
Estimating the Overall Economic Benefits provided by the Natura 2000 Network

Project

Duration

Jan - Sep 2011

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The aim of the EU's Natura 2000 Network is to protect Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. This project developed a methodological framework for assessing the overall economic value of the benefits provided by the Natura 2000 network. A first estimate suggests that the benefits could be between €200 and €300 billion per year at present, which equals 2% to 3% of EU GDP. The project report is available for download.

The prime focus of the Natura 2000 protected area network is on the conservation of the unique and endangered biodiversity in Europe; this includes rare habitats, species and genetic diversity. In addition, the Natura 2000 network provides a range of benefits to society and the economy via the flow of ecosystem services (provisioning, regulating, cultural and supporting services). These also support policy objectives beyond biodiversity, in particular climate change mitigation and adaptation, water quality and provision, food provision, jobs and livelihoods, cost savings, science and education, social cohesion and identity.

A first estimate of the value of the Natura 2000 network suggests that the value of the flow of ecosystem services from the (terrestrial) Natura 2000 network would be between €200 and €300 billion per year. The value has been derived by scaling up from an existing pool of site-based assessments of the value of Natura 2000. The values also relate to a subset of the ecosystem services from the protected area network, and should be seen as a conservative estimate of its 'gross benefits' rather than benefits directly relating to the Natura 2000 designation and associated conservation measures. This is therefore a first estimate and should not be taken as fully robust, but rather as an indicative first estimate.

Ecologic Institute contributed to the project, which was led by the [Institute for European Environmental Policy \(IEEP\)](#), by estimating the total benefits provided by water provision and purification ecosystem services in Natura 2000 areas. The project results have informed the European Commission's Staff Working Paper 'Financing Natura 2000', which was published in December 2011.

The [project report](#) [pdf, 6 MB, English] and a [synthesis report](#) [pdf, 2.7 MB, English] are available for download.

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