

Effectiveness of conservation measures for birds in 100 European Union Special Protection Areas

TASK 1. SELECTION OF TEN MEMBER STATES

Methods

Ten Member States (MS) were selected to demonstrate differing conditions across the EU using five criteria:

1. **Coverage of biogeographical regions:** All biogeographical regions within EU to be included - Alpine, Atlantic, Black Sea, Boreal, Continental, Macaronesian, Mediterranean, Pannonian and Steppic. Larger countries with several biogeographical regions within their territory were included.
2. **Coverage of the regional seas:** All European regional seas to be covered including North Sea, Northeast Atlantic, Baltic, Black Sea and Mediterranean.
3. **State size:** A balanced geographical spread across the EU was sought including both small and larger MS. Preference was given to those with a proportionally higher coverage of SPAs within their territory.
4. **Coverage of major European migratory bird flyways:** For waterbirds, this functionally meant inclusion of MS lying within the East Atlantic and Black Sea/Mediterranean Flyways (Boere & Stroud, 2006).
5. **Different approaches to governance:** A range of countries with different approaches to protected area governance was selected.

Results

The ten MS selected for review were Croatia, Finland, France, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain (Figure 1 below), with the reasons for their selection given in Table 1 below. Without further sampling, it is not possible to know how representative are these ten of the other 17 MS.

Figure 1. The ten EU Member States included in this study.



TASK 2. SELECTION OF TEN SPAS WITHIN EACH MEMBER STATE

Methods

Ten SPAs were selected within each MS, through expert knowledge, using the following factors:

- co-designation of at least some as SAC/SCIs under the EU Habitats Directive;
- for wetlands, co-designation as Ramsar Sites especially those important for regularly occurring migratory species not listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive;
- geographic spread within MS;
- where possible, inclusion of sites from multiple biogeographical terrestrial regions;
- representation of a range of habitat types occurring in the MS, with particular emphasis on habitats of national or international conservation significance;
- different approaches to governance;
- inclusion of sites holding bird species and/or communities of particular national and international importance for the country concerned (including important Annex I species); and

- selection of sites where management (planning) was known to be undertaken to allow assessment of relevant processes, given that one of the aims of the study was to try to learn from good practice and promote compliance.

Fully marine SPAs were not included in the study.

Results

Supplementary Document 3, Annex 1 and Table 2 below give attributes of each of the 100 SPAs against selection criteria for this study. A very wide range of natural and semi-natural habitats were included in the sample of SPAs (Supplementary Document 3, Annex 1) across all EU biogeographic regions.

Of the 100 SPAs, 71 were also classified as SAC/SCIs, 50 also were Ramsar Sites, and 28 only had SPA status. A total of 49 sites had been the subject of an EU LIFE-funded project. The total area of the 100 sites was 5,576,323 ha representing 10.6% of total EU SPA extent, and a 1.8% numerical sample of the 5,407 terrestrial SPAs classified in December 2021.

Discussion

The sample was non-random for reasons outlined above so results need to be interpreted accordingly. The difference in proportional area and numbers indicates over-representation of larger sites. It is not known the extent to which the sites are representative of either other unassessed SPAs or sites in other MS, however the study is the largest, most detailed study of conditions at SPAs yet undertaken.

References

- Boere, G.C. & Stroud, D.A. 2006. The flyway concept: what it is and what it isn't. In G.C. Boere, C.A. Galbraith & D.A. Stroud (Eds.). *Waterbirds around the world* (pp.40-49). The Stationery Office, Edinburgh, UK.
https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20190301182744mp/http://jnc.c.defra.gov.uk/PDF/pub07_waterbirds_part1_flywayconcept.pdf

Table 1. Attributes of the ten selected Member States

Countries	Biogeographical region	Regional Seas	Migratory bird flyways ^a	Member State size	Number and extent of SPAs ^b
Croatia	Alpine, Continental, Mediterranean	Mediterranean	BSMF	Small	38 (18,162 km ²)
Finland	Boreal	Baltic	EAF, BSMF	Big	470 (31,952 km ²)
France	Alpine, Atlantic, Continental, Mediterranean	Mediterranean Sea, NE Atlantic, North Sea	EAF, BSMF	Big	403 (163,661 km ²)
Ireland	Atlantic	NE Atlantic	EAF	Small	165 (5,896 km ²)
Italy	Continental, Alpine, Mediterranean	Mediterranean	EAF	Big	627 (49,104 km ²)
Latvia	Boreal	Baltic	EAF	Small	98 (10,887 km ²)
Poland	Continental, Alpine	Baltic	EAF	Big	145 (55,651 km ²)
Romania	Continental, Alpine, Steppic, Pannonian, Black Sea	Black Sea	BSMF	Big	171 (38,748 km ²)
Slovakia	Alpine, Pannonian	Inland country	BSMF	Small	41 (13,105 km ²)
Spain	Atlantic, Alpine, Mediterranean, Macaronesian	NE Atlantic, Mediterranean	EAF, BSMF	Big	657 (153,691 km ²)

Notes:

- Flyways after Boere & Stroud (2006): East Atlantic Flyway (EAF) and Black Sea/Mediterranean Flyway (BSMF)
- As at 19 February 2021

Table 2. Distribution of sampled sites according to the dominant EU biogeographical regions in which they occur.

Member State	Boreal	Continental	Atlantic	Macaronesian	Mediterranean	Alpine	Pannonic	Steppic	Black Sea
Croatia		3			5	2			
Finland	9					1			
France		2	4		2	2			
Italy		4			4	2			
Ireland			10						
Latvia	10								
Poland		10							
Romania		2				2	2	2	2
Slovakia						6	4		
Spain			2	2	5	1			
Total EU	10	21	14	2	16	16	6	2	2

Regions follow <https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/figures/biogeographical-regions-in-europe-2>