



the Nature-GIS newsletter

Funded by the
EU Commission
IST project
2001-34641



Nature-GIS:

a European thematic network for Protected Areas/
Nature Preservation and Geographical Information

www.gisig.it/nature-gis

no. 4, June 2003

CONTENTS:

**National Context
Assessment for Protected
Areas in**

- ◆ Italy
- ◆ Spain
- ◆ Estonia
- ◆ Slovakia

WELCOME

This is the fourth newsletter of the Nature-GIS project and the first of a series dedicated to the National Context Assessment for Protected Areas, in which the partners have described the context about protected areas for their own country.

This number is dedicated to four Countries:

- ✓ Italy
- ✓ Spain
- ✓ Estonia
- ✓ Slovakia.

Suggestions and comments are warmly accepted at
nature-gis@gisig.it.

The Nature-GIS partnership



I. Italian National Context Assessment for Protected Areas

Description of the national system of Protected Areas

The total surface covered by protected areas in Italy is about 2.715.000 hectares, equivalent to 9% of the entire national territory and 266.220 are the hectares of marine protected areas, according to the Natural Protected Areas Official List by the Environmental National Department of 2002. The mentioned data represent just an estimation because various Regional Natural Protected Areas are not exactly classified by the national legislation and then they are not included in the Natural Protected Areas Official List.

In the Italian legislative system, the most important law in matter of protected areas is the framework law 6th December 1991 no. 394, that defines the different kinds of natural parks and protected areas and the rules for their institution and management.

Actually it is possible to define the following kinds of protected areas:

✓ National Parks:

constituted by terrestrial areas, rivers, lakes and marine areas including:

- one or more undamaged, or just partially damaged by human activities, ecosystems;
- one or more physic, geologic, geomorphologic, biologic structures, of international or national importance, having scientific, aesthetical, cultural, educational and recreational value.

At the moment Italy counts 21 Terrestrial National parks already instituted, 4 parks in course of institution, 20 Marine National Protected and 13 areas in phase of institution.

✓ Regional and Interregional Natural Park:

constituted by terrestrial areas, rivers, lakes and marine areas having a naturalistic and environmental value that constitute an homogeneous system, that could be individualised by the naturalistic aspects of the area, the landscape and artistic and cultural traditions of the local people.

These areas are instituted by Regions, since 1977, following the procedure previewed in their own regional law. Actually the regional system of protected areas is constituted by:

- 99 Regional Parks, covering a territory of about one million of hectares;
- 332 regional natural reserves (see below) and
- 136 other regional natural protected areas.

✓ Natural Reserves:

constituted by terrestrial areas, rivers, lakes and marine areas containing one or more relevant naturalistic species of the fauna and flora, or containing one or more ecosystems important for

their biological diversity or for the conservation of genetic resources.

Natural Reserves could be governmental or regional on the base of the relevance of the naturalistic elements contained.

The National natural terrestrial reserves are 145 mainly distributed in the Northern and Central Italy and there are 17 Marine Natural Parks and Reserves covering about 171.316 hectares of sea surface.

✓ Humid zones of international interest:

constituted by marshy areas, quagmire, peat bog, natural or artificial water zones, permanent or transitory, included marine zones (having a maximum depth of six meters during the low tide) that, for their characteristics, could be considered of international importance in accordance with the Ramsar convention.

✓ Other natural protected areas:

areas (oasis managed by environmental association, suburban parks, etc.) not included in the previous classes. These can be classified in publicly managed areas (instituted with regional laws or equivalent measures) and privately managed areas (instituted with public formal provisions or with contractual acts as concessions or similar contracts).

The most important non-profit environmentalist association managing natural protected areas are:

- WWF Italia with about 98 oasis,
- Lipu (Italian league for bird protection) counting 56 oasis, and 12 bird recovery centres, and
- Legambiente with 38 oasis and natural reserves.

✓ Zones of Special Protection (Zps):

identified in accordance with the Directive 79/409/Cee (preservation of wild birds), constituted by territories that for their extension and/or geographic localisation are suitable for the preservation of the bird species listed in the annex of the mentioned directive. The most part of Regions are actually involved in the updating process of the firsts lists of identified sites.

✓ Zones of Special Conservation (ZSC) and Site of Community Importance (SIC): identified in by Regions in accordance with the Directive 92/43/Cee (Habitat directive), constituted by natural areas, geographically defined and with delimited extension.

✓ Marine and terrestrial finding areas:

they are indicated by the national law no. 349/91 and no. 979/82. The conservation of these areas is considered priority through the institution of a protected area.

Networks and Stakeholders

◆ National Network of protected areas

Federparchi is the Italian Federation for Natural Parks and Reserves. It was founded in 1989 as a voluntary association and counts 120 members (National and Regional Parks, Terrestrial and Marine Reserves, local administrations and Associations) managing nearly 300 protected areas covering an area of about 2.500.000 hectares.

Federparchi acts in accordance with all the subjects working in the fields of protection and valorisation of natural environment, in order to promote the creation of the national system of protected areas. For this strategic objective it is possible to identify the following activities:

- participation in the elaboration, planning and realisation of programs in the field of protected areas;
- promotion of the collaboration among the associates and of the circulation of knowledge and of managerial experience;
- study and definition of methodologies for the sustainability of the human activities in fragile territories;
- promotion of the international connection between agencies and institutions of protection;
- development of information and improvement of access to same.

Federparchi has realised and updates the most exhaustive Internet site about protected area in Italy: www.parks.it.

◆ International Networks involving Italian protected areas

Nature 2000: in application of the directive 92/43/CEE "Habitats".

Alpine Network of the protected areas: most of the protected areas of the Alpine arc participate in this Network (Réseau Alpin des Espaces Protégés), in application of the Convention of the Alps. It was formally set up in October 1995 and until now it has organised more than 100 thematic meetings and it co-ordinates about fifteen international working groups on different subjects such as forest management, mountain tourism, protection of the flora and fauna, communication in the parks. More information at www.alparc.org.

Europarc Federation (Federation of Natures and National Parks of Europe) and **Europarc-Italia:** constituted by management agencies and specialists from about 400 national protected areas of more than 35 countries. It re-unites both national and provincial protected areas, non-governmental organisations and academic institutions specialised in the management of protected areas. More information at: www.europarc.org and www.europarc.it.

MAB - WCPA: on planetary scale Italian protected areas participate to the Net of the biosphere reserves MAB (Man and Biosphere) - Unesco initiative -, and the activities and initiatives of the

World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) of the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

CIPRA (International Commission for the Protection of the Alps): it counts more than 100 affiliated associations of the 7 alpine states, engaged for the total safeguard of the natural and cultural patrimony of the alpine arc.

The marine Sanctuary for cetaceans: international marine protected area created in accordance with an Agreement between France, Italy and Principality of Monaco in order to protect a large area of sea, characterised by the presence of a consisting number of sperm whales, common whales, dolphins, and other cetaceans species. The Sanctuary for marine mammals has been inserted in the list of special protected Areas of Mediterranean importance (Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance - SPAMIs) previewed by the Protocol on the specially protected areas and the biological diversity in the Mediterranean (Protocol SPA) of the Convention framework for the protection of the marine environment and the Mediterranean coastal region (Convention of Barcelona).

◆ Principals public stakeholders

The Italian State is the most important authority for the protection of nature at national level, as sanctioned in the Italian Constitution, and it has the functions of general address and co-ordination (such as general programming) and of international obligations about nature protection. Moreover the institution of new national parks or reserves needs a national law.

Regions are charged, since the second half of '70's, for the management of the Italian naturalistic heritage.

The decentralisation process allows Regions and Provinces to institute regional or provincial natural reserves with regional law.

The national law n.142/90 regulates the functions and the competencies of the local autonomies: Provinces and Municipalities have competencies about the protection of flora, fauna, parks and reserves, including the programming role of identification of the more opportune areas where to institute natural parks or reserves.

Commercial aspects

◆ Commercial operators in the field of IT and Nature management and preservation

At national level, there exists a specific research institution which has a public participation (ENEA National Agency for the Energy, New Technologies, Environment) and different IT societies for data elaboration (for example FINSIEL) that, jointly to other societies support the territorial management and nature protection, with the needed IT elaboration.

At local level, the same role is covered by consortia, societies having a public participation

(for example CSI in the Region Piemonte) and many smaller societies.

◆ Principal economic incomes for the different protected areas

Protected areas in Italy are generally directed by public agencies, which are for more than 95% financed by public grants, and for a smaller part financed by the park activity such as:

- sale of products;

- various services and
- donations conferred by private or other supporting structures.

The Oasis are managed from the non-profit environmentalist associations. They obtain their own incomes through:

- the inscription rate of their supporters;
- public grants, that are their principal income.

II. Spanish National Context Assessment for Protected Areas

Description of the national system of Protected Areas

In Spain there are 832 natural protected areas, covering about 4 million hectares, equivalent to the 7.8% of the national territory. In the Spanish legislative system, the most important law in matter of protected areas is the law n. 4, 27 March 1989: "Preservation of Natural Areas and Wildlife (flora and fauna)" in which they are identified 4 typologies of national protection:

✓ Parks

- Natural Parks including: the Regional Parks, the Rural Parks, and the Urdaibai's Biosphere Reserve
- National Parks including: the Special Natural Reserves, the Directed Natural Reserves, the Wildlife Natural Reserves, the Partial Natural Reserves, the Concerted Natural Reserves, the Integral Natural Reserves, the National Biological Reserves.

✓ Reserves

✓ Natural monuments

✓ Protected landscapes.

◆ Possible future development or extension of the protected areas system

In the next two years time, probably the State and Region laws system will be changed in order to adapt it to the Nature 2000 Network. Spain will have to define the following typologies of protected areas: ZEPA's (Zone of Birds Special Protection) and ZEC's (Special Conservation Area).

At the moment an extensions of the protected areas system is not previewed, on the contrary probably it will be reduced to adjust it to the categories fixed by the IUCN.

Networks and Stakeholders

◆ National Networks of protected areas

Europarc-Spain: created in 1993. It is an active member of the Federation of Natural and National Parks of Europe (EUROPARC).

EUROPARC-Spain is an organisation of institutions involved in the planning and management of Spanish protected natural areas. It constitutes the main professional forum where proposals for the improvement of these areas are processed and discussed. There are more than 500 protected areas in EUROPARC-Spain, with a total surface of over 3.2 million hectares.

For further details: <http://www.europarc-es.org/>

◆ International Networks involving Spanish protected areas

EUROSITE: was created in 1989 and it is the largest network of organisations devoted to the protection of nature in Europe. Its work is supported by the European Union and by the Ministries of Environment of countries represented in the network. Its members are an exceptional source of information and expertise on the management of nature and are responsible for a very high diversity of natural habitats across the whole of Europe. Its mission is to ensure the transfer of knowledge to improve the quality of management for nature conservation in its widest sense. For further details: <http://www.eurosite-nature.org/en-accueil/>.

◆ Environmental associations and their role in the management of protected areas

Fundació Territori i Paisatge (Territory and Landscape Foundation): founded in 1997 by the Caixa de Catalunya. The main objectives are to preserve the natural resources and to make aware population about environment protection needs. The foundation manage some areas in order to preserve their ecological or landscape value in collaborations with NGO's, public administrations and a wide variety of entities. Furthermore it collaborates in projects of nature preservation and in educational programme.

Fundació Natura (Natura Foundation): is one of the first NGO created in Spain exclusively devoted to the conservation of the biological diversity through the protection, improvement and restoration of the natural ecosystems.

Its aim is to create a network of protected natural areas and it tries to promote compatibility between conservation, public use and the educational

benefits of natural areas as well as the promotion of ecotourism as a tool for the conservation and the sustainable economic development of rural uninhabited areas.

◆ Principals public stakeholders

Apart from the central government, the Autonomous Regions (i.e. Catalonia, Andalusia, Basc Country,) have also legal competencies in the institution, planning and management of natural protected areas. For this reason, it is necessary to distinguish between policy regulation at a national and regional level.

The following themes are regulated at region level by the autonomous regional law :

- Natural Monuments of National Interest
- Singular Tree
- Natural Point
- PEIN (Landscape of special national interest)
- Natural Place
- Scenic Place
- Natural Place of National Interest
- Place of Scientific Interest
- Natural Location of National Interest
- Recreation Natural Area
- Protected Biotope
- Ecological and Biodiversity Corridor
- Natural Place (under general protection law)
- Natural Protected Area
- Microreservoir
- Periurban Park
- Fauna Shelter

- Figure of Preventive Protection, etc.

As specified in the law 4/1989, National Protected Areas are planned on the base of the following documents:

- Natural Resources Order Plan (NROP)
 - Rector Plan of Use and Management (RPUM).
- Autonomous Regions' law also specifies that protected areas instituted by Regions need a management plan.
- At a national level, it is possible to find information about environmental regulation, environmental quality, nature preservation, among other issues, in the web sites of:
- Dirección General de Conservación de la Naturaleza. Ministerio de Medio Ambiente
 - Organismo Autónomo Parques Nacionales. Ministerio de Medio Ambiente

Commercial aspects

◆ Principal economic incomes for the different protected areas

In Spain, protected areas are mostly financed by the Autonomous Regions of competence and in particular by the Environmental Department or Council of each region.

Others resources come from European funds related to European projects such as Life, Leader, etc.

III. Estonian National Context Assessment for Protected Areas

Description of the national system of Protected Areas

The most important law about protected areas in Estonia is the Protected Natural Objects Act that introduce new rules of protection. It defines three categories of protected areas:

✓ **National park (Rahvuspark):**

A National Park is a protected area of national importance for the preservation, protection, investigation and promotion of awareness of the natural and cultural heritage; it includes ecosystems, examples of biological diversity, landscapes, national culture and is subject to sustainable nature management.

National Parks are divided into strict nature reserves, special and limited management zones.

The National Parks of Estonia are:

- Lahemaa – for the preservation of nature and cultural landscapes typical of North Estonia;
- Karula – for the preservation of hilly landscapes rich in forests and lakes, typical of South Estonia;

- Soomaa – for the preservation of the largest bogs in Estonia and its floodplain meadows and forests in the south-western transitional part of Estonia;

- Vilsandi – for preservation of West Estonian coastal landscapes and sea, as well as islets rich in birds. The total area is 144 188 hectares (ha) from that 41 330 ha is sea area.

✓ **Natural Conservation Areas (Looduskaitseala)**

A Nature Conservation Area is an area protected for its natural conservation or scientific value set aside for the preservation, protection, and investigation of natural processes and endangered or protected plants, animals, fungus species and their habitats, inanimate objects, as well as landscapes and natural monuments.

A Nature Conservation Area is divided into strict nature reserves, and special and limited management zones. In January 2003 there were 47 nature conservation areas in Estonia (179 973 ha, 34 915 of that is sea area).

✓ **Landscape Protection Area (Maastikukaitseala)**

A Landscape Protection Area is an area of natural or cultural heritage value which is rare or typical for Estonia, and is established for nature conservation, cultural or recreational purposes. Parks, arboreta and botanical gardens which have been taken into protection are also considered protected landscapes.

A Landscape Protection Area is divided into special and limited management zones.

A Park, arboretum or botanical garden which is taken into protection is considered a limited management zone.

In January 2003 there were 91 landscape protection areas in Estonia (142 495 ha, 7045 of that is sea area) and 531 parks, groves and arboretum (5492 ha).

142 protected areas of 363 have got new protection rules, for the others the process of new regulation is under development.

In every protected areas it is possible to identify different typology of zones, having different characteristics:

- Strict natural reserve is an area of land or water in its natural state and free from the direct impact of human activity. In these areas, the following they are prohibited:

- 1) economic activity and use of natural resources;
- 2) human presence, except in performance of enforcement, scientific, or rescue activities, in accordance with procedures established by the Government of Estonia.

The strict nature reserves match with IUCN category Ia;

- Special management zone is a land or water area protected in order to preserve resulting or created natural and semi-natural associations. This zone is devised into natural special management zone - "looduslik" (matches with IUCN category Ib) and special management zone - "hooldatav" according to management restrictions;

- Limited management zone is a part of protected area used for economic purposes where restrictions, established by the authority which has taken the object under protection, must be taken into account.

Estonian has a territory of 4 522 710 ha and the protected areas (as of January 2003) are 484 144 ha, that represent about the 10,7% of the Estonian territory (without sea area).

Type of protected areas	% of the territory
strict natural reserves	0,16 %
natural special management zones	3,35 %,
Special management zone represents	1,49
limited management zones	3,53
other protected areas	2,19 %

(More information at:

<http://eelis.ic.envir.ee/eelis/default.asp?art=357&tee ma=22>).

◆ Possible future development or extension of the protected areas system

Seeing that the New Nature Conservation Act is under reconstruction, it is probably that new protected areas will be created and that old ones will get new protection rules. Management plans are being composed.

Networks and Stakeholders

◆ National and International Networks of protected areas

Union of Protected areas of Estonia: Protected areas with an administrations structure co-operate through this organisation. Further information at: (<http://www.ekal.org.ee/>).

UNESCO: Under UNESCO West Estonian Archipelago has been added to the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

Ramsar Convention: Estonia ratified it in 1993. At the moment there are 11 wetlands of international importance in Estonia.

Estonian Ornithological Society: Estonia has also selected Important Bird Areas in its territory. These areas (51 of them) have been included to the network of BirdLife International.

Most of the Important Bird Areas are included to the preliminary list of Natura 2000 as Special Protection Areas (SPA). Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) are being also named. Natura 2000 site list is in project stadium. Estonian Ministry of the Environment (Nature Conservation Department - <http://www.envir.ee/natura2000/>) co-ordinates this whole process. The list of Natura 2000 areas should be ready by the accession with the European Union.

◆ Principals public stakeholders

Estonian Ministry of the Environment rules over nature and environmental protection. In the Ministry of Environment, the Nature Conservation Department has function of co-ordination and management of the protection activities in all the protected areas and around protected objects. Primary tasks include preparation of legal grounds for protected areas, i.e harmonisation of the protection rules with applicable laws and preparation of management plans as well as managing actual protective activities. Management plans are drawn up for managing the protection of national parks, nature reserves and areas falling in the scope of the Ramsar Convention.

A certain number of protected areas have their own administrative organisation (Protected Area Management) for example Matsalu Nature Protection Area, Lahemaa National Park and so on,

other ones are administrated by the National Environmental Departments.

◆ Environmental associations and their role in the management of protected areas

In Estonia there are different non-governmental organisations that take interest in nature protection. Here are few examples.

Estonian Fund for Nature (Eestimaa Looduse Fond - ELF): ELF had an important role to safeguard the future of valuable areas, by establishing new protected areas and natural parks, after the restoration of independence in 1991. Initially they have been instituted two national parks (Soomaa and Karula) and a natural reserve (Lower-Pedja). During following years, ELF has played a significant role in the establishment of tens of other smaller protected areas over Estonia. ELF has carried on inventories of valuable habitats, wetlands, old-growth forests and meadows, and participates in designing the Natura 2000 network of protected areas.

The aim of the nature tourism initiated and organised by ELF in Estonia is to increase environmental awareness and support the preservation and welfare of local natural, cultural and community values by following the principles of sustainable and ecological tourism. They have arranged nature restoration camps for several protection areas.

Estonian Seminatural Community Conservation Association (Pärandkoosluste Kaitse Ühing - PKÜ): This Association has taken interest in

preserving the seminatural communities in Estonia. Some of the most valuable traditional rural biotopes in the Northern Europe are found in Estonia. They also have arranged nature restoration work in protected areas.

Looduskaitseühing (Nature Protection Association) “Kotkas”: Alam-Pedja Nature protection area is managed by “Kotkas”.

Estonian Ornithological Society (Eesti Ornitoloogiaühing – EOÜ): Further information at: <http://www.eoy.ee/>

Nõmme tee selts: Further information at <http://www.nommeteeselts.ee/index.html>

Vapramäe-Vellavere-Vitipalu Sihtasutus: Further information at <http://www.vvvs.ee/>

Commercial aspects

◆ Principal economic incomes for the different protected areas

The main financing comes from the state budget (public grants). Other part comes from the Environmental Investment Centre by financing projects, and from different European Projects (e.g Life Nature). For example Life Nature project “Restoration and management of the Häädemeeste wetland complex” (<http://www.livonia.ee/life-haademeeste/sisu/index.php>).

IV. Slovakian National Context Assessment for Protected Areas

Description of the national system of Protected Areas

Protected areas in Slovakia are managed by Ministry of Environment and state agencies (the most important are the State protection of Nature of the Slovak Republic and Slovak Agency for Environment - SAZP).

In the Slovak republic legislative system, the most important law in matter of protected areas is the law n. 287/1994, declared by the Parliament.

They have been defined five level of protection from 1 – without protection to 5 – highest protection. Protected areas (levels 2 - 5) form about 25% of the total area of Slovak republic. 9,8% are in the National parks (level 3), 12,7% in Protected landscape areas (level 2), the highest-level areas (levels 4 and 5) form 2.3% of the total area.

The number and area of protected areas (status of 31.12.2001) is given in the following table:

Category	Level of Protection	No.	% of total area
Protected landscape area	2	16	12,7
National parks	3	7	9,8
Protected place	4	185	0,19
Nature reserve	5	375	0,24
Nature memorial	5	231	1,82
National nature reserve	5	230	0,04
National nature memorial	5	60	0,0017
Total		1104	24,80

Source: State protection of Nature of Slovak Republic (SOP SR)

Apart from above-mentioned areas, under state protection there are:

- a network of 503 protected objects in the list of protected trees, from which 337 are single trees and 166 groups of trees, altogether 1325 trees
- a list of protected geological objects,

- al list of protected petrified objects.

◆ Possible future development or extension of the protected areas system

The protection of nature is an ongoing process in which new protected areas and levels of protection are proposed and evaluated. In the year 2001 there were 15 proposals connected to the protection of certain areas. There were 6 new Protected landscape areas declared, 6 Nature reserves, 4 Nature memorials and 14 National nature memorials. The attributes of one National nature reserve and one National nature memorial were modified. Proposal for change of status of two large area protected landscape areas to gain National park status was evaluated and granted in 2002.

In the years 2001-2002 the realisations of principles of NATURA 2000 in Slovak protection of nature has been started. The goal is the harmonisation of legal system of the Slovak republic in the area of Nature protection with the European Union.

Networks and Stakeholders

◆ Relevant public stakeholders related to protected areas

The protected areas are administered at national level by the State Protection of Nature of the Slovak republic (SOP SR) and concrete Protected Area Administrations, which belong to the structures of the Ministry of Environment.

Environment protection, Landscape and environmental planning, monitoring, information

processing are the functions of Slovak Agency for Environment (SAZP) and of its units. This institution operates nation-wide Information system on Environment.

At the administration level, each regional and district government office has its own Department of Environment, which cares for its respective territorial unit. In a near future the district offices should be removed, thus making the change in the organisation of the nature protection by state necessary.

The users (municipalities, business and industry) may be represented by the Association of municipalities of the Slovak Republic (ZMO SR) and Slovak Chamber of Industry and Commerce (SOPK).

The Ministry of Agriculture of the Slovak republic represents the interests of Agriculture and Forestry.

Commercial aspects

◆ Commercial operators in the field of IT and Nature management and preservation

The environmental information is processed on non-commercial base by state operated and funded agencies.

◆ Principal economic incomes for the different protected areas

The principal source of income of the protected areas is the public funding, granted in the national budget of the Slovak republic.