

The international context for the management of biodiversity in Ireland

Dr Micheál Ó Briain

Origins of international/EU action for biodiversity



1962 publication generated awareness of vulnerability of nature to chemical pesticides & triggered environmental movement



First UN Earth Summit, Stockholm (June 1972)



EEC Heads of State - Paris Summit (October 1972) – led to EU environmental action programmes



Second UN Earth Summit, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (June 1992)



Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) - Overarching Global legal/policy Framework -



3 main objectives:

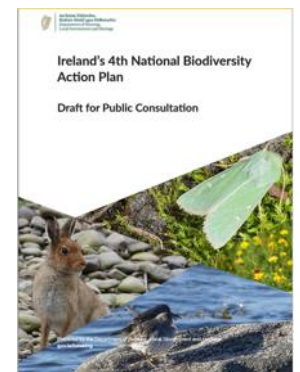
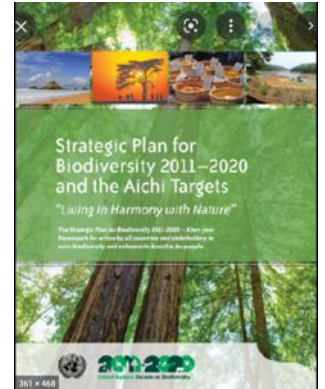
- The **conservation** of biological diversity
- The **sustainable use** of the components of biological diversity
- The **fair and equitable sharing of the benefits** arising out of the utilization of genetic resources

196 contracting parties including European Union (since 1994) & Ireland (since 1996)

Operates under **CBD Strategic Plans** - 2011-2020 Plan to be updated for 2030 at next Conference of Parties (COP) in Montreal, December 2022

EU Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan for 2030 published in May 2020 as core element of EU New Green Deal

Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (for 2023-2027) currently under preparation



Other key international biodiversity conventions

- **Ramsar Convention** (1971) - for the conservation and wise use of wetlands
- **CITES Convention** (1978) - on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
- Convention on Migratory Species (**Bonn Convention**) (1979)
 - Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (**AEWA**)
 - Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (**ASCOBANS**)
 - Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of European Bats (**EUROBATS**)
- Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (**Bern Convention**) (1979)
- The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (**OSPAR Convention**) (1992)



EU Nature & Biodiversity Legislation

- **Birds Directive** (1979) – on conservation of wild birds
- **Habitats Directive** (1992) – on conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora
 - NATURA 2000 network of protected areas
- **Zoos Directive** (1999)
- **Regulation on Invasive Species** (2014)
- [European Commission Proposed **Nature Restoration Law** (2022)]

Many other key EU environmental legislation also highly relevant e.g.

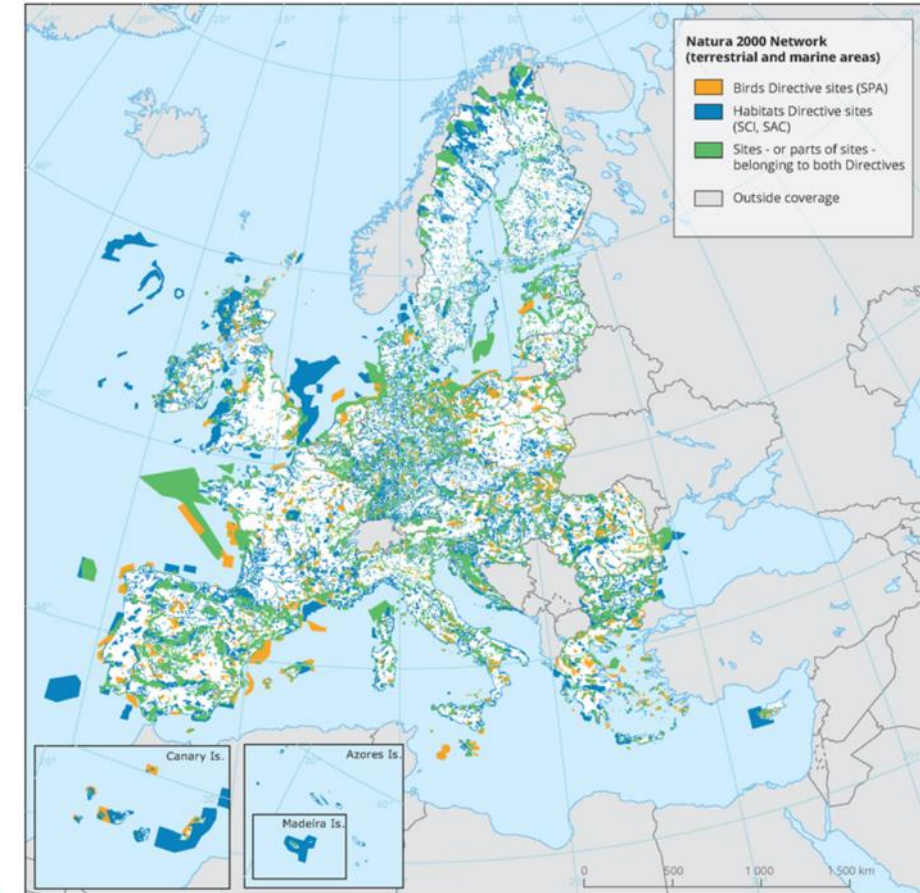
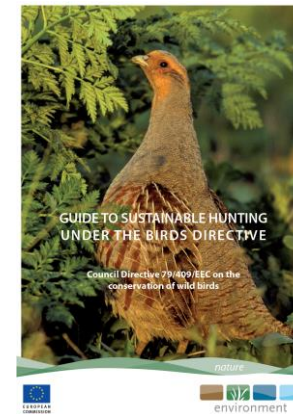
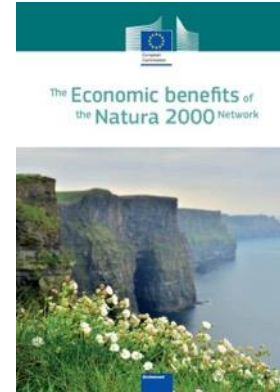
- **Water Framework Directive** (2000)
- **Marine Strategy Framework Directive** (2008)
- **Environmental Impact Assessment Directive** - EIA (1985)
- **Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive** – SEA (2001)
- **Environmental Liability Directive** (2004)



Key objectives of Birds & Habitats Directives

Overall objective to maintain or restore species/habitats of EU conservation concern to favourable status by:

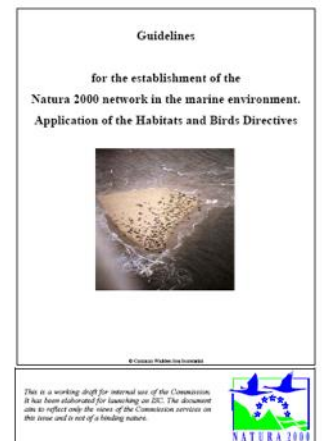
- A. Ensure most valuable sites are managed/protected in Natura 2000
- B. Manage/restore habitats/landscape features beyond Natura 2000
- C. Ensure protection & sustainable use of species
- D. Ensure adequate knowledge, data availability & awareness



~ 27 000 sites
~ 1 215 000 km²
18 % of EU land
~ 9 % of EU seas

Ireland's poor implementation record on EU nature legislation

- Serious difficulties and delays in implementation of Directives
- EU Court of Justice rulings against Ireland for failures to establish & protect Natura 2000 sites, address serious overgrazing in uplands, and establish species protection rules
- Case currently in EU Court regarding failure to designate sites (Habitats Directive) & establish the necessary conservation measures based on clearly defined conservation objectives
- Ongoing legal action in relation to Natura 2000 peatlands
- Ireland has made very limited progress on marine Natura 2000 (around 2% of marine waters versus 9% EU average)



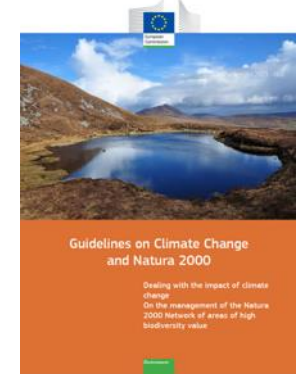
Key drivers for successful implementation of EU nature legislation

- Political support, strong and coherent governance and effective supporting institutions with motivated staff
- Adequate and effective consultation and engagement of landowners and stakeholders
- Research and monitoring that provides context-relevant information on the ecological requirements of targeted species and habitats and the pressures affecting them
- Access to funding and other resources with the EU LIFE fund a major catalyst for improvements, particularly when supported by follow up investments under larger scale funds e.g agri-environment schemes
- Ensuring long term sustainability of conservation outcomes through commitments that provide on-going delivery of necessary measures



Key challenges for improved implementation of EU/international commitments by Ireland

- We are dealing with depleted nature so ensure adequate investment in restoration including better use of EU/other funds
- Put in place clear strategy & mechanisms, properly resourced, to deliver CBD/EU/National Biodiversity targets for 2030, including
 - Designation & effective management of 30% of land/marine in Natura 2000 & other protected areas including one third strictly protected
 - Measurable Improvements in conservation status for 30% of protected species/habitats
 - Proper enforcement where failures of compliance
- Ensure biodiversity objectives are fully integrated into broader sustainable development goals – especially in relation to climate, food system & circular economy measures



Thank you for your attention

