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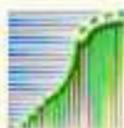
EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION

## FINANCING NATURE CONSERVATION

EU programmes and instruments  
for Central and East European Accession Countries



Editors: Carlos Sunyer and Mihály Vég



**TERRA**  
environmental policy centre

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*EU PROGRAMMES AND INSTRUMENTS FOR  
CENTRAL AND EAST EUROPEAN ACCESSION COUNTRIES*

**Carlos Sunyer and Mihály Végh (eds)**

This publication has been prepared with the financial support of the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries and of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MATRA Fund/Programme International Nature Management).

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## Preface

The environment will be one of the most complicated issues to be dealt with during the process of enlargement of the European Union. Nature conservation is part of the environment package, and thus accession countries have to treat it as a priority area.

Over the past years a series of targeted activities were implemented to facilitate the accession process regarding nature conservation. During these events participants from nature conservation authorities in CEE frequently expressed a keen interest in information about the EU financial programmes and instruments related to nature conservation, which are available to them at present and after joining the European Union. In response to this demand the European Centre for Nature Conservation (ECNC) initiated the project 'Providing information on financing nature conservation in CEE accession countries with the new opportunities in EU financial instruments'. The expected project outputs were a manual, and an international workshop, together with the incorporation of all the relevant information gathered through the project into the web site of ECNC.

This publication, the manual, was prepared with close cooperation between ECNC and TERRA Environmental Policy Centre, Spain. It aims to provide up to date information to EU accession countries on the possibilities of EU funding for nature conservation purposes with focus on LIFE, SAPARD, ISPA, enlarged PHARE and Interreg. The manual will help candidate countries to prepare for the implementation of EU-instruments for EU member states, which will, as I expect, not be far off for a number of countries. Practical examples demonstrate how nature conservation can be integrated in other economic sectors such as agriculture or tourism. The draft of the manual served as a background document for a workshop, which welcomed representatives of ten accession countries and created the opportunity to discuss the details of the new financial instruments in an interactive way. According to the participants this workshop was very useful, practical and eye opening. After the workshop the manual was completed. In order to ensure a wider dissemination of information, the entire text of the manual - including the annexes with useful information - has been incorporated into the ECNC web site.

I would like to express my thanks to the editors of the manual, Mr Carlos Sunyer from TERRA and Mr Mihály Végh from ECNC, and to the authors of the case studies, Ms Janet Dwyer, Mr Manfred Pils, Mr Jörg Hensiek, Mr Gábor Szilágyi and Mr Ovidiu Ionescu for presenting good examples on the wise use of different financial sources for the purposes of nature conservation. I also express my appreciation to the speakers and participants of the workshop for their interest and active participation during the workshop. The smooth running and effectiveness of the workshop was assured by a team consisting of Ms Laura Buguñá Hoffmann, Ms Dora Szücs, Ms Camelia Kovacs and Mr Mihály Végh, who did a very good job. An additional word of thanks goes to Ms Astrid van Hemert and Mr Ben Delbaere for editing the report.

The project was made possible with the financial support of the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MATRA Fund/Programme International Nature Management). I would especially like to thank Mr Gerard van Dijk, Senior Officer, International Nature Management of the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries, for his input into this project.

I hope that the information provided through the manual and the web site will lead to wider EU funding for nature conservation in EU accession countries and will make apparent that early communication with the national accession programme planning authorities is vital for integrating nature conservation in all relevant EU programmes and instruments available to EU accession countries.

Rob Wolters  
Executive Director ECNC

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## Executive summary

The enlargement of the European Union to include the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) has gone through several key stages in a process of refining needs and obligations. One of the most important obligations for accession is the adoption of the entire body of EU legislation, the *acquis communautaire*. This includes the Habitats and Birds Directives with the obligation to establish the Natura 2000 network.

Several EU financial instruments have been opened to the CEECs aspiring to accession. These include the LIFE programme and the Leader and Interreg Community Initiatives, SAPARD and ISPA – new instruments created specifically to support the accession process – and a redesigned PHARE.

Each country's Accession Partnership agreement provides its own framework for accession and is the key element of the accession strategy. It includes a National Plan for the Adoption of the Acquis and governs the financial programming of the most important funding support. The Accession Partnership agreements and the introduction of the new funding instruments provide new opportunities to finance nature conservation.

LIFE is a specific programme for the environment and about half of its budget is devoted to nature conservation. Although it was opened to CEECs in 1999 the only CEE country to date to make use of it has been Romania, where seven projects were supported by LIFE-Nature in 1999. LIFE is expected to be taken up more widely during the period 2000–2006. It can be used to finance preliminary studies for establishing Natura 2000 sites and management plans, for example, for sites and species.

The PHARE programme was established in 1989 and has been redefined for the period 2000–2006 to allow it to be used to finance institution building and investments. PHARE has three main programmes: National, Multi-country and Cross-Border Cooperation. All can be used for nature conservation, although mainly through the development and improvement of administration and skills. It will have a total annual budget of EUR 1.5 billion.

SAPARD, the Special Action Programme for Pre-accession Aid for Agriculture and Rural Development, is a new fund. It has an annual budget of EUR 520 million to promote agricultural and rural development. A plan has to be prepared by the competent national authorities in which a menu of different measures should be developed. Under the SAPARD the co-financing of agro-environmental pilot projects is possible. These can be very relevant to biodiversity conservation. This means that the way the national programme is designed affects the use that can be made of SAPARD for nature conservation purposes. Similar measures to those provided by SAPARD have been successfully used for nature conservation in many EU regions.

The Pre-accession Structural Instrument ISPA is a completely new instrument. It is similar to SAPARD and has an annual budget of EUR 1040 million, to be distributed equally between transport and environment infrastructure. In principle this instrument can be used to finance any new infrastructure proposed as part of the implementation of EU environmental policy, which obviously includes nature conservation. Although its environmental priorities are waste, water and air, certain investments are possible where there is a high relevance for biodiversity. For example, water purification plants on certain rivers adjacent to internationally important wetlands. Or under the infrastructure section of ISPA mitigating measures such as game-passages on motorways can be included in the overall planning. A few examples from EU countries of the use of the Cohesion Fund demonstrate some of the possibilities.

All the above mentioned instruments are to be programmed by the CEECs. There are also two Community Initiatives that can be used by CEECs: Interreg III and Leader+. Interreg offers CEECs the chance to share a project with an EU Member State. It presents an interesting opportunity for nature conservation, particularly for protected areas in frontier zones. Some Interreg II projects are examples of how this can be done. Leader is a Community Initiative to promote cooperation among local actors. It is also open to the

CEECs and could be of help in promoting sustainable development strategies relevant to protected areas.

Although the only financial instrument with nature conservation as one of the two main objectives is LIFE, many other instruments can be used for nature conservation. Recent EU studies have demonstrated these possibilities, drawing on real examples. But in order to use these financial instruments it is necessary to integrate nature conservation into other policies, especially rural development policies. This means that nature conservation authorities should play a more active role in structural programming of the newly introduced EU financial instruments and programmes.

# 1. Introduction

*This publication aims to promote the use of different European Union funding programmes and instruments to finance nature conservation including the Natura 2000 network in the accession countries from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Like other EU policy areas, this is a new issue for the environmental authorities in the CEECs and it seems to be one of the most difficult areas during the transposition of the acquis. The early implementation of it could present an opportunity for funding and for integration, which will be a key issue in future.*

Financial programmes and instruments similar to the newly introduced ones in CEECs have been available in the EU for many years, but until recently the possibilities they offer for nature conservation have not been sufficiently recognized. Not much use has been made of them in the past, but some good examples of the use of these instruments in different EU regions have been published recently.<sup>1,2</sup> Awareness of the potential use that can be made of these funding instruments is now growing as the pressure for greater integration of EU environmental policies rises and access to the relevant information becomes easier.

The environmental authorities in the CEECs should not let other priorities overshadow their efforts to use these funding instruments for nature conservation. After all, they have a better starting position than their EU colleagues had years ago. This publication seeks to exploit this unique situation by providing guidelines, basic information, some examples and contact addresses.

The book has two main parts. The first part (Chapters 2 to 4) is an introduction to relevant EU policies on the enlargement of the EU, nature conservation and regional cohesion. Chapter 2 describes the enlargement process, with its many steps and instruments. In Chapter 3 special attention is given to the Natura 2000 network, which is not yet established in the CEECs. Chapter 4 is a brief introduction to the EU cohesion policy and its financial instruments, and describes the planning of the accession financial programmes and instruments for the period 2000–2006.

The second part (Chapters 5 to 12) is a review of the main EU financial instruments that can currently be used in the interests of nature conservation in the CEECs. Each instrument is explained and the kinds of opportunities it provides for nature conservation are discussed. Brief case studies (Chapter 10) are included to illustrate uses of the instruments, including two examples from the CEE countries (Chapter 11). The manual closes with a summary of the conclusions (Chapter 12).

Annex 1 contains a brief introduction to the EU Structural Funds. Although the Structural Funds will not apply to the CEECs until their accession, this information is important for obtaining a broader overview.

Annexes 2 – 4 of the report contain a glossary, the references and additional information on interesting web sites and useful lists of addresses.

## 2. The Route to Accession

*To make the best possible use of the different EU funding schemes it is necessary to know the main elements of the process of accession to the European Union. Preparations for the enlargement of the EU to include countries from Central and Eastern Europe has gone through several key stages in a process of refining requirements and obligations.*

### 2.1. The Europe agreements (association agreements)

The European Union established diplomatic relations with the Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1998 and established the PHARE programme to assist Poland and Hungary in their reforms. Later the PHARE was opened to all CEE accession countries. Between 1993 and 1996 association agreements were signed with 10 countries: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Other previously associated countries are Turkey, Malta and Cyprus.

The Europe Agreements provide the basis for bilateral relationships with the aim of establishing a free trade area between the EU and the associated countries.

### 2.2. The Copenhagen criteria

The decisive step towards the accession of CEECs to the European Union was taken in 1993 at the European Council meeting in Copenhagen. Here it was decided that those associated countries that desire and are able to implement certain political and economic reforms could become members of the European Union. These conditions, known as the 'Copenhagen criteria', are:

- the existence of stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law and human rights;
- the existence of a functioning market economy;
- the ability to take on the obligations of membership.

### 2.3. The pre-accession strategy

A pre-accession strategy to help the associated countries meet the challenge of accession was adopted at the European Council meeting in Essen (1994), where the Commission was also asked to prepare a white paper on the enlargement. The pre-accession strategy was designed to help the candidate CEECs bring their political, economic and legal systems into line with those of the European Union. It comprises:

- the Europe Agreements;
- a framework for a structured dialogue between the associated countries and the EU institutions (the Accession Partnerships and the National Programmes for the Adoption of the Acquis<sup>i</sup>);
- the PHARE programme.

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<sup>i</sup> *acquis communautaire*, the entire body of EU legislation.

## **2.4. The White Paper on enlargement**

In 1995 a White Paper on enlargement was published. The aim of the white paper was to prepare a programme to help the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe meet the requirements of the internal market. In response, each associated country had to prepare a programme containing the key elements of the *acquis communautaire* that should be adopted for each sector, and the necessary structures to implement this legislation.

Among the conclusions of the white paper was the need for greater PHARE assistance, supplementary technical assistance, and the provision of information through a specific office managed by the Commission and funded by PHARE, the Technical Assistance Information Exchange Office (TAIEX) (for more information see pages 25 and 26).

## **2.5. Agenda 2000 and the European Commission's opinions**

In 1995 at its Madrid meeting the European Council invited the Commission to draw up an assessment of the candidates' applications for membership and to analyse the impact of the enlargement of the EU. The Commission's response was Agenda 2000<sup>3</sup> in which it outlined the prospects for the development of the European Union beyond the turn of the century. Agenda 2000 included four major items: the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, the reform of the Structural Funds, the new Financial Perspectives and the EU enlargement.

Agenda 2000 includes an action programme with two main objectives: to strengthen Community policies and to provide a new framework for the European Union for the period 2000–2006 with a view to enlargement.

One of the conclusions of Agenda 2000 is the need to reinforce the pre-accession strategy to bring together the different forms of EU support within a single framework. The other main conclusion was that applicants should be able to get to know the EU policies and procedures by participating in Community programmes. The first of these objectives has been developed through the Accession Partnerships.

On 26 March 1999, at the Berlin European Council meeting, the Heads of Governments or States reached a political agreement on Agenda 2000. The new financial framework for enlargement was approved, including budgets and the structural aid programme for the CEECs.

One of the tools for this new strategy is extra financial aid from the new PHARE programmes and the two new funding instruments, SAPARD for agricultural development and ISPA for infrastructure.

Along with Agenda 2000 the Commission published its Opinions on each of the applications for membership regarding their progress in meeting the requirements of the Copenhagen criteria. Following the Opinions more up to date information is provided through the Screening and the Regular Reporting in this, furthermore through the Position Papers of the candidate countries and the EU (draft) Common Positions.

## **2.6. The enlargement process**

An overall enlargement programme for all the countries wanting to join the EU was agreed at the Luxembourg European Council meeting (1997). This was based on the Commission's recommendations and included:

- the European conference, which brings together the accession countries in a multilateral forum for discussing issues of common interest;
- the accession process, which was launched in March 1998 involving the Central European accession countries and Cyprus. This includes:
  - a reinforced pre-accession strategy with two objectives: to bring together all the different EU support structures within a single framework (the Accession Partnerships) and to familiarize the applicants with EU policies and procedures;

- the accession negotiations to agree on the conditions under which each candidate will join the EU. It was decided to begin accession negotiations with six countries: (Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia);
- the screening of EC legislation and a review procedure.

## **2.7. The Accession Partnerships**

The Accession Partnerships are the key element of the new reinforced pre-accession strategy. Each candidate country has its own Accession Partnership, which mobilises all forms of Community assistance within a single framework.<sup>4</sup> Accession Partnerships are revised regularly.

The Accession Partnership framework covers in detail the priority areas in which the candidate countries must make progress in preparation for accession to the European Union. It also includes an indication of the financial assistance available from the EU to support these priorities. Financial assistance is provided through multi-annual programmes<sup>5</sup> linked to the funding from PHARE, SAPARD and ISPA. The Council sets the objectives, priorities, and conditions.

The Accession Partnerships are implemented through National Programmes for the Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA). These programmes are drawn up by the partner countries and give details on the action to be taken to meet the Copenhagen criteria and adopt the *acquis*.

The Accession Partnerships provide the framework for the multi-annual programming of assistance to the candidate countries and, therefore, are key elements in justifying the funding of nature conservation and the Natura 2000 network.

## **2.8. Regular reports**

In Agenda 2000 the Commission made a commitment to submit regular reports to the European Council on the progress made by each of the candidate countries. These reports provide the basis for decisions concerning the accession negotiations.

The first set of reports was published in 1998, and a second set in 1999. The views presented in the reports are based on several sources of information, including the candidate countries.

## **2.9. Target dates**

In 1997, following the publication of its Opinions, the Commission recommended that accession negotiations should be started with the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia.

In its regular report of 1999 on progress towards accession, the Commission recommended that from the year 2002 the European Council should be ready to decide on the accession of candidate countries fulfilling all the necessary criteria. By that time the financial framework and an institutional reform should be in place.

## 3. The Natura 2000 Network

### 3.1. Introduction

*In 1979 the European Union laid down the foundation of its nature conservation policy by adopting the Birds Directive.<sup>6</sup> The aim of this directive is the conservation of wild birds and their habitats. It calls upon EU member states to take the necessary measures to conserve birds and bird habitats and provides for the establishment of Special Protection Areas (SPAs), the maintenance and management of these habitats and the regeneration or construction of new habitats.*

Although the legal status of the SPAs has not always been incorporated in the national legislation of the different Member States and their integrity has not always been respected, several supporting statements by the European Court in Luxembourg have helped to consolidate their position. An important consequence of the process of designating SPAs is that a network of 2525 protected areas has been established throughout the Community, covering a total area of 17.3 million hectares (Natura Barometer, 17.03.2000).

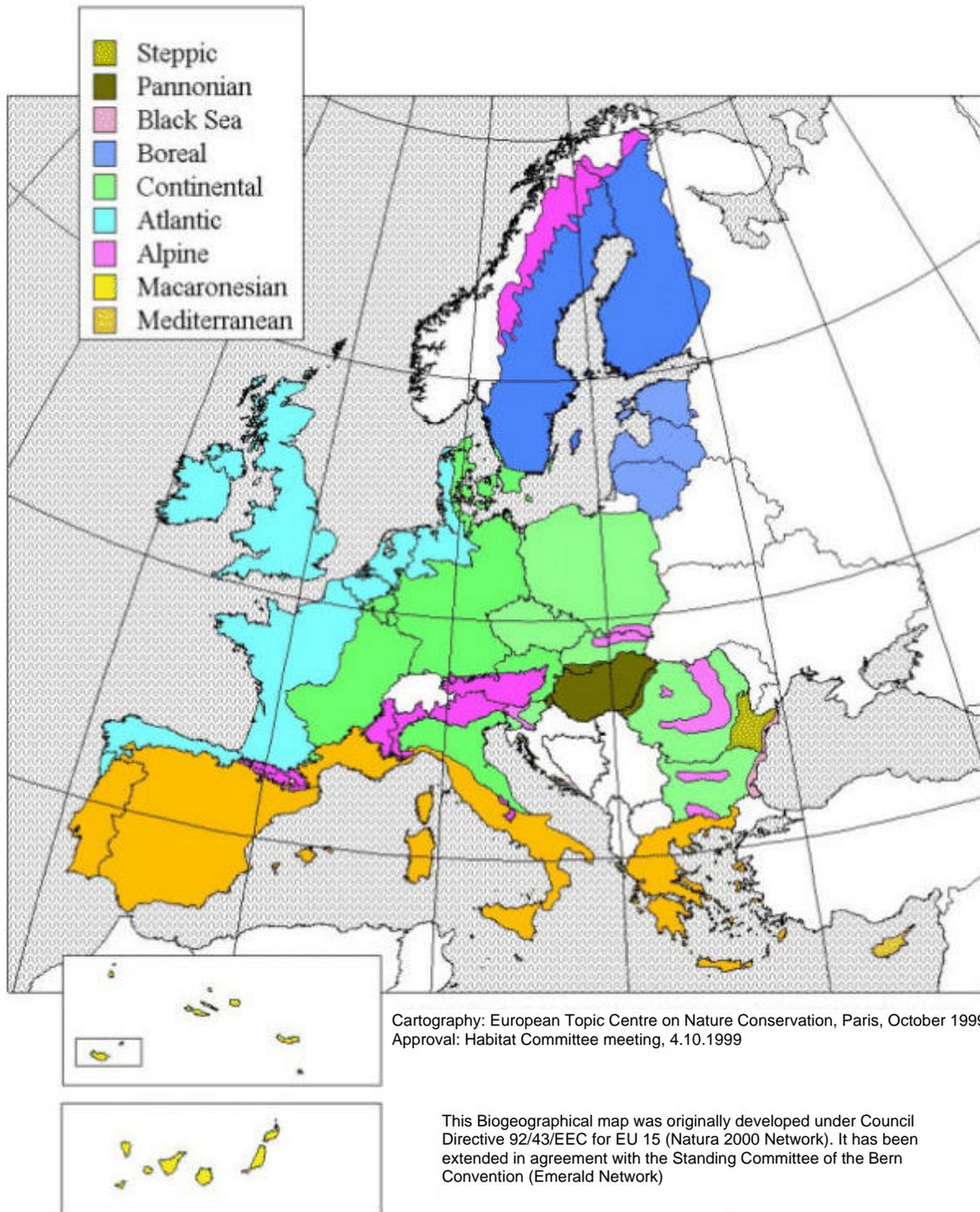
As a further step towards the conservation of biodiversity, the Habitats Directive was adopted in 1992<sup>7</sup> and today constitutes the main instrument for nature conservation in the European Union. Its main aim is to conserve biodiversity through the conservation of natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora. In order to achieve this aim one of the tools provided by the directive is the creation of a network of Special Areas for Conservation (SACs), to be known as Natura 2000. This also includes the Special Protection Areas under the Birds Directive.

The Natura 2000 network should protect a coherent body of representative habitats and species of Community interest. To aid site selection a description of the European Union's main biogeographical regions has been drawn up<sup>8</sup> (see Map 1), each with its representative habitats and species of Community interest. The enlargement of the EU will undoubtedly enrich the Union's natural heritage and biodiversity, but it will also change the relative situation of some habitats and species already included in the Habitats and Birds Directives.

Each Member State must propose a national list of Sites of Community Importance (SCI) to the Commission. The list must be a coherent representation of the habitats listed in the Habitats Directive. To do this each Member State has to make a comprehensive assessment at the national level of the habitats and species listed in the Habitats Directive, taking into account the characteristics of different biogeographical regions. The Commission, in common agreement with the Member States, will then propose a list of Sites of Community Importance according to the needs of each biogeographical region and the criteria specified in the Habitats Directive. The proposal must be approved by a committee with representatives from all the states (the Habitats Committee), which in turn will send the proposal to the European Union's Council of Ministers for final approval.

Once the Sites of Community Importance are selected each Member State must designate them as Special Areas for Conservation as soon as possible, and no later than six years after their adoption. This means that the Natura 2000 network (its requirements were set out in Draft (EU) Common Position on Environment) will be finally established once the Sites of Community Importance have been designated as SACs.

The CEECs are in the process of adopting the *acquis*. It is expected that when they accede to the EU they will have to identify the sites they propose to designate as Special Protection Areas under the Birds Directive and Sites of Community Importance under the Habitats Directive. After accession they will have another six years to designate the Special Areas for Conservation.



**Map 1:** Indicative map of biogeographic regions (Courtesy: ETC/NC 1999)

### 3.2. Obligations of Member States

The Habitats Directive establishes a common framework for action, making nature conservation a political commitment at the European Communities level and a shared

responsibility of the Member States. It also defines the obligations on Member States with regard to sites in Natura 2000. Most of these are defined in Article 6 and are interpreted according to specific guidelines.<sup>9</sup> The following issues are worth noting.

### **Obligations to conserve Natura 2000 sites**

In the areas, which comprise Natura 2000 (those which have been designated as Special Areas for Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs)), Member States must establish the necessary conservation measures to ensure the favourable state of conservation of the species and habitats (Article 6.1).

Such measures may involve the design and application of specific management systems, the integration of these management systems in other development plans (tourism, agriculture, rural development, fisheries, etc.) and the adoption of regulatory measures. These measures depend on the conservation needs of the Special Area for Conservation and should take into account the economic, social and cultural requirements and regional and local characteristics (Article 2).

### **Obligations to protect Natura 2000 sites**

The Habitats Directive also obliges Member States to protect Natura 2000 sites from significant disturbance and deterioration by adopting the necessary measures (Article 6.2). This obligation may affect a broad range of activities such as farming, hunting and tourism.

Plans or projects not directly affecting a Special Area for Conservation, but which may have significant indirect impacts should also be assessed. In the light of the conclusions of an assessment study, the competent environmental authorities will only approve plans or projects that do not affect the integrity of the Special Area for Conservation. If there is no suitable alternative to a plan or project that will have significant negative impacts, but which must be carried out due to overriding needs in the public interest, the Member State must adopt all the necessary compensatory measures to guarantee the coherence of the Natura 2000 network.

### **Obligation to monitor habitats and species**

Member States are also obliged to survey and monitor the conservation status of natural habitats and species, with particular regard to priority habitats and species. Member States and the Commission will encourage the necessary research and scientific work.

## **3.3. Opportunities presented by Natura 2000**

Human interventions and activities have in some way affected almost all the European territory, and this has led to the development of new habitats, or 'semi-natural' habitats. Their environmental value is a by-product of the interactions between the habitats and the use of the natural resources and at the same time they are largely an indispensable substitute for natural habitats that have now disappeared or become very rare. So the conservation of many semi-natural habitats depends on the maintenance of extensive arable or livestock farming and forestry practices.<sup>i</sup> Nature conservation and rural development are closely linked in these areas. Where the nature values of Special Areas for Conservation (SACs) depend on such farming practices, plans and projects for nature conservation and rural development will need to be integrated where appropriate. Areas like these are widespread all over Europe and in the CEECs,<sup>10</sup> and generally coincide with the most depressed rural zones.

The Habitats Directive encourages the maintenance of all economic activities that are not detrimental to the conservation objectives of the SAC, which in general means traditional extensive livestock and arable farming or forestry practices. In many SACs it will be necessary to maintain such practices to conserve natural values.

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<sup>i</sup> In the text the terms 'agriculture' or 'farming' also imply these activities.

Although the directives do not explicitly impose an obligation to integrate the Natura 2000 network into other sectorial policies, there is no doubt that this is the best way forward. Besides, environmental integration is itself an objective of EU environmental policy. The policy areas where integration is most desirable are agriculture, forestry, fisheries, tourism, water management, spatial planning and transport.

All in all, the obligations of the Habitats Directive must be considered within a very broad framework. For many sites within the Natura 2000 network (which must be protected according to the relevant directives) and in other areas it will be necessary to find formulas for integrating rural development and nature conservation. These formulas may be very complex, but they can also draw on diverse financial instruments. For this reason, the Natura 2000 network should not be seen as an impediment to economic activities, but as a driving force for the renovation of sustainable activities that do not harm conservation objectives.<sup>11</sup>

Another opportunity presented by Natura 2000 is that it is the only EU framework with a link to land use planning. This is of great potential when preparing cross-border cooperation projects and programmes, one of the objectives of the new structural aid programme.

### 3.4. Funding Natura 2000

Meeting the Natura 2000 obligations will obviously involve costs (Table 1). These will depend on the characteristics and needs of each Special Area for Conservation. The Habitats Directive provides for the co-funding of some of the measures required for the maintenance or restoration of priority species and habitats. Member States are asked to estimate the costs of the conservation measures needed to meet their obligations.

Once a site has been designated as a Special Area for Conservation, Member States, with the agreement of the Commission, will identify the essential measures and their costs. This information will be used to draw up an action framework of measures involving co-financing that sets clear priorities.

Funding may be more of a problem when the national territory included in the Natura 2000 network is large. However, each state has its own conservation strategy adapted to its own needs, and each site has its own needs. This broad range of needs should be met by drawing on a number of different funding instruments.

**Table 1:** Relationship between obligations under the Habitats Directive and the needs for their implementation.

Obligations	Needs and possible tools
Maintain or restore the habitats and species at favourable conservation status (Art 2.2, Art 6.1)	Assess status, functions and needs (research) Appropriate management (intervention) Legal, administrative or contractual measures (regulations)
Take into account the economic, social and cultural requirements and local and regional characteristics (Art 2.3)	Integration measures and policies to promote sustainable development (management plan, awareness, education)
Measures to prevent deterioration and disturbance (Art 6.2)	Assessment of potential risks (research, surveillance) Define carrying capacity (research) Implementation of measures (management plan, regulations)
To ensure the overall coherence of SAC and SCI (Art 6.4)	Compensatory measures Environmental Impact Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment
Surveillance of conservation status (Art 11)	Monitoring Research
Voluntary schemes	Needs and possible tools
Co-funding (Art 8)	Assessment of essential measures and their costs (management plan)

## 4. EU Financial Programmes and Instrument for the Pre-Accession Process

### 4.1. Introduction

*Socio-economic disparities between regions frustrate the general aim of economic and social cohesion within the EU. To reduce and remove these disparities the financial instruments were introduced as one of the three pillars of the Union, the other two are being the economic and monetary union and the single market. The Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund each have their own programming processes. In the case of the Structural Funds this process can be complicated and require specific administrative structures and skills (see Annex 1).*

The future accession of new countries with different levels of development makes the maintenance of this financing policy a priority. Some new instruments have recently been developed to assist CEECs in the pre-accession period and some existing programmes and funds have been opened to these countries.

From an environmental viewpoint there are always two major aspects of interest:

- a. projects supported by the funds should not harm the environment, including biodiversity (therefore environmental appraisal or impact assessment are supportive);
- b. the funds should contribute to funding projects in support of the environment, including biodiversity.

Of all the EU programmes and funds, LIFE is the only one with specific environmental objectives. It is well known in the European Union, but so far Romania has been the only CEEC to make use of it. The other instruments, which have much higher budgets, are geared mainly to promoting accession through economic and social development.

There are three important financial support schemes for the pre-accession process in 2000–2006:

- PHARE;
- ISPA;
- SAPARD.

The most important in budgetary terms is the PHARE programme, with a total budget of EUR 1500 million per year for the period 2000–2006.

The new Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession (ISPA), with a budget of EUR 1040 million per year, provides finance for environmental and transport investment projects.

The third scheme, SAPARD, was established to help the accession CEECs to overcome structural problems, providing timely assistance in the form of specific rural programmes. The scheme has an indicative allocation of EUR 520 million per year.

Two Community Initiatives are also of interest: Interreg III for cross-border, transnational and Interregional cooperation, in which CEECs partners can participate, and Leader+ for rural development promoting transnational cooperation with the CEECs.

#### **4.2. Structural Aid Programmes for CEECs**

To help prepare the accession countries for using the EU Structural and Cohesion Funds and to optimize aid, all the pre-accession funding instruments for the period 2000–2006 (PHARE, ISPA and SAPARD) have been brought together within a single framework (SPPSF). This framework to a certain extent resembles the Structural Funds programming (see also Annex 1). Moreover, SAPARD is quite similar to the EU rural development regulation and ISPA to the Cohesion Fund. These similarities will prove useful in future programming. Under SAPARD a few per cent will be spent on agri-environmental programmes. Under the EU rural development regulation it is in the order of 50 per cent. This illustrates the potential of these measures for the time after the accession.

#### **The Special Preparatory Programme for Structural Funds (SPPSF)**

This PHARE programme aims to help CEECs build their capacity to use the funds, which will become available before, during and after accession. It will concentrate on helping to design the candidate countries' structural policies and promoting and understanding of the EU structural policy through administrative cooperation.

Within the SPPSF framework, and recognizing that the economic and cohesion policy is a major priority of the *acquis*, each candidate country was asked to draw up a preliminary National Development Plan (NDP) as an annex to its National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis. This Plan will help CEECs develop the administrative structures and regional development skills required to meet EU standards.

In some respects the NDPs will be very similar to those of the EU Member States under the Structural Funds and will be compatible with the planning and programming documents used in the EU. Each country will periodically update its NDP, which in time should evolve into the National Development Plan required for EU Objective 1 regions (see also paragraph 1.2 in Annex 1).

The National Development Plan should include:

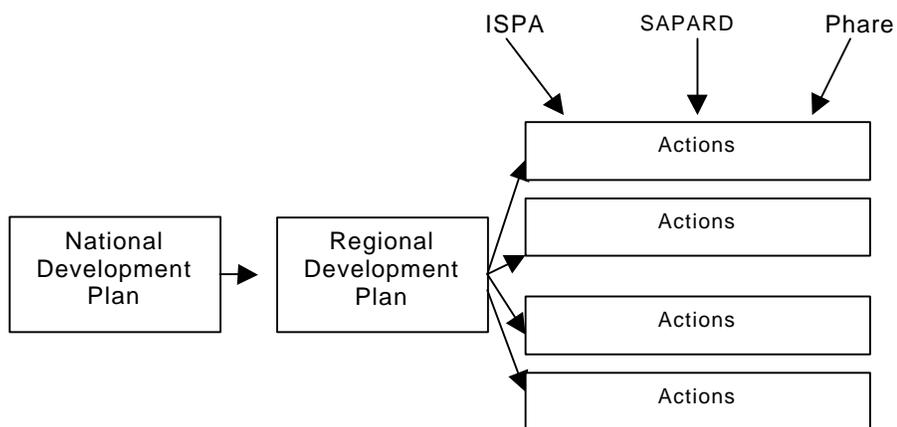
- an analysis of the candidate country's current situation, identifying the critical development gaps between national regions and the candidate country and the EU;
- a description of an appropriate strategy to attain the development priorities in the area of economic and social cohesion;
- an indication of the planned use of EU financial contribution (PHARE, ISPA, SAPARD) and where appropriate other instruments;
- the provisions for implementing the NDP;
- an environmental assessment.

These NDPs will be prepared by the responsible authorities of the country concerned and presented to the Commission. Once the NDP is approved, Community funding will take place through specific Regional Development Plans (Figure 1). These should specify:

- the priorities and their consistency with the National Development Plan;
- a description of the planned measures to implement priorities;
- an indicative financing plan, the contribution of each fund, etc.;
- a definition of the final beneficiaries;
- provisions for its implementation;
- an environmental assessment.

Support will be given only to those measures that are consistent with the objectives and priorities defined in the National Development Plan and will concentrate on the most serious structural problems. The candidate countries will be asked to select the target regions and the most important projects for EU investment support.

Funding from PHARE, ISPA and SAPARD will be subject to each programme's own regulations and procedures within the framework of this programming process.



**Figure 1:** Scheme of the intervention.

## 5. The LIFE Fund

### 5.1. Introduction

*LIFE is a specific EU financial instrument for the environment and was established in 1992. It is not one of the Structural Funds. Its main objective is to contribute to the development of Community environmental policy, in particular the integration of the environment into other policies and the implementation and updating of environmental legislation. There are two main components: nature protection (LIFE-Nature) and other actions involving the application of Community environmental policy and legislation (LIFE-Environment).*

The second application period ended in 1999 and LIFE III has come into force for the period 2000–2006 (Table 2).

### 5.2. Participation of Candidate Countries for Accession

The CEECs that decided to participate in LIFE II were admitted on the same footing as Member States, but under certain conditions established in specific decisions taken by the respective Association Councils. They also had to provide a national financial contribution to supplement the partial support from PHARE. However, by the end of LIFE II, Romania was the only applicant CEEC which had participated, and eleven national projects were selected, 7 for nature conservation and 4 for other environmental topics, receiving a total of EUR 1.9 million (Table 3).

LIFE III<sup>12</sup> is now open to the candidate CEECs according to the conditions referred to in the association agreements and the provisions decided on by the Association Council for each country concerned.

Proposals for projects to be financed by LIFE should be submitted by the national authorities of each country to the Commission, following the procedures and within the time limits established by the regulation (See Annex 4 for web site).

In cases where projects involve more than one country, the country in which the project coordinating authority or body is located shall submit the proposals.

### 5.3. LIFE III-Nature

LIFE-Nature accounts for 47 per cent of the LIFE budget. Projects must contribute to the implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives and the Natura 2000 network. Nature conservation projects developed in the accession countries should focus on:

- sites of international importance hosting habitats or species from the Habitats Directive (Annex I and II of the Directive), or habitats classified in the Bern Convention as being in need of specific conservation measures;
- sites of international importance hosting bird species from the Birds Directive (Annex I), or species classified in the Bern Convention as being in need of specific conservation measures;

- species included in Annexes II or IV of the Habitats Directive, or in Annex I of the Birds Directive, or species not present in the Community but classified in the Bern Convention as being in need of specific conservation measures.

#### **5.4. How it works**

Any legally established person or body may prepare proposals for projects. Each year the Commission publishes a guide for potential applicants on how to prepare a successful proposal and specifying the details and conditions to be met and the deadline for submissions. Proposals must be submitted to the national LIFE representatives, who send the proposals to the Commission.

The Commission evaluates the proposals in a selection procedure, which has several stages. First, proposals that do not meet the published criteria are rejected. A list of the rejected and remaining projects is sent to the competent authorities in the Member States for their comments. Second, the Commission evaluates the remaining eligible projects. A proposal for selection is submitted to the Habitats Committee,<sup>i</sup> which makes a further selection based on the quality of the projects and their ecological value and contribution to Natura 2000. In the final stage the Commission considers the views of the Habitats Committee and establishes and approves a framework decision for the funding of the projects. Each beneficiary is notified.

LIFE finances up to 50 per cent of project costs. In exceptional circumstances this can be increased to 75 per cent, as was the case for most of the Romanian projects.

#### **5.5. Eligible Activities**

LIFE-Nature compared to other EU financial programmes and instruments offers the greatest flexibility for co-funding nature conservation and has been used to fund a wide range of projects. Examples include basic ecological inventories to identify Sites of Community Importance for the further development of Natura 2000, the application of site management models and the protection and recovery of sites and species. The different actions that can be funded by LIFE can be grouped under six headings:

##### **Preparatory measures**

These include actions needed to prepare for conservation work, such as administrative preparation (permissions, meetings), negotiations with stakeholders, preparation of management plans and site surveys.

##### **Acquisition of land**

Includes purchasing and leasing land. Land acquisition must be well justified to obtain funding from LIFE.

##### **Non-recurring actions**

These are one-off actions such as removing scrub or deepening a marsh, that need to be taken before a site can be managed for nature conservation.

##### **Recurring actions**

Those actions that have to be done on a regular basis to maintain habitat conditions. LIFE often provides the initial investment (equipment, small-scale pilot projects, and long-term agreements with other land users, surveillance).

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<sup>i</sup> The Habitats Committee was set up under the Habitats Directive. It is made up of the representatives from the Member States and is chaired by the Commission.

## Raising public awareness

This involves activities designed to influence public use of a site (e.g. footpaths, observatories for birdwatching) and actions aimed to disseminate information about the project (e.g. brochures, conferences).

## Project management

All the actions needed to run the project, including administrative staff and equipment.

**Table 2:** Summary of LIFE project funding 1992–1999<sup>13</sup>

Year	LIFE I				LIFE II				
	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	
Eligible countries	EUR 12				EUR 15				EUR 15+1
Submitted projects	86	198	296	313	241	174	191		
Funded projects	35	22	47	72	63	60	85	94	
LIFE contribution (EUR million)	36.9	20.6	47.7	48.5	43.4	42.4	48	64.8	
Total LIFE contribution (EUR million)	153.7				198.6				

## The Romanian LIFE-Nature projects

The first candidate country from the CEE to receive direct financial support from the LIFE nature programme was Romania, in 1999. The Romanian LIFE-Nature projects cover a wide range of actions, from habitat restoration to species management, with different types of beneficiaries, ranging from universities and NGOs to public bodies and administrative organizations (Table 3). It is worth noting that in most cases the financial contribution from LIFE was 75 per cent of the eligible costs.

**Table 3:** Romanian LIFE nature projects<sup>14</sup>

Year	Title	Beneficiary	Budget (euros)	LIFE Contribution (%)
99	Saving Romanichthys valsanicola	Academia Romana	201,207	75
99	Management of the Piatra Craiului National Park	Forest Research and Management Institute ICAS	274,448	75
99	Conservation of natural habitats in the Bucegi National Park	Agentia de Protectie a Mediului	122,967	65
99	Conservation of the Romanian meadow viper (Orsini's viper)	Danube Delta Research and Design Institute	255,877	50
99	Management of the small island of Braila	University of Bucharest	190,008	75
99	Restoring the Satchinez marshes	Agentia de Protectie a Mediului	127,450	75
99	The Narcissus clearings of the Dumbrava Vadului reserve	Consiliul Judetean Brasov	80,664	75

## 5.6. LIFE III-Environment

LIFE-Environment also accounts for 47 per cent of the total LIFE budget. It contributes to the development of the Community environmental policy through the promotion of innovative techniques and methods for environmental integration, minimization of environmental

impacts, sound management of waste and support for new environmental actions. Financial assistance can be awarded to a maximum of 50 per cent of the eligible costs.

At first sight this instrument may not seem to be of much interest for Natura 2000, but this is not the case. It can offer interesting opportunities for nature conservation through the development of new strategies for sustainable development. This could be the case for projects falling within the category of 'demonstration projects integrating environmental considerations in land-use development and planning'.

Guidelines for demonstration projects will be established by the Commission and published in the Official Journal of the European Communities. They will promote synergy between demonstration actions and the guiding principles of Community environmental policy with a view to sustainable development.

Projects should meet the following criteria:

- provide solutions to a problem which very often arises in the Community, or is of great concern to some Member States;
- make use of innovative technologies or methods;
- set an example and improve the current situation;
- be capable of playing a demonstration role and promoting application of practices and technologies conducive to environmental protection;
- aim at developing and transferring know-how that can be used in similar situations;
- promote cooperation in the environmental field;
- promote sustainability in socio-economic activities through the direct or indirect creation of jobs.

The following costs are ineligible:

- purchase of land;
- studies not specifically addressing the objective;
- investments in major infrastructure or investments of a non-innovative structural nature, including activities already established on an industrial scale;
- research and technological development activities.

## 6. PHARE Programme

### 6.1. Introduction

*The PHARE Programme was initially established in 1989 to assist Poland and Hungary in the transition process (PHARE stands for Poland, Hungary Aid for the Reconstruction of the Economy).<sup>15</sup> It extended rapidly to the other accession countries and its budget rose. It was a demand driven programme and was adapted to the changing economies and social needs of these countries. At the beginning it focused on critical aid and support to institutional reform.*

In 1994 PHARE was identified as the main financial instrument for the pre-accession strategy. Since then, in addition to the previous types of assistance, it also provides technical assistance for the approximation of laws and standards and financial assistance for infrastructure.

Multi-annual programmes are agreed with the partner countries. These programmes are prepared as part of a pre-accession strategy and include an agreement on the strategy for implementing PHARE and an indicative budget. The National Programmes form the core of the PHARE programme and take up 78 per cent of the budget. Cross-border, multi-country and horizontal programmes have also been developed.

### 6.2. The New PHARE 2000–2006

In 1997, following the Commission's recommendations, PHARE was changed from a 'demand driven' to an 'accession driven' programme to help the candidate countries prepare to join the European Union. The programme concentrates its support on the priorities set in the Accession Partnerships (see Chapter 2.7).

During the period 2000–2006 PHARE will focus on two main priorities.<sup>16</sup> The first is institution building – improving the institutional and administrative capacity of the candidate countries to adopt and implement the *acquis*. An indicative 30 per cent of the PHARE resources will be allocated to this objective and assistance will be given for:

- implementing the *acquis communautaire* and preparing for participation in EU policies;
- fulfilling the requirements of the Copenhagen criteria.

The second priority is to support investments needed to address the *acquis*-related imbalances in the economies of the accession countries and to help bring their industry and infrastructure up to EU standards. The remaining 70 per cent of the PHARE budget will be allocated for this.

There are three groups of PHARE programmes:

- Cross-Border Cooperation programmes;
- national programmes;
- multi-country programmes.

For 2000–2006 the annual PHARE budget will be EUR 1.5 billion. Support will be divided fairly, with particular attention to the countries with the greatest needs. Multi-annual indicative national allocations set by the Commission will reflect population numbers and

GDP per capita, but also take into account the past performance and needs of individual countries and their progress with the accession process.

### **6.3. Cross-Border Cooperation Programme**

The Cross-border Cooperation Regulation<sup>17</sup> sets the rules for financing actions of a structural nature in frontier zones of the CEECs. Commonly known as PHARE-CBC, this programme promotes development among states, regions or interest groups in regions bordering the EU and between neighbouring countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The main objectives of this programme are to:

- help the border regions of the CEECs solve specific development problems;
- encourage the creation and development of cooperation networks on both sides of the border and with other EU networks.

These objectives are quite similar to those of the Interreg Community Initiative, which provides some good examples of how funds can be used for nature conservation purposes in protected areas in frontier zones.

The Cross-border Cooperation Regulation contains a list of actions that can be financed under the programme. Although none of these is specifically for nature conservation or sustainable development, some actions may be of interest for protected areas:

- Environmental protection, for example waste management, environmental management and pollution prevention dealing with problems made worse by their proximity to external borders;
- Agricultural and rural development measures, with particular attention to facilitating cross-border cooperation projects;
- Training and employment measures;
- Local economic development, including tourism;
- Local employment, education and training initiatives.

The programme states that special attention will be given to measures involving cross-border cooperation. The regional and local authorities in border areas have to work closely together and establish joint management structures to intensify cooperation between public agencies and non-profit organizations. The programme may also be used to finance the preparation of development plans for border regions, formulation of programmes and identification of projects, feasibility studies, implementation of the programmes and monitoring and/or evaluation studies.

Joint Cooperation Committees must be set up in each of the border regions to prepare multi-annual programming documents and implement the programme. The programming documents must include common development strategies, state priorities for the region as a single socio-economic and geographical entity and make provisions for joint implementation. Each year the committees will define a common set of projects in line with the provisions of the multi-annual plan. The Commission will review these programming documents and any other recommendations by the Joint Cooperation Committees and formulate a programme proposal for each border region.

### **6.4. National and multi-country programmes**

The Accession Partnerships provide the basis for the PHARE National Programmes. Each year the PHARE management committee will be informed about the multi-annual allocation and annual allocation to each country. The national and cross-border programmes will be prepared within the framework of the Accession Partnerships and included in the National Development Plan.

The multi-country programme stimulates cooperation between CEECs in areas of common interest and raises the level of communication and understanding. Under the new PHARE guidelines, multi-country programmes will only be used where the Accession Partnership identifies a priority in a sector where there is a clear justification for developing such a programme.

The number of multi-country programmes has been reduced from 25 before 1997 to 10 in 1999 and this number will be further reduced.

Some multi-country programmes:

- CREDO, promotes cross-border cooperation in regions bordering EU countries;
- Partnership programme for economic development projects;
- LIEN, for underprivileged groups and minorities;
- Consensus;
- Democracy.

### **6.5. How it works**

The PHARE National and Cross-Border Cooperation Programmes should elaborate the priorities established in the Accession Partnerships and the measures implemented by PHARE should reflect these priorities. Each year the PHARE management committee will be informed about the multi-annual allocation and the annual allocation for each country.

#### **Institution building**

The main instruments for institutional building are the Technical Assistance through TAIEX and the Twinning programme.

#### *The TAIEX (Technical Assistance Information Exchange Office)*

TAIEX is a key institution in building mechanisms to support preparations for accession. Its role is to provide information and expertise on the *acquis communautaire*, in particular the fields of environment and transport. It works as an intermediate agent in the transfer of expertise from public and semi-public bodies in the Member States to their counterparts in the Associated Countries.

Its main tasks are:

- to provide technical assistance and advice on the transposition, implementation and enforcement of the *acquis* (expert missions, seminars, workshops and study visits);
- to be an information broker for the Associated Countries by gathering and making available information on the Community *acquis*;
- to provide database tools to the Associated Countries for facilitating and monitoring the approximation progress and identify the types of technical assistance required.

Some of its services are:

- documentation;
- making available experts from an expert pool;
- training;
- exchange of officials;
- information and advice about alignment with the *acquis*;
- database services.

*Twinning Programme: an instrument for institution building (financed by PHARE)*

Twinning is an instrument to help the candidate countries (including Cyprus) to adopt the *acquis*. EU advisers from a ministry or other approved body in a Member State are seconded to work on a project in a corresponding ministry in a candidate country. Twinning will be used to support specific projects and to help build long-term relationships between existing and future Member States. It will bring the candidate countries into closer contact with the diversity of practices within the EU.

The first step in Twinning is the assessment of the needs of each candidate country in relation to the priority areas set out in the Accession Partnerships. These needs will then be turned into a preliminary project, which will be evaluated by the Commission. For approved projects, Member States will be invited to propose ways to meet their needs.

### **Investment**

PHARE investments will be addressed within the framework of the National Development Plans and will support the following objectives:

- expand activities in production sectors with the aim of diversifying the economy and developing the private sector;
- strengthen human resources with the aim of improving employment, developing partnerships, encouraging business adaptability and strengthening equal opportunities;
- develop infrastructure-related businesses, focusing on infrastructure projects directly benefiting the productive sector and local businesses.

PHARE will not support investment projects in certain areas, such as environment and agriculture, which are eligible for ISPA and SAPARD respectively.<sup>18</sup> Projects related to interregional or transnational measures (Interreg) can be financed in the CEECs by PHARE, ISPA or SAPARD programmes.

### **6.6. Opportunities for nature conservation**

The opportunities PHARE offers for nature conservation are equivalent to those offered to other sectors. Some activities from the PHARE Cross-Border Cooperation programme can be linked to nature conservation. For instance, common conservation programmes may be a part of wider local development objectives in protected areas on both sides of a border. This may be the creation of employment through nature tourism or the promotion of certain agricultural products linked with the conservation of farming practices that maintain valuable habitats or species. It is important to note that these sites do not have to share a common border, but they must be in an eligible region – a point that is of even greater significance in relation to Interreg, which requires the participation of EU Member States.

It should be noted that only EU support is mentioned here, however there is also bilateral support from individual Member States.

Other programmes may be of interest in a number of ways. For example, the Twinning programme could be used to draw upon EU experts to assess and support the development of Natura 2000 and any other assistance within the framework of the National Programmes.

**Box 1. Example: Impact assessment of the Birds and Habitats Directives in Hungary (1999)**

The aim of the project was to raise the capacity of the environment ministry to transpose and implement both directives, and to assess the financial and institutional needs.

The project was undertaken by a Hungarian private company, supported by two external consultants, from the UK and from Spain, with relevant experience in their countries.

The project was included in the European Integration Programme, a programme to aid the translation of the *acquis* into Hungarian legislation and to inform government officials more fully about EU affairs.

**Box 2. Example: The Europarc expertise exchange programme (1998–2000)<sup>19</sup>**

The overall objective of the expertise exchange programme was to enhance sustainable development, nature conservation and biodiversity in PHARE countries. It received EUR 1.5 million for the period 1997–2000 from the PHARE Multi-country Environment Programme.

Its goals are:

- enhance the management of protected areas for the conservation of natural landscapes;
- enlarge and strengthen the pan-European network of protected areas by establishing sustainable links between areas in the EU and CEECs;
- work towards the harmonization of nature conservation standards in the PHARE countries and the EU;
- raise public awareness in Central and Eastern European countries;
- establish protected areas as pilot areas for sustainable development.

A large number of training courses, workshops and exchanges were organized on environmental education, integrated management, planning of visitors' facilities, guidelines for sustainable activities in cultural landscapes and ecotourism. Cooperation agreements were signed and joint activities are now underway between different protected areas in the EU and CEE (France and Poland, Slovakia and UK) and between CEE sites (in Hungary and Slovakia).

## 7. SAPARD

### 7.1. Introduction

*The Special Action Programme for Pre-accession Aid for Agriculture and Rural Development (SAPARD)<sup>20</sup> is a new fund for the accession countries of Central and Eastern Europe and has its origins in the recommendations of Agenda 2000. Its purpose is to help the CEECs overcome structural problems by providing timely assistance in the form of specific rural programmes.*

The SAPARD Regulation is very similar to the new EU Rural Development Regulation.<sup>21</sup> It covers a wide range of measures to be developed by each Member State, most of which have been in force for many years. They include the measures to promote agricultural production methods that are compatible with environmental protection and landscape conservation, known as 'agri-environmental' measures. By familiarizing CEECs with EU rural development policy, SAPARD is an important preparation for the post-accession period.

### 7.2. SAPARD objectives

The main objectives of SAPARD are:

- to support agricultural and rural development in the CEE applicant countries during the pre-accession period;
- to solve specific priority problems for the sustainable adjustment of the agricultural sector and the rural areas;
- to help implement the common agricultural policy.

To achieve these objectives the SAPARD Regulation identifies a list of priorities to be included in the plan according to a set of rules to be established by a further regulation.<sup>22</sup>

The total indicative budget allocation to SAPARD is EUR 520 million per year for the period 2000–2007 (see Table 4). Community financing may contribute up to 75 per cent of total public expenditure for each measure, and in certain cases may cover 100 per cent of the costs.

**Table 4:** SAPARD: annual indicative budget allocations (thousand Euros at constant 1999 prices)<sup>23</sup>

Bulgaria	52,124
Czech Republic	22,063
Estonia	12,137
Hungary	38,054
Lithuania	29,829
Latvia	21,848
Poland	168,683
Romania	150,636
Slovenia	6,337
Slovakia	18,289
<b>Total</b>	<b>520,000</b>

### **7.3. How it works**

The competent authorities in each applicant country have to prepare a plan at the most appropriate geographical level, depending on the size of the country and its needs. The plans may cover periods of up to seven years (2000–2006).

Community support will be subject to the conditions set out in each country's Accession Partnership Programme, and in all cases the plan must prioritize measures designed to improve market efficiency, quality and health standards, and to maintain jobs and create new employment opportunities in rural areas.

The plans must contain the information specified in the regulation. The main requirements are:

- a quantified description of the present situation. This is to reveal disparities, shortcomings and potentials for development and will provide basic information for the future monitoring and evaluation of the plan;
- a description of the proposed strategy, its objectives, priorities and geographical scope;
- an assessment of the expected economic, environmental and social impact;
- financial information, summarising the resources for each priority and an indicative financial profile for each source of funding, year by year, covered by the programme;
- a description of the measures contemplated for implementing the plans. This should include a definition of the final beneficiaries of each action, aid schemes and the information necessary for the application of the competition rules;
- provisions ensuring the implementation of the programme, including monitoring and evaluation.

The plans were submitted to the Commission in December 1999. The Commission evaluates the plans using the following criteria:

- consistency with the regulation;
- the commitments made in the Accession Partnership;
- the principles of the National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis;
- the provisions of the Europe Agreements;
- the objectives of the common agricultural policy.

Once the programme is approved a monitoring committee will be responsible for the follow up and monitoring. The management of the SAPARD programmes will be completely decentralized. Each candidate country will have to establish a SAPARD agency to ensure the proper use and management of the programme.

### **7.4. Opportunities for nature conservation**

The SAPARD Regulation identifies a list of priorities that can be included in the plan, most of them not directly related to nature conservation. However, from an integration point of view, SAPARD offers a wide variety of measures of interest for nature conservation (see Table 5). These measures can be used to generate income in protected areas from tourism or the sale of quality products from sustainable farming systems that help maintain certain habitats (Box 4 and Box 6).

**Table 5:** SAPARD's relevant priorities for nature conservation

<b>SAPARD priorities</b>	<b>Relevance to nature conservation</b>
Investment in agricultural holdings	Farm improvement to prevent pollution in sensitive areas (e.g. wetlands)
Improving processing and marketing	Marketing of sustainably produced products from protected areas
Improving structures for quality control in the interest of food quality and consumer protection	Improving quality of sustainably produced products from protected areas
Agricultural production methods to protect the environment and landscape	Extensive farming, reduction of agricultural inputs, reducing erosion.
Development and diversification of economic activities	Promotion of nature tourism Valorization of protected areas through tourism
Renovation and development of villages and protection and conservation of the rural heritage	Conservation of cultural landscapes Conservation of farming systems with natural values
Improving training	Education on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agricultural production methods to protect the environment and landscape</li> <li>- Quality products linked to protected areas</li> </ul>
Forestry, including afforestation for agricultural areas	Promotion of native species Improvement of forests Afforestation of sensible sites Erosion prevention
Technical assistance on the above-mentioned measures	

The agri-environmental measures are one of the most popular sets of measures in the SAPARD Regulation. They are a wide variety of measures to promote agricultural production methods that protect the environment and the landscape (Box 3). They offer a range of opportunities for managing and conserving nature and Natura 2000 sites by reducing the effects of intensive agriculture, maintaining extensive farming systems or promoting certain management practices.

Four broad categories of measures are of interest for Natura 2000:

- non-ecological farming with environmental benefits  
Reducing the use of fertilisers, water and pesticides, maintaining borders between arable fields and conserving genetic resources, reducing livestock numbers, and so on, can alleviate the negative impacts of intensive agriculture. The aim is to recover lost biodiversity;
- maintenance of extensive land management systems  
These measures include maintaining traditional extensive farming systems, fostering low livestock densities, maintaining low fertiliser levels, water and pesticide consumption, pastures, and so on. In such cases, the aid helps conserve biodiversity and prevent the abandonment of land in marginal zones;
- managing set-aside land  
This aims to recover and restore habitats by planting species of interest, permanently flooding land and other measures. These contracts should have a minimum duration;
- training and demonstration projects  
This group of actions is useful for training farmers in the most appropriate techniques and practices, raising their awareness of nature conservation issues and carrying out demonstration and experimental projects.

However, the regulation on the implementation of SAPARD restricts the agri-environmental schemes to pilot programmes. Practical experience at both administrative and farm levels will be gained before wider implementation of the schemes. It is expected that 5–6 per cent of the SAPARD budget will be devoted to agri-environmental measures. These pilot programmes could have an important effect on the approaches taken in future Natura 2000 sites.

**Box 3. Agri-environmental schemes implemented in the EU that could be used in pilot schemes**

- promoting farming practices that reduce the polluting effects of agriculture. For example, using less fertiliser and pesticides, and introducing or maintaining biological farming methods;
- making crop and livestock production more extensive; conversion of herbaceous crops into extensive grazing land;
- reducing livestock densities;
- using other practices that are compatible with the requirements of environmental protection and the conservation of natural resources, natural areas and the landscape;
- rearing endangered local breeds of animals;
- cultivating plant varieties threatened by genetic erosion;
- maintaining abandoned farmland or forested land;
- setting aside farmland for environmental purposes, especially as reserves, biotopes or protected areas, and for water protection;
- managing land for public access and leisure;
- measures to improve the training of farmers in farming methods that are compatible with environmental protection.

The implications of SAPARD for Natura 2000, therefore, depend on how the competent authorities design the programmes. The priorities mentioned in the regulation are guidelines only. Two important aspects require further consideration and development:

- definition of each measure: Each priority needs to be developed according to the implementation regulation, which in many cases makes reference to the Rural Development Regulation. This is a key issue because how the measures are defined determines whether they can be useful for Natura 2000 or not. For example, the premiums can be used to focus the measures on certain objectives and priorities;
- geographical scope: Certain measures can be implemented within specific areas. For example, in a region with a groundwater eutrophication problem priority can be given to measures preventing pollution by manure.

The afforestation measures are a good example. Attaching a higher premium to the most ecologically important species will promote their uptake – an environmental objective. Afforestation could also be restricted to certain areas and the use of permitted species suited to local ecological conditions. In other areas, for example with important open habitats, afforestation may be prohibited.

#### **Box 4. Example: North York Moorland Regeneration Programme<sup>i</sup>**

This programme aims to improve the management of the special habitats of the North York Moors National Park, an inhabited nature park. The Park contains 50,000 ha of heather moorland, which is traditionally maintained by extensive grazing and management for grouse hunting.

In recent decades this habitat has suffered a decline in active management due to a combination of depressed farm incomes and labour shortages. This has led to habitat changes (reduction in heather coverage, spread of bracken) and to an increased risk of diseases associated with sheep ticks, parasites which thrive in unmanaged vegetation.

The Moorland Regeneration Programme was established to reverse the decline in management and the threat to wildlife. It aims to address this decline by identifying the links between all the factors: sheep farming, grouse hunting, good moorland management, landscape and nature conservation, and tourism.

The programme is led by a partnership of interested individuals and organizations including farmers, landowners, environmental agencies and NGOs. Its objectives are:

- reduce the high death rates of lambs and grouse chicks caused largely by tick-related diseases, and thereby improve the health and quality of lambs and grouse which can be marketed from the moors; which will in turn:
- enhance the economic value of the moorland, increase employment, safeguard land-based businesses;
- enhance and sustain a high nature value environment in which the wildlife, human culture and the landscape are secured for the future.

These aims are to be achieved in two stages. The first offers farmers and landowners financial aid to improve the quality of the moorland vegetation and the health and quality of sheep and grouse. The second provides commercial incentives to continue moorland management after the financial aid stops by improving marketing opportunities for both grouse and sheep.

As a consequence, lamb survival rates have increased by 10 per cent, the yield of grouse has increased by 11 per cent, new jobs have been created and many people have been helped to maintain their incomes.

These actions were supported by EAGGF funds covering 36 per cent of the total budget. Similar actions could be developed under SAPARD.

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<sup>i</sup> Case study by Janet Dwyer for the project 'EU Structural Funds 2000-2006: conserving nature, creating jobs'

## 8. ISPA

### 8.1. Introduction

*Together with SAPARD, Agenda 2000 envisaged the creation of an Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-accession (ISPA).<sup>24</sup> Its main objective is to prepare the CEE candidate countries for introduction of the EU environmental, transport and communications standards required for accession. Investments in both transport and environment should be balanced, and the scope of ISPA is very similar to the Cohesion Fund, which has been operating in some EU Member States since 1992.*

Projects are selected and approved on the basis of national programmes for transport or the environment included in the Accession Partnerships.

ISPA will have a budget of EUR 1,040 million per year for the period 2000–2006, to be divided equally between environmental and transport infrastructure projects. It could be discussed to what extent environmental infrastructure eligible under ISPA, should also cover ecological infrastructure in the case of the Natura 2000 network.

The Commission decides on the budgets to be allocated to the CEECs using criteria based on population numbers, GDP and land surface area per capita (Table 5). ISPA assistance will be up to 75 per cent of eligible public expenditure, but in exceptional cases may be as high as 85 per cent. The combined assistance under ISPA and other Community aid for a measure must not exceed 90 per cent of the total expenditure on that measure.

**Table 5:** Indicative ISPA funding allocation (% of total budget, EUR 1,040 million)<sup>25</sup>

Bulgaria	8.0–2.0
Czech Republic	5.5–8.0
Estonia	2.0–3.5
Hungary	7.0–10.0
Lithuania	4.0–6.0
Latvia	3.5–5.5
Poland	30.0–37.0
Romania	20.0–26.0
Slovenia	1.0–2.0
Slovakia	3.5–5.5

#### **Environmental objectives**

Environmental measures to be financed by ISPA must help the candidate countries to comply with the requirements of Community environmental laws and with the objectives of the Accession Partnerships.

In principle, investments for nature conservation in the Natura 2000 network may be eligible if they are considered to be a national priority in the Accession Partnerships (Box 5). Anyway, it is expected that most of ISPA will target the main environmental problems in the CEECs: water pollution, waste management and air pollution.

## 8.2. How it works

Following the pattern of the Cohesion Fund, ISPA funding will be on a project-by-project basis. Three main conditions can be identified:

- located in the same area or corridor;
- objective defined within an overall plan for the area or corridor;
- supervised by a single body responsible for coordination and monitoring.

Eligible projects must be of a high quality and on a sufficient scale to have a significant impact. In principle, the total cost of each measure shall not be less than EUR 5 million, but may be less in cases where justified by specific circumstances.

The benefiting countries must submit applications for assistance to the Commission. These should include:

- information on the project (body responsible for implementation, nature and description of the measure, cost and location, timetable, environmental assessment, cost-benefit analysis, effects on employment, etc.);
- all relevant information proving that the measures comply with the regulation and in particular that the resources deployed deliver proportional economic and social benefits in the medium term.

Before approving a measure the Commission will assess its compliance with the criteria set out in the regulation. These include:

- their economic and social benefits;
- arrangements for ensuring effective management of the measures;
- the priorities established by the Accession Partnerships for the areas of intervention;
- their contribution to the implementation of Community environmental policy;
- an appropriate balance between the environment and transport aid.

If a measure is approved for co-funding, the Commission will determine the amount of financial assistance and draw up a financing plan with all the provisions and conditions necessary for the implementation of the measure. The CEECs will have to establish management and control systems to ensure the proper implementation of this assistance.

## 8.3. Opportunities for Natura 2000

There are not many opportunities to finance nature conservation from ISPA because it is mainly focused on projects relating to waste, water and air. These are highly costly and are an environmental priority in these countries. Another handicap is that the minimum budget required for eligibility is EUR 5 million.

Although very similar constraints apply to the Cohesion Fund, some examples of the possibilities it can offer nature conservation can be found in EU Member States (Box 5). Although these are an exception, the opportunities can be expanded if project descriptions clearly state their contribution to the creation of new employment and the implementation of Natura 2000, which is part of the *acquis*.

Examples include projects that raise the capacity of various protected areas to receive visitors (information and visitor centres, access roads, footpaths, habitat restoration, etc). These are very costly but important in raising the value of these areas for income generation and employment creation. ISPA can also be used to adapt the transport infrastructure to minimize barrier effects on certain species.

### **Box 5. Example: adaptation and conservation of the National Park Network (Spain)<sup>i</sup>**

The Spanish National Park Network is becoming an important tourism asset. The number of visitors to these areas is increasing every year and reached 8 million in 1997. Although the public use of these protected areas is desirable, it can create environmental problems if adequate precautions are not taken.

In 1993 the Cohesion Fund approved two projects submitted by Spain for the National Park Network.<sup>ii</sup> The first of these projects, 'Adaptation of systems of public use of National Parks', was carried out between 1993 and 1995 and had a total budget of 16.5 MECU. Its objective was to create suitable new infrastructure, or improve and expand existing infrastructure, and to provide the capacity to receive the growing number of visitors to National Parks – which on occasions has led to the degradation of habitats and impacts on species. Visitor centres and bird watching facilities have been created in each National Park and access to the parks improved.

The second project, 'Restoration of natural resources in National Parks', was carried out during the same period and had a total budget of 5.4 MECU. This funding was used to restore degraded areas and carry out fire prevention works and undertake activities for the recovery of threatened species. For example, in the National Park of Doñana some funds were used to restore degraded areas and provide habitat management for the prevention of forest fires, and the programme included several actions from the Pardel Lynx (*Lynx pardina*) recovery plan, such as fencing and wildlife tunnels under roads.

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<sup>i</sup> Case study by Carlos Sunyer for the project 'Financial instruments for the Natura 2000 network and nature conservation'.

<sup>ii</sup> At that time the National Park Network comprized nine parks, eight of which are SPAs under the Birds Directive. All of them will be designated SACs, thus forming part of the Natura 2000 network.

## 9. The Community Initiatives

### 9.1. Introduction

*The European Commission considers that the national programmes do not cover some key aspects of the economic and social cohesion of the EU well enough. In order to fill these gaps a small percentage of the Structural Funds budget is reserved for the development of programmes initiated by the Commission called Community Initiatives.*

The Commission identifies a series of priority issues and proposes them to the Council of Ministers. In Agenda 2000 the Commission proposed to reduce the 13 Community Initiatives to just three. This was later increased to four: Urban, Interreg III, Leader+ and Equal (Table 6). Some existing programmes have changes, such as the inclusion of Natura 2000 as a priority.

**Table 6:** Objectives of the new Community Initiatives 2000–2006

Objective	Initiative
Cross-border and interregional development and cooperation	Interreg-III
Rural development	Leader+
Employment, human resources	Equal
Depressed urban neighbourhoods	Urban

The Commission has adopted certain indicative measures for the implementation of each initiative. Each Member State has to develop a programme for each initiative, taking into account the regulations, and submit them to the Commission for approval.

During the programming period 1994–1999 several Community Initiatives were used for various aspects of nature conservation. Once again, this demonstrates that the real possibilities for using these instruments for nature conservation depends more on the imagination of the applicants than on the regulations.

Out of the new Community Initiatives for the period 2000–2006, Interreg III and Leader+ are the most interesting for the CEE accession countries. However, it must be said that their potential is quite limited because these instruments are geared to the current EU Member States.

The four Initiatives will receive an allocation of 5.35 per cent of the Structural Fund credits for the period 2000–2006.

### 9.2. Interreg III

Border areas tend to be isolated. The presence of political borders divides border communities from each other economically, socially and culturally. They were largely ignored by national policies and as result their economies have become peripheral to their national economies. The overall aim of Interreg is to remove any barriers that national borders have placed in the way of the balanced development and integration of the European territory.

The new Interreg III initiative,<sup>26</sup> funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), has three components:

- section A concerns cross-border cooperation – the promotion of integrated regional development between bordering regions;
- section B concentrates on transnational cooperation contributing to an integrated and harmonious territory across the European Union;
- section C aims to reinforce interregional cooperation and so improve the policies and techniques of interregional economic development.

### Transnational cooperation

Of the three components, Section B offers possibilities to the CEECs. Its objective is to promote transnational cooperation between national, regional and local authorities that contributes to a higher degree of territorial integration across the EU Programmes and operations should contribute to a better territorial integration with candidate CEECs.

Eligible areas are grouped into regions and two of these include CEECs: the Baltic Sea, and the Central and Danube Space (see maps below). Particular attention will be given to the external borders of the Community from the perspective of enlargement.



Interreg 3B eligible areas: Baltic Sea



Centre, Adriatic and Danube Space

(Source: Inforegio web site<sup>27</sup>)

Proposals under this component should build on the experiences of Interreg II C and take into account the Community policy priorities, such as the recommendations for territorial development in the European Spatial Development Perspective.

Support may be requested to:

- elaborate operational spatial development strategies promoting polycentric and sustainable development;
- promote efficient and sustainable transport systems and improve access to the information society;
- promote the environment and the good management of cultural heritage and of natural resources. This includes:

- contributing to the development of the Natura 2000, linking protected sites;
- rehabilitation of cultural landscapes, including areas threatened or degraded by agricultural abandonment;
- innovative promotion of natural and cultural assets in rural regions as potential for development of sustainable tourism;
- concerted management of coastal waters;
- promote the integration of maritime regions and insular regions;
- promote the integrated cooperation of the outermost regions.

### **How it works**

Community Initiative Programmes for Interreg should be drawn up for each of its components. Joint cross-border committees representing a wide partnership, including not only institutional but also economic and social partners must prepare them. Proposals should be based on a truly joint strategy, and measures to be implemented should have a clear cross-border element.

When including actions involving CEECs, the Community Initiative Programme should ensure coordination with the other financial instruments concerned. Measures to be developed within the Community are funded by the European Regional Development Fund, whereas the pre-accession instruments (PHARE-CBC, ISPA, etc.) will fund operations undertaken in CEECs.

The content of Community Initiative Programmes will be very similar to that of Structural Fund single programming documents. They should include:

- an ex ante evaluation, including the expected impact on the environment;
- an account of the process of joint programming;
- the joint strategy and priorities for the development of the geographical area covered by the Community Initiative Programme;
- a description by subprogramme of the planned measures to implement the priorities;
- a financing plan;
- the provisions for its implementation.

### **Opportunities for nature conservation**

Because of the historical isolation of border areas they have generally been subjected to fewer impacts from development policies. They tend, therefore, to contain interesting natural heritage and nature conservation values, and protected areas often cover parts of neighbouring countries. This situation provides a very good opportunity for the development of Interreg projects for the creation of transnational protected areas, the development the Natura 2000 network or joint sustainable development programmes (Box 6).

Although Interreg shares some attributes with PHARE-CBC, it is potentially more useful because it includes as a specific measure the linking of protected sites in the Natura 2000 network. Previous Interreg II projects have demonstrated its great potential in this respect.

### **Box 6. Example: Cross-Border ‘Meadow Breeding Birds’ programme<sup>i</sup>**

This project is a joint venture between Austria and Germany. The aim was the revival and protection of the population of meadow breeding birds in a border site. The first part of the project concerns the organization and implementation of the project, including the development of landscape management plans. Cross-border networking and linking of measures and information is an important feature of the project.

Actions included in the programme are:

- awareness raising on the value of the areas and the nature protection work;
- organizing a travelling exhibition to inform the public in the regions concerned about the problems of meadow bird populations;
- site visits to the landowners concerned to demonstrate the benefits of the project;
- mapping for planning;
- the maintenance of land under less intensive agriculture management.

The first phase had a total budget per country of EUR 30,435; Interreg II contributed 50 per cent of the budget.

The second phase of the study is to establish adequate land management through voluntary agreements with farmers (agri-environmental measures). These measures include:

- preservation and re-establishment of scattered meadows;
- fixing mowing times;
- removal of encroaching scrub;
- raising water levels.

This phase was funded by agri-environmental schemes, similar to those included in SAPARD.

### **9.3. Leader+**

This Community Initiative aims to promote rural development through original and innovative strategies for sustainable development. A special feature of Leader+ is its bottom-up approach, which encourages people in rural areas to prepare the strategies themselves. An important component of the new Leader+ is the cooperation between rural areas in the EU and in other countries.<sup>28</sup>

Activities supported by Leader should be structured around three actions:

- Action 1. Integrated territorial development strategies

Supports development strategies proposed by local action groups (LAGs). One of the priorities for the Commission is to enhance the sites of community interest under Natura 2000. Any rural territory within the EU is in principle eligible.

- Action 2. Support for cooperation between rural territories

Encourages and supports cooperation between rural territories. Activities must be grouped along thematic guidelines defined by the LAGs in their development strategies (prepared in Action 1). Cooperation must include the implementation of a joint project, if possible supported by a common structure. This action is to be developed in the EU territories selected for Action 1. However, where a territory selected under Leader+ enters into a cooperation project with an area outside the Community, but organized along the lines of a Leader project, associated expenditure related to the Leader+ area will be eligible.

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<sup>i</sup> Case study by Manfred Pils for the project ‘EU Structural Funds 2000-2006: conserving nature, creating jobs’.

- **Action 3. Networking**

The exchange of experiences and know-how is a priority of Leader+. This action aims to promote networking within EU rural areas, whether or not they are beneficiaries under the initiative. The network organization unit can provide technical assistance for transnational cooperation under Action 2.

### **How it works**

Each Member State has to submit their proposed Leader+ programme to the Commission. This should be similar in content to the single programming documents and must describe the strengths, weaknesses and potentials of the area where the programme will run and the number of LAGs intending to take part. If the Commission approves the programme the Member State issues a call for strategy proposals from LAGs.

Local action groups should contain a balanced and representative selection of local partners from the different socio-economic sectors in the territory concerned. These groups prepare a development strategy under Action 1 in response to the call for proposals. The strategy should take an integrated approach based on the interaction of different actors or sectors and centred on a strong topic relevant to their territory. These topics should relate to:

- using new know-how and new technologies to make products and services in rural areas more competitive;
- improving the quality of life in rural areas;
- adding value to local products;
- making the best use of natural and cultural resources.

The LAGs will be responsible for the administration and implementation of approved projects and so they must have the capacity to administer public funds.

Requests can be made to a LAG for co-funding of local initiatives satisfying the Leader+ requirements and falling within the area covered by the LAG proposal.

### **Opportunities for nature conservation**

Because Leader is based on local initiatives within a territory, any nature conservation objectives have to be very clear if an overall positive impact on nature conservation is to be obtained. This will generally be related to the exploitation of goods and services from protected areas: for example nature tourism initiatives, cooperatives to manage visitors in protected areas, promotion of local products, guides and brochures. (Box 7).

### **Box 7. Example: The Rhone Biosphere Reserve<sup>i</sup>**

The Rhone Biosphere Reserve is a protected area covering 300,000 ha. It is a diverse cultivated landscape, which supports a wide range of wild species. Agriculture is prohibited in a core area covering 2.7 per cent of the reserve, environmentally friendly land uses are permitted on 40 per cent of the area, and the remainder is a development zone where ecologically sustainable economic activities are allowed.

In recent years the rate of land abandonment has increased. The use of lowlands has decreased, 60 per cent of the milk quota has been lost and afforestation threatens the abandoned grasslands, which will affect the cultural landscape and wildlife.

Between 1991 and 1994 an operational plan was developed for integrated rural development in the reserve. Its main objectives were:

- to promote nature conservation;
- to promote environmentally sensitive regional development;
- to secure and create jobs.

In combining nature protection and employment measures the emphasis was on alternative extensive use of fallow grasslands and the creation of nature tourism. Other measures included the promotion of regional agricultural products.

Leader is one of the main sources for funding the plan. Several interest groups have been created and are developing nature conservation related activities. These include the direct marketing of regional and organic products, nature conservation and care of the countryside, marketing hay to encourage the maintenance of meadow species, and ecotourism.

For the period 1991–1998 the socio-economic results of the Leader programme were:

- 2000 part-time jobs retained;
- 30 to 50 new jobs created each year;
- a rise from 3 per cent to 10 per cent in the share of regional products in the total output of the region's catering industry, boosting the demand for environmentally sensitive farming methods.

Leader has improved the economic viability of farming in the Reserve through a variety of approaches. The integrated and participative approach taken throughout the project has raised the degree of local acceptance of nature conservation in the Rhone reserve. Local people regard the Reserve as a driving force for sustainable development in the area, with nature conservation as an integral part of the overall development strategy.

### **9.4. The Leonardo Programme**

Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci, Youth and Tempus are the Community's main instruments for helping education centres and companies adapt to changes in society and offer a wide range of possibilities for education and training. Like other EU funding instruments, they have been recently renewed for the 2000–2006 period. Some now offer CEECs the opportunity to participate, but the most interesting for Natura 2000 is the Leonardo da Vinci programme.<sup>29</sup>

The Leonardo da Vinci programme aims to promote a European area of cooperation in the field of education and vocational training through transnational cooperation. Its objectives are to:

- improve the skills and competencies of people in initial vocational training;

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<sup>i</sup> Case study by Jörg Hensiek in the project 'EU Structural Funds 2000–2006: conserving nature, creating jobs.

- improve the quality of, and access to, continuing vocational training and the life-long acquisition of skills;
- promote and reinforce the contribution of vocational training to the process of innovation;
- support the development of transnational cooperation networks to facilitate the exchange of experience and good practice.

The new Leonardo programme is open to the 11 pre-accession countries (the 10 associated countries of Central and East Europe and Cyprus).

This programme can be used to train people in managing protected areas. A good example for this is the case of the Peneda Gêres National Park in Portugal (see next chapter for examples).

# 10. Examples of integrated use of structural funds

## 10.1. Introduction

*This chapter contains examples from two protected areas of how the different EU financial instruments can be used for nature conservation. In both examples most of the funding came from rural development instruments adapted for sustainable development.*

Most of these examples could be reproduced in the accession countries with the newly available funds. In Peneda Gêres some funding was obtained from the Cohesion Fund (similar to ISPA).

## 10.2. The National Park of Peneda Gêres (Portugal)<sup>i</sup>

The National Park of Peneda Gêres in the north of Portugal bordering Spain covers an area of 71,422 hectares. This is a rural area with 115 settlements and a total of 9099 inhabitants. The population depends on agriculture as the main activity, followed by tourism generated by the National Park. The area receives nearly one million visitors each year. Only 7 per cent of the area belongs to the state; the rest is private property.

The conservation of the main ecosystems of the Peneda-Gêres National Park relies on traditional farming practices, which are gradually disappearing. To maintain these practices the National Park authorities have coordinated the use of different financial instruments to achieve their nature conservation objectives. It should be stressed that most of these instruments, like SAPARD, were not intended specifically for nature conservation but for rural development.

This variety of funding instruments could be used because the Park management understood that nature conservation in the area has to be supported by environmentally friendly social and economic development and that efforts should be made to integrate nature conservation into other sectors. The Park management board now consists of representatives of nearly a dozen important institutions, such as the Association for Forestry Development, the Agrarian Institute of the North of Portugal, the Professional School of Alto Minho Interior, Quality North (Certification Institute of Qualification of Origin), Leader local action groups, the Regional Agrarian Council, Working Group Galicia (Spain) – North of Portugal, and the Association for the Development of the Regions on the National Park (ADERE). This active policy of integration has enabled the Park to benefit from a wide range of projects, and the Park itself has become a driving force for rural development.

The following funding instruments were used.

### **EAGGF Operational Programmes**

The EAGGF Operational Programmes used in the Park include measures which could be implemented with SAPARD.

### **Operational Programme ‘Support to Rural Development’**

This programme aims to explore the local development potentials of the internal market. One of the actions in the programme is ‘Support to the development of rural nuclei’, which

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<sup>i</sup> Case study based on information from Carlos Sunyer in the project ‘EU Structural Funds 2000–2006: conserving nature, creating jobs’.

aims to enhance rural economies through general activities in selected rural centres. The programme is implemented by two councils in the National Park and supports sustainable development by promoting local livestock breeds, improving the conditions for breeding practices and conserving traditional product practices.

### **Operational Programme 'Modernization of the Economic Fabric'**

This programme includes a measure to support the modernization of farming structures, assist young farmers, improve forestry, marketing, research, etc. It supports some of the research programmes being run in the National Park, including a study about the effects of wolves on the behaviour of a local breed of ponies (EUR 12,820); a multidisciplinary study of a specific sector of the Park to assess the relationship between an increase in farmers' incomes and sustainable development (EUR 20,512), and selection and training of local dog breeds to protect livestock against wolf attacks (EUR 153,846).

### **Agri-environmental schemes**

An agri-environmental scheme has recently been developed in the park and many farmers are participating in the programme.

### **Interreg**

There are three Interreg projects running in the Park. The first is an Interreg programme managed by the Ministry of Agriculture to study the impact of brucellosis on wildlife and livestock. The second, a project managed by an association for rural development (ADERE), is looking for ways to exploit the built heritage to pay for the preservation of the landscape. The third project is managed by the Spanish Natural Park of Baixa Limia-Serra do Xurés, which shares a 67 kilometre border with Peneda Gêres National Park, and includes some interesting examples of cross-border cooperation. Its aims include the promotion of a more coordinated ecosystem management on both sides of the border, through regulations for example, and sharing of the coordination of information for posters and brochures.

### **Leader**

Three local action groups manage the Leader projects affecting the Park and the Park authorities are involved in some of them. These projects have promoted rural tourism, local products and the maintenance of the cultural landscape – actions with a high indirect impact on nature conservation.

### **Cohesion Fund (similar to ISPA)**

In Spain and Portugal some afforestation projects have received support from the Cohesion Fund. The fight against erosion is an environmental priority: 5000 ha have been afforested and coordinated action has been taken in a further 200 ha, including the protection of small woods and the removal of invasive species.

### **The ERDF environmental programme**

The national environmental programme (Programa Ambiente) is funded by the ERDF; a Structural Fund focused on developing infrastructure. Most of this programme is devoted to improving water and air quality. However, a specific measure, managed by the nature conservation authorities (ICN), was created for protected areas.

The Peneda Gêres project has a total budget of EUR 4,422,924, with a 75 per cent contribution from the ERDF. It includes the following actions:

- conservation of and studies on natural heritage. Several important studies have been carried out under this action, such as management plans, monitoring of the wolf population, species reintroduction programmes;
- information and awareness. Several books and brochures have been published, including the atlas of the breeding birds and maps;
- infrastructure for public use. Recreational sites, visitor's information centres, etc. have been built and mountain shelters restored;

- enhancement of the cultural (built) heritage. Archaeological and historical sites have been mapped and conserved;
- infrastructure to support actions for local development. This is one of the most important actions. It has been used to promote the conservation of traditional farming practices through a professional qualification for the promotion of local products. Support has been given to maintain local livestock breeds and manage game through collaboration between local hunters and local inhabitants.

## **LIFE**

In 1999 a LIFE project was carried out in the National Park to allow natural forests to recover and eradicate exotic vegetation.

## **Leonardo Programme**

This programme was to educate postgraduate students on the management of protected areas.

## **Conclusion**

The case of the Peneda Gêres National Park shows that in regions where the conservation of traditional farming practices is still viable there is a strong link between nature conservation and rural development. This opens up more opportunities to finance nature conservation. The effort the Park authorities have made to integrate nature conservation and rural development is paying off; they are achieving their conservation objectives and this form of integration is seen as a driving force for sustainable development.

### **10.3. Villafafila Reserve<sup>i</sup>**

The Villafáfila Reserve covers an area of 32,682 ha of extensive grassland steppes and contains a wetland of international importance. The reserve supports the highest density of Great Bustards (*Otis tarda*) in the world, with up to 2,200 birds in autumn.

There are 11 villages with a total population of 4708 inhabitants within the Reserve. People's lives are closely linked to the natural environment through local architecture and agriculture, which makes an important contribution to the local economy. The maintenance of extensive farming systems assures the existence of their associated wildlife.

Recent years have seen a gradual abandonment of traditional farming practices under the influence of the common agricultural policy, which encourages agricultural intensification. One consequence of this is the loss of the mosaic-like pattern of land uses and abandonment of traditional crops such as dry-farmed alfalfa that are vital for the Great Bustard. The lagoons in the wetland are gradually silting up as a result of soil erosion from arable land.

Different funding instruments were used in Villafafila for nature conservation, most of them similar to those that can be used in the accession countries.

## **The EAGGF Operative Programme**

This programme, which had to be prepared by the regions (as it falls under SAPARD), included a specific action for biodiversity conservation in protected areas, linking conservation to rural development. The measures were designed to help maintain the population in protected areas, which tend to be the most depressed areas in the region.

Funds from the EAGGF Operative Programme were invested in gaining further knowledge of the ecological processes necessary to conserve the site and provide the basic infrastructure for the promotion of orderly ecotourism. The total budget of about EUR 120,000 was used to

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<sup>i</sup> Based on information from a case study by Carlos Sunyer in the project 'Financial instruments for the Natura 2000 network and nature conservation'.

undertake a number of studies, including radio tracking studies of the Great Bustard and a sedimentation and limnology study.

### **Interreg**

The Interreg programme took over the objectives of the EAGGF programme and focused mainly on promoting ecotourism. Interreg provided 73 per cent of the EUR 968,553 invested in the Reserve. This was used to construct a nature information centre with an artificial lagoon where the most common wildfowl can be observed. Until recently only a few ornithologists had visited Villafafila and so the information centre represents an important new development; visitor numbers have risen to nearly 100,000 per year. A company has been established to run the new facilities, creating new jobs in the process.

### **Agri-environmental schemes**

The SAPARD scheme for pilot sites has been implemented in the Reserve since 1993. Its popularity has increased year by year and it is now a key element in the management of the Reserve. The programme is open to farmers who commit themselves to fixed practices for a period of five years (for example cultivating dry-farming alfalfa).

### **LIFE**

LIFE has been supporting conservation activities since 1996. The first programme, to conserve the Great Bustard, supported the application of measures to complement the agri-environmental programme, including the purchase of land and equipment to maintain the cultivation of dry-farmed alfalfa. It had a total budget of EUR 452,327, with 75 per cent provided by LIFE.

In 1999 a new LIFE project began in the Reserve for the conservation of the Lesser Kestrel (*Falco naumanni*). There are 13 colonies, about 200 pairs in all, nesting in the Reserve. They nest in abandoned pigeon houses, which are becoming scarcer. The project will restore the nesting habitat of this species and has a total budget of EUR 310,723 (75 per cent contribution from LIFE).

### **Leader**

The area is included within the action radius of a local action group managing a Leader project. This has enabled the development of several initiatives beneficial to the Reserve, such as the publication of a bird guide, the promotion of local products and the creation of the first, small hotel in the area.

### **Conclusion**

Until 1996 there had been no specific funding for nature conservation in Villafafila, but the nature conservation authorities were able to manage some rural development instruments for sustainable development within the area. Exploiting the local natural heritage has allowed progress to be made with both nature conservation and rural development.

# 11. Case studies from EU Accession Countries using financial instruments provided by the EU

## 11.1. Introduction

*This chapter contains examples from two protected areas on how the different EU financial programmes and instruments were used for the purposes of nature conservation. It should be noted that until 1999 only two instruments were available in the CEE accession countries. The PHARE Programme started in 1989 while LIFE was opened 1999.*

In the first case study PHARE grants were used to elaborate feasibility studies and plans. The final products of the project, the wetland restoration plans including financial plans were used for fundraising purposes. In this way the PHARE funds have had a 'seed money' role, which led to further financing and to the implementation of the restoration plans. The additional funds were provided by EU Member States.

In the second case study it is demonstrated that co-financing can lead to more complex projects, which can very efficiently serve the conservation of natural values. The basis for conservation activities here was provided through implementing a Global Environment Facility (GEF) project, financing the establishment of basic structures such as administrative measures, a management plan, personnel and field surveys. The LIFE nature funded project complements the GEF project, by establishing a land-use management plan to maximize the conservation of large carnivores within the protected area.

## 11.2. Habitat rehabilitation and ecotourism development in the Egyek Pusztakócs swamp system and restoration of the Southern Grasslands in the Hortobágy National Park, Hungary<sup>i</sup>

### Introduction

The Hortobágy National Park was established in 1973 and now covers more than 80,000 hectares. It incorporates the largest continuous area of natural grassland in Europe and a system of natural marshes of varying size and artificial wetland areas (fishponds). The majority of these wetlands (covering 30 per cent of the park) are of international importance and are protected under the Ramsar Convention.

Water management activities during the last 150 years have deprived a number of natural marshes of their catchment area and some of them have dried out as a result. Feasibility studies have been carried as part of two PHARE projects (in 1993 and 1994) to restore these areas and develop the possibilities for ecotourism in the park.

The Egyek-Pusztakócs swamp system is one of the areas of the park that have been seriously damaged by the drying out of natural marshes. The catchment area of these swamps includes agricultural areas with a high proportion of arable land. The diversion of water to irrigate this land left about 1000 ha of marshy area with no water supply other than precipitation. These areas dry out during the summer, in dry years as early as June.

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<sup>i</sup> Text contribution by Gábor Szilágyi; contact details at the end of the paragraph

About 200,000 people visit the Hortobágy National Park each year, most of them day visitors. They usually take the ride in a horse-drawn coach, see the traditional domestic animals of the *puszta* and eat in a *csárda* (roadside inn) before leaving. There is a lack of nature-oriented visitor facilities and basic infrastructure. In the project-planning phase the most up-to-date plan available for the National Park was the one prepared in 1987 before the political changes in Hungary.

### **The approach**

The feasibility studies funded from PHARE grants carried out between 1991 and 1992 for wetland restoration purposes were updated in 1994, mainly in financial terms. Also in 1994 a zoning plan was prepared for the National Park containing clear management rules for each zone, including visitor management. This project was also financed from PHARE. The implementation of this complex project for wetland rehabilitation and ecotourism development was based on the available feasibility studies. From these documents the Danish company Danagro Adviser a/s and the Hortobágy National Park Directorate prepared a detailed and operational project proposal.

In practical terms the project was undertaken as three subprojects, covering wetland rehabilitation, ecotourism development and the preparation of a detailed management plan for a pilot project area in the Southern Grasslands of the park.

The total budget for the project was a little more than DEM 1 million, 88 per cent of which was received as financial assistance from the Central and Eastern Europe Environmental Support Fund of the Danish Ministry for Environment and Energy. The Hortobágy National Park Directorate financed the remaining 12 per cent of the budget (mainly the costs of planning, manpower, and transportation in Hungary and office facilities). The Danish Funding was used to cover technical assistance (33 per cent), equipment (2 per cent) and subcontracting (65 per cent). Hungarian contractors undertook the construction work related to wetland rehabilitation and ecotourism development.

### **Achievements**

#### Wetland rehabilitation

A new watercourse more than 8 km long has been dug to supply water to four marshes in the swamp system and several engineering structures have been built to allow individual management of the marshes. The work was complex and required much machinery, and was considerably hampered during the extremely wet spring and summer of 1996. This made it difficult to control progress. A system was set up for the Hungarian subcontractor to work with a detailed, rolling budget and report to the Danagro project co-ordinator every second month. This detailed planning was time-consuming but turned out to be very beneficial as the year progressed. By closely tracking the construction process it was possible to take a flexible approach and adapt time schedules and budgets within the total amount available. This required the Danish project co-ordinator to visit the site more frequently than normal. Rapid and efficient feedback from the Danish Ministry for Environment and Energy allowed work to progress quickly and be completed within the deadline.

#### Ecotourism Development

A bicycle path has been created that makes use of existing unpaved tracks and the dike along the main watercourse for the wetland rehabilitation. There are several viewpoints along the route, and a series of uniform information posters have been produced in Denmark and installed along the 30-km long path. There are also two indoor exhibits along the path. A 1-km wooden nature trail has been built leading to a 10-m high reed-covered birdwatching tower in one of the marshes. Construction of the paths and buildings was delayed due to the wet spring, and certain lengths of the route could only be built after wetland rehabilitation work had been completed.

#### Management Plan

A nature conservation management plan for 12,000 hectares of the National Park has been prepared. It contains details on establishing a financially viable system for increasing the

numbers of traditional cattle breeds required meeting the nature conservation goals for grassland management. A limited number of copies of the management plan are available on request (see the contact details for the Hortobágy National Park Directorate below).

### **Lessons learned**

The PHARE grants were functioning as ‘seed money’, attracting additional funds for the field implementation of the feasibility studies and through this serving the better conservation of natural values and assuring the implementation of international obligations of the Hortobágy National Park. The Danish consultants and the Hungarian experts shared the same approach and direct communication on the ground was extremely useful when problems arose. Contact between the Hungarian subcontractors and their Danish colleagues were as regular as possible, and both sides managed the problems with great sensibility and flexibility.

The main conclusion of the project was that it is possible to implement the feasibility studies prepared in the framework of a PHARE project in the accession countries.

The Danish Ministry for Environment and Energy has stopped financing such projects in Hungary directly from the Central and Eastern Europe Environmental Support Fund. The reason given is that Denmark provides financial assistance through the PHARE Programme and other EU funds already available for accession countries. Although the logic of this is entirely acceptable, it does mean that the flexibility required for the implementation of nature-oriented projects like this – that face conditions not found in an office – is lost.

### **Contact details**

Further information is available from the project coordinator:

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## **11.3. Large carnivore conservation and ecotourism development in the Piatra Craiului National Park, Romania<sup>i</sup>**

### **Introduction**

Large carnivores used to occupy the extensive forests, which once covered Europe. Now bears are restricted to three main populations, in the Carpathians, the Balkans and Scandinavia, and their numbers are estimated to be about 12,800. Wolves also inhabit these three regions, together with the Iberian Peninsula and Italy; numbers are estimated to be about 9800. Lynx are found mainly in the Carpathians and Fennoscandia. In other parts of Europe large carnivores are rare and live in small isolated populations. Both brown bear and wolf are listed in Appendix II of the Bern Convention as strictly protected species whilst lynx is listed in Appendix III as a protected species.

The large carnivores of Europe continue to survive in the Carpathian natural or virgin forests because here their natural prey still exists and human impacts are low. The Romanian Carpathians cover 1.4 per cent of Europe’s territory but are home to 43 per cent of the bears, 30 per cent of the wolves and 30 per cent of the lynxes in Europe, excluding Russia. To survive, these animals need large undisturbed territories, natural prey and as few conflicts with people as possible. Wherever these conditions disappear, large carnivores disappear too.

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<sup>i</sup> Text contribution by Ovidiu Ionescu and George Predoiu; contact details at the end of the paragraph

In 1993 Romania joined and ratified the Bern Convention and in 1996 a new hunting law made the bear and the wolf completely protected species; the lynx became a game species with a harvest quota (with a hunting season from 15 September to 31 March). In 1998 Romania entered an agreement with LIFE programme and in 1999 received direct financial support to 11 projects out of which 7 were for nature conservation. Enhancement of Piatra Craiului is one of these.

### **Piatra Craiului**

The fact that the Piatra Craiului region of the Carpathians still retains most of its natural ecological features is not the result of long-term sustainable management, but rather of past state economic planning, which directed development toward the cities and away from rural areas. This policy left many areas unspoiled. But now that Romania is quickly moving towards a market-based economy, attention is turning to its abundant reserves of natural resources, especially its forests.

Local people generally view large carnivores as a threat and do not like the idea of conserving the populations of bear, wolf and lynx. During the Carpathian Large Carnivore Project a good relationship was established with the local stakeholders: farmers, foresters, hunters, berry/mushroom collectors, local entrepreneurs, officials and tourists. Through the development of ecotourism local people have gained a greater understanding of the conservation issues and recognize that the presence of these animals presents a possibility for economic growth.

### **The Piatra Craiului National Park LIFE project**

Despite the designation of the area as a national park there has been a lack of coordinated and consolidated management. The objective of the Piatra Craiului LIFE project is 'to design and implement a land use plan in the area of Piatra Craiului National Park, introducing the sustainable use of natural resources compatible with the management of large carnivores, while gaining the acceptance of the local people through cooperation, education and assistance.' It should provide a replicable model for other protected areas in the Carpathian mountains.

The LIFE project will design and implement an ecosystem-based land use plan for the Piatra Craiului region, with particular attention to the large carnivores of the area. The project will use and build on the information gathered by the Carpathian Large Carnivore Project in the important task of strengthening cooperation between stakeholders. The plan will serve as a model for management guidance in other areas and will be a useful tool for the conservation of large carnivores throughout Europe in future.

A Global Environment Facility (GEF) project is already being implemented in the Piatra Craiului National Park. To maximize the conservation of large carnivores the activities proposed in the GEF and LIFE projects have been designed to complement each other. The GEF project sets out to establish an administrative structure, develop a management plan, reduce non-sustainable use of natural resources, elaborate mechanisms to encourage park-friendly activities, complete the park monograph and organize an annual park festival.

### **Threats**

There are four classes of threat affecting the area: unsustainable forestry, livestock grazing, increasing mass tourism and lack of law enforcement. These are now being overshadowed by the growing threat of privatization. Private landowners tend to be more concerned about making a fast profit from the land than developing long-term strategies for the area. The chances of successfully implementing an ecosystem-based land use plan with private landowners may therefore be limited; land bought as property of the national park will be fully protected.

### **Actions**

To address these threats the LIFE project has five main activity areas:

- institution and capacity building;

- public awareness and education;
- conflict management;
- ecotourism and recreation;
- scientific research.

#### Institution and capacity building

The overall lack of coordinated management will be tackled by providing training to improve and expand the capacity of local management. The project will set up a management team to implement the land use plan, evaluate and improve implementation of existing policies, make recommendations and initiate consultations with stakeholders. The management team will be trained in conflict management, site administration and stakeholder consultations.

#### Public awareness raising and education

The threats to the area are magnified by the general lack of environmental awareness. To get the various stakeholder groups involved, the project will initiate a public awareness raising and education programme and a school education programme, and produce an educational booklet, press releases and visitor information. It will emphasize the need for a sustainable approach to the forestry and livestock industries and provide information about the economic benefits of an 'ecologically friendly' and well-monitored tourism industry. The goal of these activities is to create a more informed group of stakeholders who are better able to contribute to the project.

#### Conflict management

The large carnivore populations of the area are a priority concern for the LIFE project. Where both large carnivores and human populations inhabit the same area there will be conflicts. And the privatization of land will probably lead to an increase in livestock numbers and forest clearance, causing further conflicts. Activities will be undertaken to initiate a participatory process in which the management team works together with concerned stakeholders to reach compromises and introduce improved management techniques. This will include collecting information about conflicts, monitoring the situation, initiating a participatory planning process and improved management methods, and ensuring that the land use plan is accepted by the stakeholders.

#### Ecotourism and recreation

An ecotourism development programme under the Carpathian Large Carnivore project has been running for two years and has given the local economy a boost. The LIFE project will continue to expand this programme and specific measures will be taken to educate local people about the economic opportunities of the area.

#### Scientific research

The project will include a review of existing scientific research into large carnivores carried out in Romania and other parts of the world. Later research activities will focus on providing a better understanding of the population size and behaviour of large carnivores in the project area.

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## 12. Conclusions

*The environmental sector is an integral part of the acquis and through the environment the biodiversity and its conservation too. The main pillars for biodiversity conservation, the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive are the clearest anchors of biodiversity in EU legislation. Therefore attaching adequate financing to biodiversity conservation actions is a necessity. Below some major lessons learned during the project are highlighted:*

1. the strategies and objectives envisaged in the Accession Partnerships will be a key element in using SAPARD, ISPA and PHARE to support nature conservation objectives;
2. the Natura 2000 network provides an excellent basis for obtaining funds from the different funding instruments. This is because it is the only existing territorial network of Community interest in Europe. However, other areas with conservation values are also eligible for funding, for example, in the case of agri-environmental programmes;
3. the LIFE funding instrument is the easiest to use for nature conservation. However, the initiative has to come from the CEECs, and so far Romania is the only country to have used it;
4. PHARE, and especially SAPARD, can also be used for nature conservation. The nature conservation authorities must be involved in the programming process;
5. ISPA will be difficult to use for nature conservation purposes. However, the EU experience with the Cohesion Fund demonstrates that opportunities do exist;
6. SAPARD integrates environment, including biodiversity/nature conservation into rural development, but this depends on how the programme is structured. Developments in this field are of great significance for the use of EU Rural Development Funds in future. (Today in the EU 15-20 per cent of the farmland is under agri-environmental measures);
7. Interreg and Leader offer interesting possibilities, each of them in their specific action fields, but both in relation to EU-CEEC cross-border cooperation. The best way to make use of them may be through an EU programme initiative that CEE partners are invited to join. As these funding instruments are an EU priority, such transnational projects may have a greater chance of approval;
8. nearly all the existing EU funding instruments can be used for nature conservation, but only a few can be used to fund nature conservation directly. To make use of these possibilities, the following is needed:
  - greater knowledge in EU Accession Countries of these instruments, including how they work and the programming process;
  - stronger integration of nature conservation objectives into rural development and regional development;
  - a clearer link between nature conservation objectives and the creation of new jobs (tourism, farming, etc.) and infrastructure (creation of information centres, etc.);
  - flexible programming that includes as wide a range of actions as possible.
9. certain instruments of the Twinning programme, the TAIEX office and the PHARE Special Preparatory Programme for Structural Funds, can be used to support actions mentioned in point 8.

Now that most candidate countries in CEE have included agri-environmental pilot projects in their SAPARD plans, they can prepare for the use of these measures on a much larger scale after the accession.

As all EU Member States have submitted their planning documents to the European Commission, it would be very useful to review the measures for nature conservation in these new plans. This will help to constantly build upon new experience and it is relevant in the short term for the new Member States that will enter into the EU in the next few years.

Whether certain new EU instruments for CEE accession countries will fund biodiversity projects or not, some of these countries are likely to become EU members in the near future. At that time all EU experience will be relevant for them. It is hoped that this publication provides information about the various programmes and instruments that is both practical and usable, and that through this a contribution has been made to the gradual opening of a door that will lead to wider funding of biodiversity conservation projects.

# ANNEX 1. Introduction to the EU Structural Funds

## 1.1. Introduction

There are four Structural Funds. Each has its own regulation setting out specific objectives and defining the eligible measures (see Box A1). In addition, the Structural Funds pursue three regional objectives<sup>30</sup> (see Box A2).

### Box A1. The Structural Funds

#### The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)<sup>31</sup>

The ERDF aims to correct the main imbalances between the EU regions by taking part in the development and structural readjustment of backward regions and in the regeneration of declining industrial regions. To do so, it finances productive investments in infrastructure, the development of endogenous potential, health and education, and research and development. In this context the environment should contribute to sustainable development. The regulation mentions that the ERDF can be used to support the protection of the natural heritage on the condition that this creates jobs.

#### The European Agricultural Orientation and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF)

The intervention of this fund within the framework of the structural funds is ruled by the rural development regulation<sup>32</sup>. It enables the implementation of a large set of measures, as the modernization of agricultural operations, agricultural conversion and marketing, agricultural development, promotion of local products, agri-environmental measures, prevention of natural catastrophes, afforestation, etc. Some of them can be of great interest for nature conservation.

#### The European Social Fund (ESF)<sup>33</sup>

The ESF supports measures to improve the employment possibilities of workers and help raise the standard of living. These are mainly for job training, employment aid, innovative actions, training systems, educational systems and research and development.

#### The Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG)<sup>34</sup>

The FIFG was established to help attain a sustainable equilibrium between fishing resources and their exploitation, increase competitiveness of the operational structures, support business development and raise the value of fishery and aquaculture products.

### Box A2. 'Objective regions' of the Structural Fund 2000–2006

Objective 1. To foster the development and structural adjustment of the less developed regions. All the regions with a per capita GDP of less than 75 per cent of the Community average are eligible. This objective contains the greatest credits of the Structural Funds.

Objective 2. To support the economic and social reconversion of areas with structural weaknesses. These are areas with structural problems in the industrial and services sectors, rural areas in crisis, certain urban areas and fishery-dependent areas in crisis. Areas under Objective 1 are excluded.

Objective 3. Promotes the adaptation and improvement of educational and employment systems. Areas under Objective 1 are excluded.

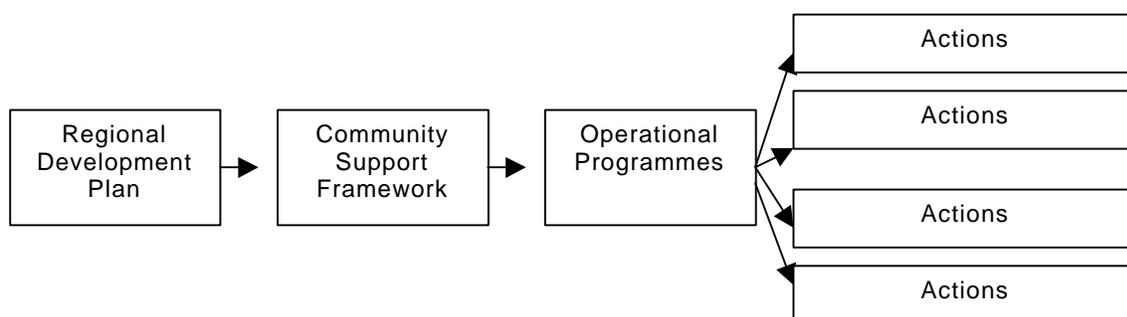
## 1.2. Structural Funds Programming

The Structural Funds can be divided into two blocks: National Initiatives and Community Initiatives.

National Initiatives, more commonly known as the 'Structural Funds', are developed by Member States to tackle their needs within the framework of the structural policy. They have the greatest budgets.

Programming usually involves three stages (see Figure 2). First, a Regional Development Plan is drawn up. This identifies regional priorities and objectives and a strategy. This plan is sent to the Commission, which establishes a Community Support Framework that defines the priority actions, the coordination of the assistance, a financing plan and an intervention, among other aspects.

In the third stage assistance is provided in the form of Operational Programmes.<sup>i</sup> These pursue specific objectives and define a group of measures, including the measures to be financed, the schedule to be followed, the costs and financing.



**Figure 2:** General scheme of the intervention of the structural funds

Only a small part of the Structural Funds budget is allocated to the Community Initiatives. At the initiative of the Commission specific actions are promoted that contribute to solving certain Community problems not properly covered by the National Initiative programmes (for more details see Chapter 8).

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<sup>i</sup> This is the main programming process for Objective 1 regions, in which the CEECs are expected to be included.

## Annex 2. Glossary

<b>Acquis communautaire</b>	The body of EU legislation, regulations and directives
<b>CBC</b>	Cross Border Cooperation (see PHARE)
<b>CEECs</b>	Central and Eastern European Countries
<b>DG</b>	Directorate General
<b>EAGGF</b>	European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund
<b>ECNC</b>	European Centre for Nature Conservation
<b>ERDF</b>	European Regional Development Fund
<b>ESF</b>	European Social Fund
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FIFG</b>	Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>Meuro</b>	1,000,000 Euro
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Programme (see CEECs Structural Aid programming)
<b>NPAA</b>	National Programmes for the Adoption of the Acquis
<b>NUTS</b>	Nomenclature of territorial Units of Statistics.
<b>NUTS 2</b>	is the basic administrative region for regional planning..
<b>OJ</b>	Official Journal. It has three series, C, L and S.
<b>SAC</b>	Special Areas of Conservation (under the Habitats Directive)
<b>SCI</b>	Sites of Community Interest (under the Habitats Directive)
<b>SPA</b>	Special Protection Area (under the Birds Directive)

## Annex 3. References

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- <sup>1</sup> Sunyer, C. & L. Manteiga (1998) *Financial instruments for the Natura 2000 network and nature conservation*. Madrid, TERRA environmental policy centre
- <sup>2</sup> Mitchell, K. (1999) *The EU Structural Funds 2000–2006: conserving nature, creating jobs*. London, Institute for European Environmental Policy
- <sup>3</sup> EC (1997) *The Agenda 2000*. COM (97) 2000 final, Brussels, European Commission
- <sup>4</sup> EC (1998) *Regulation 622/98 on the assistance to the applicant countries in Central and Eastern Europe in the framework of the pre-accession strategy*. OJ L85, 20-03-1998
- <sup>5</sup> *Council Decisions of 6 December 1999 on the principles, priorities, intermediate objectives and conditions contained in the Accession Partnerships with all CEECs*. OJ 335, 28-12-1999.
- <sup>6</sup> Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds. OJ L 103/1, 25-04-1979
- <sup>7</sup> Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. OJ L 206/7, 22-07-1992
- <sup>8</sup> European Commission (1996) *Interpretation manual of European Union habitats*. Version EUR 15. European Commission DG XI. Brussels
- <sup>9</sup> European Commission (2000) *Managing Natura 2000 sites. The provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*. Brussels, European Commission
- <sup>10</sup> Baldock, D. (Coord.) (1994) *The nature of farming. Low intensity farming systems in nine European countries*. London, Institute for European Environmental Policy
- <sup>11</sup> European Commission (1998) Protecting Natura 2000 sites. *European Commission DG XI's Nature Newsletter* 5
- <sup>12</sup> Council Regulation (EEC) N° 1655/2000 concerning the financial instrument for the environment (Life). OJL 192, 28-7-2000
- <sup>13</sup> European Commission. 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999. Projects funded under Life. DG Environment.
- <sup>14</sup> European Commission (1999) *Life Nature 1999*. DG Environment.
- <sup>15</sup> Council Regulation (EEC) N° 3906/89 of 18 December 1989 on economic aid to the Republic of Hungary and the Polish People's Republic. OJL 375, 23-12-1989
- <sup>16</sup> EEC (1999) Guidelines for PHARE programme implementation in candidate countries for the period 2000–2006 in application of article 8 of Regulation 3906/89
- <sup>17</sup> EEC 2760/98 Commission Regulation (EC) No 2760/98 of 18 December 1998 concerning the implementation of a programme for cross-border cooperation in the framework of the PHARE programme OJL 345, 19-12-1998.
- <sup>18</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 1266/1999 of 21 June 1999 on coordinating aid to the applicant countries in the framework of the pre-accession strategy and amending Regulation (EEC) No 3906/89. OJL 161, 26-6-1999
- <sup>19</sup> European Commission (1999) *Phare. Multi-Beneficiary Programmes. Overview. Programmes and Projects, may 1999*. DG Enlargement
- <sup>20</sup> Council Regulation (EEC) N° 1268/99 of 21 June 1999 on Community support for pre-accession measures for agriculture and rural development in the applicant countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the pre-accession period. OJL 161. 21-7-1999
- <sup>21</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 of 17 May 1999 on support for rural development from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) and amending and

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repealing certain Regulations. OJL 1257, 26-6-1999

<sup>22</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 2759/1999 of 22 December 1999 laying down rules for the application of Council Regulation (EC) No 1268/1999 on Community support for pre-accession measures for agriculture and rural development in the applicant countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the pre-accession period. OJL 331, 23-12-1999

<sup>23</sup> European Commission (1999) Indicative distribution of the financial allocation with regard the pre-accession measures for agriculture and rural development. OJL 226. 27-8-1999.

<sup>24</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 1267/1999 of 21 June 1999 establishing an Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-accession. OJL161, 26-06-1999

<sup>25</sup> 2000/229/EC: Commission Decision of 7 March 2000 fixing an indicative allocation between beneficiary countries of the total amount of Community assistance under the Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession (notified under document number C(2000) 552), Official Journal L 072, 21/03/2000

<sup>26</sup> European Commission (2000) Communication C (2000) 1101 from the Commission to the Member States of 28.4.00 Laying down guidelines for a Community Initiative concerning trans-European cooperation intended to encourage harmonious and balanced development of the European territory INTERREG III. OJC 143, 23-05-2000.

<sup>27</sup> Interreg III 2000-2006, Strand B: Transnational cooperation, Inforegio web site [http://www.inforegio.org/wbpro/prord/prordc/prordc17b\\_en.htm](http://www.inforegio.org/wbpro/prord/prordc/prordc17b_en.htm) (5 Sep. 2000)

<sup>28</sup> Commission notice to the Member States laying down guidelines for the community initiative for rural development (Leader+). C(2000)946 final. O.J.C. 139, 18-05-2000

<sup>29</sup> Council decision establishing the second phase of the Community vocational training action programme 'Leonardo da Vinci'. OJ L 146, 11-06-1999

<sup>30</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 of 21 June 1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds. OJ L 161 26-06-99

<sup>31</sup> Regulation (EC) No 1783/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 June 1999 on the European Regional Development Fund. OJL 213, 13-08-1999

<sup>32</sup> Council regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 of 17 May 1999 on support for rural development from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) and amending and repealing certain regulations OJ L 160 26-06-1999.

<sup>33</sup> Regulation (EC) No 1784/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 July 1999 on the European Social Fund. OJL 213, 13-08-1999

<sup>34</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 1263/1999 of 21 June 1999 on the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance. OJ L 161 , 26-06-1999

## Annex 4. Lists of web references

(closed mid September 2000)

### WEB SITES

#### FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

PHARE	<a href="http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/pas/PHARE/index.htm">http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/pas/PHARE/index.htm</a>
SAPARD	<a href="http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg06/external/enlarge/index_en.htm">http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg06/external/enlarge/index_en.htm</a>
ISPA	<a href="http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/activity/ISPA/ISPA_en.htm">http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/activity/ISPA/ISPA_en.htm</a>
INTERREG	<a href="http://www.inforegio.cec.eu.int/wbdoc/docoffic/official/interreg3/index_en.htm">http://www.inforegio.cec.eu.int/wbdoc/docoffic/official/interreg3/index_en.htm</a>
LEADER	<a href="http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/dg06/rur/leaderplus/index_en.htm">http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/dg06/rur/leaderplus/index_en.htm</a> <a href="http://www.rural-europe.aeidl.be/rural-en/index.html">http://www.rural-europe.aeidl.be/rural-en/index.html</a>
EQUAL	<a href="http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/index_en.htm">http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/index_en.htm</a>
LIFE PROGRAMME	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Home page: <a href="http://europa.eu.int/comm/life/home.htm">http://europa.eu.int/comm/life/home.htm</a></li><li>• Nature Application file: <a href="http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/life/nature/index.htm">http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/life/nature/index.htm</a></li><li>• A step by step guide to prepare a project proposal: <a href="http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/life/nature/prepare.htm">http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/life/nature/prepare.htm</a></li></ul>
ESF	<a href="http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/esf/en/index.htm">http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/esf/en/index.htm</a>
ERDF	<a href="http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/activity/erdf/erdf_en.htm">http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/activity/erdf/erdf_en.htm</a>
LEONARDO PROGRAMME	<a href="http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/newprogr/index.html">http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/newprogr/index.html</a>

#### OTHER INFORMATION RESOURCES

Enlargement	<a href="http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/index.htm">http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/index.htm</a>
TAIEX	<a href="http://cadmos.carlbro.be">http://cadmos.carlbro.be</a>
Agriculture and enlargement	<a href="http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg06/external/enlarge/index_en.htm">http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg06/external/enlarge/index_en.htm</a>
Accession partnerships & Commission reports	<a href="http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/docs/index.htm">http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/docs/index.htm</a>
EU Legislation	<a href="http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/index.html">http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/index.html</a>
Habitats and Birds directives	<a href="http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/legis.htm">http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/legis.htm</a>
Bern Convention	<a href="http://www.coe.fr/eng/legaltxt/104e.htm">http://www.coe.fr/eng/legaltxt/104e.htm</a>
Map of European protected areas in application of international instruments	<a href="http://www.strategyguide.org/docs/rep98e_2.doc">http://www.strategyguide.org/docs/rep98e_2.doc</a>

#### EC DELEGATIONS IN THE PARTNER COUNTRIES:

Czech Republic:	<a href="http://www.evropska-unie.cz/en/index.shtml">http://www.evropska-unie.cz/en/index.shtml</a>
Hungary:	<a href="http://www.eudelegation.hu/">http://www.eudelegation.hu/</a>
Lithuania:	<a href="http://www.eudel.lt">http://www.eudel.lt</a>
Slovak Republic:	<a href="http://europa.sk/english.html">http://europa.sk/english.html</a>



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Note: Not all candidate countries have joined LIFE-Nature. Please check with the relevant National Authorities or with DG ENVIRONMENT (Tel: +32)2-2954239). The countries listed here are those that confirmed their intention to participate to LIFE-Nature (July 2000).

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