning that further sites had to be designated. An infringement procedure was also launched against Hungary for insufficient designation of Special Protection Areas under the Birds Directive. Thus, Hungary designated new Natura 2000 sites in 2010 to fulfil these requirements. At the biogeographic seminar held by the European Commission in October 2011 the completeness of the Natura 2000 network was evaluated again. The European Commission concluded that the Hungarian Natura 2000 network was sufficient for all Annex I habitats and Annex II species of the Habitats Directive, therefore, the designation of the Natura 2000 network has been accomplished in Hungary. Thus, Hungary underwent a coverage assessment for the habitats and species of community importance, the gaps identified were eliminated and the sufficiency of the **Natura 2000 network has been declared complete** by an independent institution.

The below tables show the different types of protected areas in Hungary:

| Protected natural areas and assets of national interest | | |
|--|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Categories of Protection | Sites (number) | Area (hectares) |
| National parks | 10 | 483 079 |
| Landscape protection areas | 38 | 334 651.8 |
| Nature conservation areas | 168 | 30 782.8 |
| Natural monuments | 1 | - |
| Total: | 217 | 848 513.6 |
| Protected natural areas of local interest | | |

| Protected natural areas of local importance | Sites (number) | Area (hectares) |
|---|--|--------------------|
| Total: | 2015 | 46 389.32 |
| Natura 2000 sites (protected areas of European importance) | | |
| Natura 2000 categories | Sites (number) | Area (hectares) |
| Special Protection Areas | 56 | 1 374 568.9 |
| Special Areas of Conservation | 479 | 1 444 344.9 |
| Total: | 525 (10 totally overlapped sites) | 1 994 966.7 |

Governance types

In Hungary protected natural areas are **predominantly owned by the state**, which is presently the most effective method of protecting natural values. According to Act XCIII of 1995 protected natural areas privatised from former co-operatives are to be purchased by the state and are to be managed by the national park directorates.

By the end of 2011, 150 000 ha protected areas were put in government ownership. Since 2005, the placing into government ownership of the affected areas has slowed down due to lack of funding. The fragmentation of the privately owned areas as well as the degree of areas in co-ownership and the resulting bureaucracy pose difficulties. By the end of 2015, 100 000 ha areas (already protected or planned for protection) are planned to be put in government ownership.

Key threats

The main threats are similar to the global trends: habitat fragmentation and degradation, inappropriate land use, overexploitation and unsustainable use of natural resources, the spread of invasive alien species and pollution. Especially the fragmentation of the privately owned areas as well as the degree of areas in co-ownership and the resulting bureaucracy pose difficulties. Another problem is that the real value of biodiversity and ecosystem services is still not considered in economic calculations and planning.

Barriers for effective implementation

The barriers of implementation are manifold, including lack of human and financial capacities especially regarding research and monitoring activities; low social acceptance of the protected areas; and conflicts between the various sectors. Another typical barrier in Hungary originates from the Socialist era: after the change of the Hungarian regime, during the redistribution of the lands of the former agricultural associations (privatisation), several protected areas have been put in undivided joint property. Therefore the proper management of these areas is difficult. The elimination of this complex ownership status has been moving very slowly because of the reduced budget of this programme.

Status, priority and timeline for key actions of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas

Status of key actions of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas

| Status of key actions of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas | Status |
|---|--------|
| • Progress on assessing gaps in the protected area network (1.1) | 4 |
| • Progress in assessing protected area integration (1.2) | 4 |
| • Progress in establishing transboundary protected areas and regional networks (1.3) | 3 |
| • Progress in developing site-level management plans (1.4) | 2 |
| • Progress in assessing threats and opportunities for restoration (1.5) | 4 |
| • Progress in assessing equitable sharing of benefits (2.1) • Progress in assessing protected area governance (2.1) | 2 |
| • Progress in assessing the participation of indigenous and local communities in key protected area decisions (2.2) | 3 |
| • Progress in assessing the policy environment for establishing and managing protected areas (3.1) • Progress in assessing the values of protected areas (3.1) | 3 |
| • Progress in assessing protected area capacity needs (3.2) | 4 |
| • Progress in assessing the appropriate technology needs (3.3) | 3 |
| • Progress in assessing protected area sustainable finance needs | 2-3 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| (3.4) | |
| • Progress in conducting public awareness campaigns (3.5) | 2 |
| • Progress in developing best practices and minimum standards (4.1) | 4 |
| • Progress in assessing management effectiveness (4.2) | 1 |
| • Progress in establishing an effective PA monitoring system (4.3) | 2 |
| • Progress in developing a research program for protected areas (4.4) | 2 |
| • Progress in assessing opportunities for marine protection | N/A |
| • Progress in incorporating climate change aspects into protected areas | 1 |

Status: 0 = no work, 1 = just started, 2 = partially complete, 3 = nearly complete, 4 = complete

Priority actions for fully implementing the Programme of Work on Protected Areas:

In Hungary, the following actions are considered priorities for the timeline of the Action Plan:

- Action 1: Develop management plans for protected areas in order to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity at these areas;
- Action 2: Expand transboundary protected areas; and
- Action 3: Restore key degraded habitats.

Timeline for completion of key actions

2012-2020

Action Plans for completing priority actions of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas

The abbreviations used in the Action Plan are listed in the footnote¹.

¹ In the Action Plan the following abbreviations are used:

| | |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>MRD</i> | <i>Ministry of Rural Development</i> |
| <i>NPD</i> | <i>National Park Directorates</i> |
| <i>NGOs</i> | <i>Non-governmental organizations</i> |
| <i>DDNP</i> | <i>Danube-Drava National Park</i> |
| <i>FHNP</i> | <i>Fertő-Hanság National Park</i> |

Action 1: Develop management plans for protected areas in order to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity at these areas

| Key steps | Timeline | Responsible parties | Indicative budget |
|---|----------|---|---|
| Develop management plans for at least 250 Natura 2000 sites | 2015 | MRD, NPD | 2 million EUR |
| Develop management plans for at least 50% of the nationally protected areas | 2020 | MRD, NPD, local communities (e.g. municipalities, farmers, NGOs etc.) | Annual governmental budget of the NPD |
| Promulgate in legislation the developed management plans of protected sites | 2020 | MRD, NPD | Annual governmental budget (wages of relevant government officials) |

Action 2: Expand transboundary protected areas

| Key steps | Timeline | Responsible parties | Indicative budget |
|---|----------|---------------------|---|
| In order to establish the Mura-Drava-Danube Transboundary UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, Hungary and Croatia have submitted the nomination documents to the UNESCO and plan to carry out joint projects | 2012 | MRD, DDNP | 650.000 EUR |
| In order to establish the Mura-Drava-Danube Transboundary UNESCO Biosphere Reserve a pentilateral agreement (Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Serbia and Slovenia) was concluded in 2011 and the establishment is supported by a Coordination Board | 2015 | MRD, DDNP | Annual governmental budget of MRD and DDNP, plus project grants |
| Establish the “Körös-ér” transboundary protected landscape area | 2012 | MRD | Annual governmental budget (wages of relevant |

| | | | |
|---|------------|------|-----------------------|
| | | | government officials) |
| Regular cooperation regarding the common protected sites of the Neusiedler See/Seewinkel National Park (Austria) and Fertő-Hanság National Park (Hungary) | continuous | FHNP | |

Action 3: Restore key degraded habitats

| Key steps | Timeline | Responsible parties | Indicative budget |
|---|----------|--|--|
| Bird-friendly conversion of power lines according to the agreement signed by MRD, Birdlife Hungary and Hungarian electric companies | 2020 | NPD, MRD, Birdlife Hungary, Electric companies | Estimation: 12 million EUR – depends on EU funding and private sector contribution |
| Restore degraded wetland areas | 2020 | NPD, MRD | Estimation: 166 million EUR – depends on EU funding |
| Eradicate invasive alien species at key habitats | 2020 | NPD, MRD | Annual budget of NPD (no special dedicated budget) as well as EU project grants |

Action 4: Increase the effectiveness of protection by local communities

| Key steps | Timeline | Responsible parties | Indicative budget |
|--|----------|---|-------------------|
| Increase the number of protected natural areas of local importance | 2020 | NPD, local communities (municipalities, farmers, NGOs etc.) | |

| | | | |
|--|------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Supervise the established protected natural areas of local importance | 2020 | MRD, NPD | Annual governmental budget of MRD |
| Encourage the establishment of protected natural areas of local importance | 2020 | MRD, municipalities, local NGOs | Annual governmental budget of MRD |

Action 5: Raise public awareness on the importance of biodiversity and protected areas

| Key steps | Timeline | Responsible parties | Indicative budget |
|---|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Annually organize the “week of national parks”, which is open for the wide public | continuous, annual event | MRD, NPD, NGOs | Annual budget of NPD, project grounds |
| Annually celebrate the Day of Birds, the World Wetlands Day, the International Biodiversity Day and important nature-related days | continuous, annual event | MRD, NPD, NGOs | Annual governmental budget of MRD |
| Participate at the Travel Exhibition and other special events such as the Fishing, Hunting and arms Exhibition | continuous, annual event | MRD, NPD | Annual governmental budget of MRD |

Action 6: Enhance the monitoring of protected areas

| Key steps | Timeline | Responsible parties | Indicative budget |
|---|----------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Establish the National Environmental Institute and its 12 regional offices. Their task includes the improvement of the regular nature conservation monitoring activities. | 2012 | Government | |

Key assessment results

Ecological gap assessment

Hungary joined the European Union in 2004, and the EU Birds Directive and Habitats Directive entered into force on accession. On the basis of these EU directives, Hungary had to designate the Natura 2000 network for the habitats and species of European importance that are listed on the respective annexes of the directives.

The designation of the Natura 2000 network took place in Hungary in 2004, and a biogeographic seminar was held in 2005 to evaluate the sufficiency of this designation. The result was that for 16% of the habitats and species under the Habitats Directive the coverage was insufficient, meaning that further sites had to be designated. An infringement procedure was also launched against Hungary for insufficient designation of Special Protection Areas under the Birds Directive. Thus, Hungary designated sites in one package under both directives in 2010 to fulfil these requirements.

As a result, the infringement procedure under the Birds Directive was closed in 2010, and a second biogeographic seminar was held by the European Commission in October 2011 to evaluate the completeness of the Natura 2000 network designated under the Habitats Directive. The European Commission concluded that the Hungarian Natura 2000 network was sufficient for all Annex I habitats and Annex II species of the Habitats Directive, therefore, the designation of the Natura 2000 network has been accomplished in Hungary. Thus, Hungary underwent a coverage assessment for the habitats and species of community importance, the gaps identified were eliminated and the sufficiency of the Natura 2000 network has been declared complete by an independent institution.

Management effectiveness assessment

Within the WWF Danube Carpathian Programme a Carpathian Protected Areas Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool was developed. This tool was tested in the countries of the Carpathian region. In Hungary 2 protected area sites were tested in 2010, including landscape protection areas and nature conservation areas. The detailed outcome of these management effectiveness assessments is not available for the public because the aim is to analyse own performance and use the data by the national park managers.
