European Natura 2000 Award – 2014 edition

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for applicants

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1. GENERAL

➤ **What is the European Natura 2000 Award?**

This pan-European award recognises excellence in the management of Natura 2000 sites and conservation achievements, showcasing the added value of the network for local economies, and increasing public awareness about Europe's valuable natural heritage.

The Award recognises good practices at Natura 2000 sites in five different categories: communication, socio-economic added value, conservation, reconciling interests/perceptions, and networking and cross-border cooperation.

➤ **When was the European Natura 2000 Award launched?**

The European Natura 2000 Award is launched on 16th December 2013.

➤ **What is the policy background of the Natura 2000 Award**

Natura 2000 is the centrepiece of European Union (EU) nature and biodiversity policy. It is an EU-wide network of nature protection areas established under the 1992 Habitats Directive. The aim of the network is to assure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. It is comprised of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated by Member States under the Habitats Directive, and also incorporates Special Protection Areas (SPAs) which they designate under the 1979 Birds Directive. Natura 2000 is not a system of strict nature reserves where all human activities are excluded. Whereas the network will certainly include nature reserves, most of the land is likely to continue to be privately owned and the emphasis will be on ensuring that future management is sustainable, both ecologically and economically. The establishment of this network of protected areas is at the core of the EU Biodiversity Policy and also fulfils a Community obligation under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. More information at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/.

➢ **What are the benefits of winning an Award?**

Winning an award in one of the five categories would give you well-earned recognition for your efforts to ensure excellence in the management of Natura 2000 and conservation achievements. Your achievements will find a place on the Award website, and will be disseminated widely via various European Commission newsletters and other websites.

As part of your award, you will receive a specially-designed trophy, to be presented at a high-level ceremony in Brussels, as well as a small financial contribution of €2,000 to be used for furthering your activities.

Furthermore, the European Commission will support you in organising an event directly linked to your activities on the ground. This will include some financial and logistical support, as well as organising media coverage, allowing links to be enhanced or fostered with local and national partners and stakeholders.

2. KEY DATES
➢ **What are the key dates?**

Launch of Call for applications: **16th December 2013**.

Deadline for submissions: **18th February 2014**.

Applicants notified of the Jury's decision: **April 2014**.

High-level ceremony: **May 2014** (date to be announced).

3. APPLICATION PROCESS

➢ **How do we apply?**

You must apply using the official online application form. On the "How to apply" webpage, click on the "Apply here" button; this will take you to the application form platform entry page.

Click on the "Sign in" button on the application form platform entry page. Here, you should enter your surname, name, email address and password, and submit them. You will receive an email confirming that your contact details have been registered. You may then log in from the application form platform entry page with your password and start to fill in the application form.

The application form is made up of five main sections, each accessible in a different tab.

When working on the forms, you can:

~ Move from one section to another, by clicking on one of the five tabs in the application form;

~ Save your application as often as you want, using the "Save" button;

~ Access your application as many times as you want as long as you do not submit it (making sure to Save before leaving the page);

~ Preview your application by clicking on the "Preview" button; and

~ Upload required files (word, pdf) as well as pictures and videos (using the links provided).

Once your application is finalised, you should save it, and then send it by clicking on "Submit". Once submitted, your application will no longer be accessible to you. It will be stored in a database which will be only accessed by the European Natura 2000 Award Secretariat and the European Commission.

➢ **Will we receive an acknowledgement of receipt when we submit our application?**

All applicants will receive an email acknowledgement of receipt of their application. This acknowledgement will include a unique reference number which should be used in all communications concerning the application.

4. WHO CAN APPLY?

➤ **Can any organisation apply?**

Any entity or group based in the EU is entitled to apply, with the exception of: anyone involved in the organisation of the 2014 European Natura 2000 Award. In subsequent years, winners from the three previous years will not be eligible to apply to the same category. Applications for a site that has won the Award in the previous years will not be accepted either.

➤ **Can applicants be from outside the EU?**

Applicants must be based in the EU.

International organisations can be a lead/partner applicant if they have a registered branch office in an EU Member State.

➤ **What language should the application be in?**

Applications must be in one of the official EU languages (with the exception of Maltese and Gaelic).

➤ **What period should our application cover?**

Applications must present tangible results achieved in the past five years. For the 2014 Award, this means that activities must have been completed between 01.01.2009 and 31.12.2013. You should provide the dates covered by your application, between which the activities should have been completed.

➢ **Can we include information about activities before or after the eligible five year period in our application?**

Activities outside the five year period can be mentioned, but they will be used only as general context, and will not be assessed as the main content of the application.

➢ **Can two or more applicants submit separate applications for the same Award category for the same site/sites in the same year?**

No, it is not possible for two or more applicants to submit separate applications for the same Award category for the same site/sites in the same year. They should submit a joint application in this case.

If the same site is mentioned in two applications, but it is not the principal site in at least one of them, this can be accepted.

➢ **Can applications be submitted by multiple applicants?**

Yes, applications by multiple applicants are permitted. However, one applicant must be designated as the lead applicant, and will be responsible for the content of the application.

There is no limit to the number of applicants who can submit a joint application. However, it can be less practical to put together an application with a very large number of partners. There is also no advantage to including large numbers of partners in an application, unless they bring a real added-value to the application.

➢ **Can unsuccessful applicants reapply the following year?**

Yes, unsuccessful applicants can reapply to the same category for the same site/sites in subsequent years (and of course for other categories and sites), so long as all other requirements are still met. However, applications that show evidence of further improvement or additional success compared to the previous year are more likely to be successful.

➢ **Can winning applicants reapply?**

Winning applicants cannot reapply for the same category for a period of three years following the initial submission leading to winning an Award, but they can apply for a different category.

➢ **Can we submit an application for a site that has won the Award?**

Applications for a site that has won the Award are not accepted in the same category for a period of three years following the prize. Applications for that site can be accepted in other categories.

➢ **Does our application have to relate explicitly to one or more Natura 2000 sites?**

Yes, applications must explicitly refer to one or more Natura 2000 sites. This requirement is also true for horizontal applications covering connectivity within the network, communication campaigns targeting the general public, partnership building with stakeholders, or transboundary experience exchange. These too must identify at least one site which has directly benefited from their work (e.g., because a new partnership solved local problems, or site managers successfully applied new techniques they learned from international experience exchange).

➢ **How many sites should our application include?**

You must include at least one Natura 2000 site, and this should be a site that your actions have had a direct impact on. Any applications that do not include at least one site will be found ineligible. You can include an unlimited number of sites in your application. However you should limit them to those that have a direct relevance to your application. No additional credit will be received for applications including long lists of sites. One site must be chosen as the principal site for the application.

> **Does the application have to make specific reference to a species or habitat?**

No, applications do not have to make specific reference to a species or habitat. However, if the application does focus on one or more species and/or habitats, they must be those for which the site is designated. The species or habitats targeted by the actions must be in the right annexes of the relevant Directive:

1. Habitats (Annexes I and II)
   (http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/habitatsdirective/); or
2. Birds Directives (Annex I or regularly occurring bird species not in Annex I)
   (http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/birdsdirective/).

In this case, the species / habitats must be on the Standard Data Forms (SDFs) for the site(s). In the case of species that are not mentioned in the SDF, you should attach a formal letter from the competent authority that the SDF has been changed, with the date when the change was sent to the European Commission.

> **How many species or habitats should our application include?**

You do not have to make specific reference to any species or habitats. There is no limit to the number of additional species/habitats you can add, but limit the list to those that are directly relevant. There is no advantage in covering a large number of species or habitats that are not directly relevant to the application.

5. HOW WILL THE WINNERS BE SELECTED?

➢ **How will the winners be selected?**

The selection process is comprised of the following steps:

1. **Admissibility**: The application must be complete and include sufficient information to allow all subsequent stages of the assessment.

2. **Eligibility**: All admissible applications will be assessed for their eligibility and compliance with the general rules of eligibility (see above).

3. **Evaluation**: All eligible applications will be assessed against five evaluation criteria (see below) by a team of experts. This will result in a shortlist of the applications scoring highest in each category.

4. **Jury**: The final decision on the winners of each category will be taken by a jury comprised of representatives of EU institutions and other relevant stakeholders. The jury's decision will be taken based on the quality of the application, based on the different criteria as well as the applicants' efforts to promote Natura 2000.

➢ **When will we be informed of the result?**

You will be informed of the decision in April.

➢ **What are the categories for applications?**

The five categories are:

1. Communication;

2. Socio-economic benefits;

3. Conservation;

4. Reconciling interests/perceptions; and

5. Networking and Cross-Border Cooperation.

However, the European Commission reserves the right not to award a particular category.

These categories may be amended in subsequent years.

➢ **Can we apply for more than one category in the same year?**

Each application is for one category only. If you wish to apply for more than one category, you must submit a separate application for each category.

➢ **What are the evaluation criteria?**

All applications will be assessed using the same five criteria:

1. Effectiveness;
2. Originality;
3. Durability;
4. Cost-benefit; and
5. Replicability.

There is one form per criterion in the application form. You must fill out all five forms.

➢ **What is the profile of the Jury?**

The Jury will be comprised of representatives of the European institutions and other relevant stakeholders.

➢ **What information should we provide for each of the five different criteria?**

Each category has a separate question for each criterion. In the following section of these FAQs, you will find some guidelines on the kind of information you could provide in your answer for each question.

6. WHAT INFORMATION TO PROVIDE FOR EACH CRITERION FOR EACH AWARD CATEGORY

This section provides some suggestions for the kind of information to be provided for each criterion for each category. These suggested questions are not comprehensive, and you are not obliged to answer them all, so feel free to provide any information that you think best illustrates your achievements. However, remember that the more concrete the information you provide, the higher are the chances of a positive evaluation.

➢ **Suggested content for the five questions under the <u>Communication category</u>:**

Question 1: How effective are your communication activities? What have you achieved?

- ☑ Describe why you launched the campaign/activities and what you wanted to achieve?
- ☑ Describe the audience targeted by your communication activities. Is the target audience widespread or very specific?
- ☑ Describe the actions undertaken. Be specific in describing the message you communicated, and its links to Natura 2000.
- ☑ Provide weblinks to supporting materials if available.
- ☑ Describe the current situation indicating changes in the attitudes/behaviour among the targeted audience (results).
- ☑ Did you measure the impact on the targeted audience and if yes, how? What are the results?

Question 2: How original are your communication activities?

- ☑ Do you consider your communication activities to be original? If so, explain how and at what level.
- ☑ Provide links to support materials if such exist.

Question 3: How sustainable are your communication activities?

☑ Describe the efforts you have made to ensure the maximum lasting impact of your communication activities, beyond the end of your campaign.

☑ Is follow-up communication (to keep the message alive and to regularly refresh it) ensured or foreseen?

☑ What is your forecast for the future? On what is this based?

Question 4: What cost-benefit results have your communication activities led to?

☑ Describe the cost-benefits of your activities.

☑ How much did your activities cost?

☑ What will be future funding needs?

Question 5: How replicable are your communications activities?

☑ What are key points of your activities which you see as being replicable elsewhere? Describe any (potential) cultural or financial barriers to "exporting" the communication method to other circumstances.

☑ Have you already contacted colleagues in other Natura 2000 sites outside your own region or country? With what results?

➢ **Suggested content for the five questions under the <u>Socio-economic benefits</u> category:**

Question 1: How effective are your activities in terms of socio-economic benefits?

☑ Specify the stakeholders targeted by your (socio-economic) activities.

☑ Describe the baseline situation indicating the socio-economic situation in the targeted audience.

☑ Describe the actions undertaken, and how they are linked to Natura 2000.

☑ Describe the current situation indicating changes in the socio-economic situation of the targeted stakeholders (results), or in resource use.

☑ Describe how you have measured the impact of the actions and what the results were.

Question 2: How original are your socio-economic activities?

☑ Are your socio-economic activities original? Why?

Question 3: How sustainable are your activities?

☑ What measures or conditions are in place to ensure continuation of the benefits after the end of the project/action?

☑ Please provide data showing the trend of commercial benefit (jobs, sales of products, increased tourism, etc.) over the duration of your initiative.

☑ Are the activities financing themselves now? If yes, how? In the future?

Question 4: What cost-benefit results have your activities led to?

☑ Describe the cost-benefits of your activities.

☑ How much did your activities/campaign cost?

Question 5: How replicable are your activities?

☑ What results did they achieve and how did you measure them? Describe any dissemination activities you have undertaken, and the audience(s) targeted by them.

☑ Do you think your activities could be implemented and could work elsewhere? Why?

> **Suggested content for the five questions under the <u>Conservation</u> category:**

Question 1: How effective are your conservation activities?

- ☑ Describe the baseline situation indicating the status of the habitats and/or species on the site/s before interventions.

- ☑ Describe the actions undertaken, with a focus on the benefiting/targeted habitats or species, and how they have benefited.

- ☑ Describe the current situation indicating changes in the status of the species and/or habitats on the site. How have your actions contributed to this change (results)?

- ☑ Describe the monitoring mechanisms in place, i.e., data collection, reporting and analyses.

- ☑ How have you measured the effectiveness of your actions? Have you had a third partner assessment of your work? Assess the results you have achieved and the problems you have encountered. Please provide evidence of your success (web links) if available.

Question 2: How original are your conservation activities?

- ☑ How original are your conservation activities? At what level? Why are they original?

Question 3: How sustainable are your activities?

- ☑ Describe the efforts you have made to ensure the maximum lasting impact of your conservation activities.

- ☑ How will the work and the investments evolve in the future? Does the success you achieve depend on further intervention? If yes, who will be responsible and how will it be funded?

Question 4: What cost-benefit results have your conservation activities resulted in?

- ☑ Describe the cost-benefits of your activities.

- ☑ How much did the conservation work cost?

Question 5: How replicable are your conservation activities?

☑ Do you think your activity is replicable? Why and how? Did you replicate your work, i.e., to package it in a format other professionals can use, such as a manual, toolbox, guideline etc., or has it been presented at a conference or thematic workshop, etc.?

➢ **Suggested content for the five questions under the <u>Reconciling interests and/or perceptions</u> category:**

Question 1: How effective are your activities in reconciling interests and/or perceptions?

☑ Describe the problem and how it was related to the protection/management of the Natura 2000 site(s).

☑ What were the different interests involved in the site(s)? What were the attitudes of relevant stakeholder groups/communities towards Natura 2000?

☑ Describe your activities with a focus on how the idea was initiated and implemented (who were the key players?).

☑ How effective have your activities been in reconciling interests and/or perceptions, and in particular how did stakeholders benefit from the activities (socio-economic impact)?

☑ How did this change benefit the Natura 2000 site/species/habitats?

☑ What is the current attitude of the targeted groups towards Natura 2000?

☑ How was this measured or evidenced?

Question 2: How original are your activities focused on reconciling interests and/or perceptions?

☑ How original are your activities focused on reconciling interests and/or perceptions?

Question 3: How sustainable are your activities focusing on reconciling interests and/or perceptions?

☑ How has the new consensus been organised?

☑ Which mechanisms have you put in place to guarantee long-lasting reconciliation?

☑ How committed are the partners? Attach any signed commitments / agreements that might exist.

☑ How do you see the attitudes evolving in the future?

Question 4: What cost-benefit results have your activities focusing on reconciling interests and/or perceptions resulted in?

☑ Describe the cost-benefits of your activities.

☑ How much did your activities/campaign cost (money, time, people involved)?

Question 5: How replicable are your activities focusing on reconciling interests and/or perception?

☑ Do you think your method ought to be disseminated to colleagues and replicated elsewhere? If so, why?

☑ Which efforts did you make to replicate your work, i.e., to package it in a format other professionals can use, such as a manual, toolbox, guideline etc.?

☑ Describe any such efforts that were made to transfer this format to colleagues by contacting others or making it available.

> ➤ **Suggested content for the five questions under the <u>Networking / Cross-border cooperation</u> category:**

Question 1: How effective are your networking/cross-border cooperation activities?

- ☑ Describe the baseline situation indicating the original status of the species/habitats on the site(s) or the Natura 2000-related problem targeted by the networking, and the original relationship of the partners.
- ☑ Describe the partners involved, and how the cooperation was set up and why.
- ☑ What was the objective of the cooperation/networking? What was it meant to achieve?
- ☑ Describe the current situation indicating changes in the relationships between the partners (results).
- ☑ Describe what kinds of exchange are going on and how best practices, etc., are exchanged.
- ☑ How effective are your networking/cross-border cooperation activities? How was this measured or evidenced?
- ☑ What implications for the European Natura 2000 network do your efforts have?

Question 2: How original are your networking/cross-border cooperation activities?

- ☑ How original are your networking/cross-border cooperation activities?
- ☑ Explain if there are other similar networking or CBC activities that you are aware of.

Question 3: How sustainable are your networking/cross-border cooperation activities?

- ☑ Describe the efforts you have made to ensure the maximum lasting impact of your networking and/or CBC activities.
- ☑ If there were tangible activities in the field, how will these be continued in the future and for how long?
- ☑ Describe in particular which structures or processes have been set up to keep it going and deal with any future internal differences.

- ☑ Describe how committed the partners are (proof of their commitment, such as signed memoranda of understanding).
- ☑ How will you raise funding in future?

Question 4: What cost-benefit outcomes have your networking / cross-border cooperation activities resulted in?

- ☑ Describe the cost-benefits of your activities.
- ☑ How much did your activities cost?

Question 5: How replicable are your networking/cross-border cooperation activities?

- ☑ For networks: How much scope do you see for expanding the network (or perhaps copying it for similar groups)? Are there any plans to expand the partnership to new areas or members?
- ☑ For CBC: Which other border regions could learn from it, or copy it?
- ☑ Have you made any attempts to expand or broaden the networking/CBC? If yes, what was the outcome? Have you received any feedback?
- ☑ Explain your efforts to disseminate the results.
- ☑ Can you identify any elements which might pose benefits or challenges to setting up the network or CBC in another context?

7. FURTHER INFORMATION

➢ How can I receive regular information?

The Natura 2000 Award website is the main information hub. For further information on the Award, we recommend that you regularly check the news section of the website.

➢ Whom can I contact for further information?

For any questions you may contact the Natura 2000 Award Secretariat at: n2000awards@adelphi.de.