



# Biodiversity Conservation: An Opportunity for the Countryside

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# About Biodiversity

- **Biodiversity is essentially all the living world around us:** *man is part of the landscape; human activity has shaped biodiversity since > 5000 years ago;*
- **Ecosystem services:** *natural ecosystems deliver goods (food, materials, energy, clean water, medicines, ..) and services (carbon storage, flood protection, protection against erosion, recreation..)*



# EU Biodiversity Policy

- **Umbrella:** Sustainable Development Strategy 2001 (2010 target)
- **Integration:** Biodiversity Action Plan 2006 (integration of biodiversity issues into other policies)
- **Network of protected areas:** NATURA 2000 based on the Birds & Habitats Directives is our flagship



# NATURA 2000: cornerstone of EU Biodiversity and Nature Policy

- **+/- 85 million ha** (17% of EU territory), more than 25 000 sites embedded in our rural environment
- **“Living Landscapes” -Man and Nature work together:** economic activities/developments continue to take place as long as these activities do not undermine the ecological value of the site;
- **Implementation** is now the challenge: an **intelligent balance** can and must be found **between economic interests and nature protection**



# Policy implementation: a complex relationship between Land Use and Environment

- **Multi-level legislative architecture:** EU Directives – MS policy implementation – translation to practice at local level – (*“Brussels” often used as convenient scapegoat !*)
- **Biodiversity is not a market good:** **financial incentives** for landowners, Rural Development, LIFE, ..
- **Additional support efforts:** Study on the Economics of Biodiversity, PES, impact of climate change, cooperation and sharing experiences between practitioners (Green-force network), communication measures



# Aim is sustainable land management, rather than just enforcing directives

- **Flexible mechanisms needed in translating scheme conditions to the local environment**, continuing discussion among administration, stakeholders and people who depend on natural resources for their economic well-being
- **Policy practices** should not simply be analysed with goals of effective implementation in mind, but also for the **articulation of conflict and difference**
- **The experiences gained** from the practice need to be translated back to administration (“*so that we don’t become too alienated from real life*”)



# Landowners must become, first and foremost, spokesmen for a living countryside

- **Most landowners are interested in conserving their land and resources. I can't see managing the land for biodiversity conservation, without involving the people who use it and know it best !**
- **Close cooperation, an atmosphere of trust, and involvement of different stakeholders are the keys to preserving biodiversity and protecting the economic vitality of our rural environment**





Thank you for your attention