

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATURA 2000 NETWORK IN AUSTRIA

(Umsetzung des Natura 2000-Netzwerkes in Österreich)

Name of Supreme Audit Institution

Österreichischer Rechnungshof (Austrian Court of Audit)

Title of summary report on audit findings

Report; Bericht des Rechnungshofes Reihe Bund 2008/8; published in June 2008

Audit issues

Nature protection

Audit type

Combined audit

Description of the Audit

The aim of the audit was to find out the status quo of the legal implementation of the two EU directives (directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on habitats and directive 79/409/EEC of 2 April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds) and of the nomination of sites. Additional topics were the quality of protection, management of the sites, and monitoring systems.

The audit was conducted in April and May 2007.

Scope of audit

Scope of the audit were compliance including infringement procedures on EU level, governance on the level of the States as well as on the level of the protected sites, funding, cost efficiency and effects of the Natura network on the quality of protection.

Audited units

Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management; six States (Carinthia, Burgenland, Lower Austria, Styria, Tyrol, Upper Austria), the remaining three States (Salzburg, Vienna, Vorarlberg) were covered by questionnaires

Summary of the audit findings and evaluation of the audited activities

In May 2007 Austria had 215 nominated sites covering an area of approximately 12300 km². This is about 14.7 % of Austria.

About 40 % of the nominated sites were already protected before. About 60 % of the Natura 2000 sites – these are 6900 km² – obtained improved protection.

Only a part of the necessary ordinances were put into force. Although the preliminary protection of the sites was guaranteed throughout, the missing ordinances should be passed.

Management plans were available in different scope, content and quality and not legally binding. When elaborating management plans there should be clear priorities. The plans should be decided and put into force by the government.

Site managers were not appointed for all sites. A comprehensive supervision of the protected sites should be installed.

There was no comprehensive monitoring system in any of the States. Work on such a system was in progress. The system and scope of such a monitoring system should be designed under the aspect of long-term financing and available resources.

Financing was done not only by nature protection budgets, but for the most part also by funds for hydraulic engineering, agriculture, special planning etc. The proportion of EU-funds was between 27 % and 60 %, varying from State to State. More EU-co financed projects should be initiated.

Addressees of the summary report on audit findings

The report was forwarded to the Nationalrat (federal legislation) of Austria and to all nine Landtage (legislative bodies of the States).

Results of the audit

All necessary ordinances were put into force.

Work on the missing management plans was intensified.

Site managers were appointed.

Work on the monitoring system and on the management plans was continued following the detailed recommendations of the report.

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