

Financing Natura 2000

2004/2164(INI) - 10/03/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament voted in favour of setting up a fund dedicated to co-finance the Natura 2000 network. An own-initiative report by Margrete AUKEN (Greens/EFA, DK), adopted by 460 in favour, 28 against and 13 abstentions, emphasises that the Natura 2000 network of protected areas across the EU is one of the main pillars of EU action on biodiversity.

Parliament welcomes the Commission statement that the EU rural development and structural funds should make a substantial contribution towards co-financing the Natura 2000 network. It equally welcomes the enabling of financing for Natura 2000 from rural development and structural funds. Nevertheless, having examined the relevant proposals (structural, rural and Life+), considers them insufficient for the adequate co-funding of the Natura 2000 network and therefore also insists that a dedicated fund be set up for this purpose.

The Commission is called upon to adjust its proposal for the Financial Instrument for the Environment, LIFE+, to include a dedicated biodiversity objective within that fund to provide funding for the management of Natura 2000 sites complementary to the rural development, structural and the fisheries funds, and complementary to funds made available by the Member States, including for special nature conservation investments, projects and emergencies; for nature conservation research, education and awareness-raising; and for cross-border cooperation with third countries on nature conservation projects.

Lastly, it is stressed that the Commission's calculation of the annual cost of the Natura 2000 network of EUR 6.1 billion is likely to be a significant under-estimate of the full cost of managing the network, and therefore should only be considered as the minimum necessary; further stresses that the calculation does not take into account the accession of the new Member States (Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia), and that the financial needs must be recalculated in order to cover the Natura 2000 network in the whole EU. Parliament has also stressed the importance of involving the national parliaments, the social partners, civil society and regional and local authorities in implementing these objectives, by promoting proper public consultation.