

NATURA 2000 NETWORK

FFH 15

The Natura 2000 network aims to ensure, in tandem with human activities, the maintenance or restoration of natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest in a favourable conservation status¹ through the implementation of a network of interconnected natural sites, in application of the EU "Birds" Directive (79/409/EEC) and "Habitats-Fauna-Flora" Directive (92/43/EEC).

The Natura 2000 network covers 13% of the territory

The Natura 2000 network in Wallonia^{2,3} has 240 sites covering 221,000 ha. Nearly 70% of it is made up of forests (27% of Walloon forest areas). Grasslands and crops represent respectively 15% and 1% of the network (5.5% of the utilised agricultural area). Almost 64,000 farmers, foresters and landowners are implicated⁴.

A lengthy designation process

The implementation of the Natura 2000 network in Wallonia was initiated in 2001. The sites were selected according to biological criteria (the presence of habitats or species of Community interest and proportion to the regional area or population) and structural criteria (topography and hydrographic network) to ensure connectivity⁵. The types of management units likely to be demarcated within a site have been laid down, as well as the specific prohibitions and preventive measures applicable to them⁶. Each site has been the subject of a designation order specifying the current status of the habitats and species present on the site. The adoption procedure of these decrees by the Walloon Government was completed at the end of 2016.

Progress towards good conservation status

The Walloon Government has set conservation targets for the network⁷. By 2025, at the Walloon level and within the network, it will be necessary to:

- for habitat types of Community interest, maintain and restore their natural range, surface area and quality;
- for species of Community interest and bird species, maintain and restore the surface areas of their habitats and the quality necessary to maintain or restore, within their natural range, the population levels of the species.

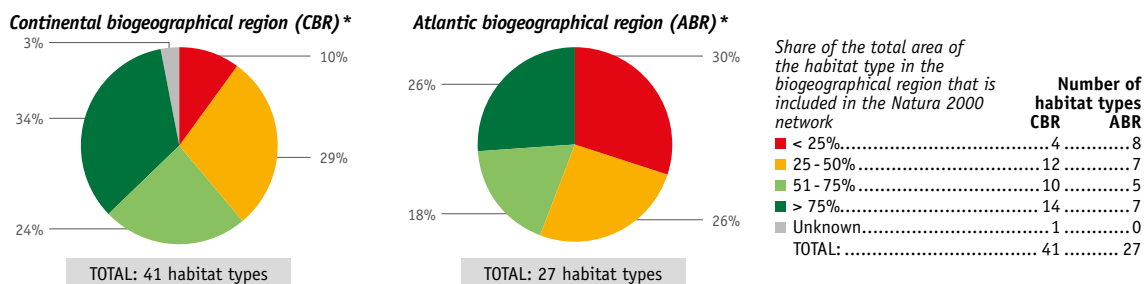
At the site level, it will therefore be necessary to maintain existing surface areas and the quality of habitat types, as well as the population levels of species and the existing surface areas of their habitats. For many habitat types⁸, surface areas need to be restored and quality improved; similarly, the presence or population levels of certain species⁹ need to be restored and the quality of their habitats improved. It should be noted that it is essential to also consider these habitats and species outside the network. In effect, for 10% of habitat types of Community interest in the Continental biogeographical region and 30% in the Atlantic region, less than 25% of the total area covered by the habitat type in the biogeographical region is included in the Natura 2000 network.

A nature integrated project

The new nature integrated project¹⁰ aims to implement the prioritised action framework established for Belgium¹¹. This will enable restoration and management programmes to be drawn up and monitoring tools to be developed. Analyses of the effectiveness of the Walloon legal system are also planned.

[1] → FFH 1 & FFH 6 | [2] → Map 56 | [3] <http://biodiversite.wallonie.be> | [4] <https://www.natagriwal.be> | [5] Species dispersal pathways are modelled on the topography and hydrographic network. | [6] Walloon Government Decree of 19/05/2011 | [7] Walloon Government Decree of 01/12/2016 | [8] In particular raised bogs, wet and dry heaths, alluvial forests or screens or veils of perennial tall herbs lining water courses | [9] E.g. Violet copper, Great crested newt, Northern shrike and Notch-eared bat. | [10] <http://life-bnnp.be> | [11] Requested by the European Commission to all Member States, the Prioritised action framework aims to plan the needs and priorities in terms of financing the measures necessary for the proper management of the Natura 2000 network.

Fig. FFH 15-1 Distribution of habitat types of Community interest according to the proportion of their total surface area included in the Natura 2000 network in Wallonia



* Wallonia is covered by the Continental biogeographical region (70% of the territory) and Atlantic biogeographical region (30%). SOERW 2017 – Source: SPW – DG03 – DEMNA