



**SURF**  
*nature*



# European Regional Development Funding for biodiversity

*An analysis of selected  
operational programmes*



**European Union**  
European Regional Development Fund

Designed and printed by

Plus One Design

www.plus-one.co.uk

1st edition Sept. 2011, 500 copies

Cover Photo: © Niccoló Caranti

Online: www.surf-nature.eu

The report was written with the support of Suske Consulting and WWF Germany, and financially supported by the INTERREG IVc SURF Nature project.

**SUSKE CONSULTING**

Wolfgang Suske, Brigitte Alex and Marija Martinko



WWF Germany

Franziska Mey and Peter Torkler

With special thanks for contributions and corrections from:

Raluca Dan, WWF Romania;

Colette Price, Countryside Council for Wales;

Angela Ellis & Margaret Birkett, Environment Agency Wales;

Gerald Plattner, Austrian Federal Forests;

Klara Brandl, Environment Agency Austria;

Julia Steinert & Melanie Hillmann, WWF Germany

Vienna, Berlin September 2011



# European Regional Development Funding for biodiversity

## Table of Contents

Foreword.....	1
Executive Summary.....	2
1 Introduction.....	4
2 Background.....	5
3 Overview of analysis results.....	12
4 Conclusions and recommendations.....	17
Appendix I: Analysis of the programme quality with regard to biodiversity.....	23
Appendix II: Analysis of the programme implementation.....	36

## Table of Figures

Figure 1: Funding Instruments according to the objectives. WWF Germany based on data from DG Regio.....	6
Figure 2: Operational Programme categories in relation to cohesion policy objectives and possible measures.....	6
Figure 3: Policy Stages of EU Cohesion policy. Source: WWF Germany based on data from DG Regio.....	7
Figure 4: Common structure of Operational Programmes.....	7
Figure 5: Overview of all analysed Operational Programmes.....	9
Figure 6: Types of Operational Programmes.....	11
Figure 7: Map of the Member States which analysed the programmes.....	11
Figure 8: Overview of the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes.....	13
Figure 9: Overview of the Convergence Programmes.....	14
Figure 10: Overview of the Cross-Border Programmes.....	15
Figure 11: Overview of the Transnational Programmes.....	16
Figure 12: Overview of the distribution of the OPs quality and implementation.....	19
Figure 13: Overview of the distribution of the OPs quality and implementation including the name of the OPs.....	20
Figure 14: Biodiversity in the SWOT analysis of OPs.....	23
Figure 15: Biodiversity in the SWOT analysis of OPs - distribution in types.....	23
Figure 16: Biodiversity in the objectives of the priority axis.....	24
Figure 17: Biodiversity in the objectives of the priority axis - distribution in types.....	24
Figure 18: Biodiversity in the activities under the priorities of the OPs.....	25
Figure 19: Biodiversity in the activities under the priorities of the OPs - distribution in types.....	26
Figure 20: Types of activities which are eligible within OPs.....	26
Figure 21: Indicators relating to biodiversity in the OPs.....	27
Figure 22: Indicators relating to biodiversity in the OPs - distribution in types.....	27
Figure 23: Restrictions on funding applicants in the OPs.....	28



# Foreword

Figure 24: Restrictions on funding applicants in the OPs - distribution in types	28
Figure 25: Potential applicants mentioned within OPs - distribution in types	29
Figure 26: Proportion of funding directly allocated to nature conservation (code 51)	29
Figure 27: Proportion of funding directly allocated to nature conservation (code 51) - distribution in types	30
Figure 28: OPs, which allocate the highest amount of nature conservation (code 51)	30
Figure 29: Financing of measures which could potentially integrate biodiversity - distribution in types	31
Figure 30: Integrated measures which could potentially include nature conservation	32
Figure 31: Integrated measures which include nature conservation - distribution in types	32
Figure 32: Overview of the answers from the OPs which have a budget for code 51	33
Figure 33: Overview of the quality of the OPs	33
Figure 34: Overview of the quality of the OPs - distribution in types	33
Figure 35: Presence of nature conservation experts within the authorising committees	37
Figure 36: Presence of nature conservation experts within the authorising committees – distribution according to types of programmes	37
Figure 37: Opportunities available to train applicants in writing applications	38
Figure 38: Opportunities available to train applicants in writing applications - distribution in types	38
Figure 39: Number of calls for proposals per year	39
Figure 40: Presence of a simple pre-audit for project ideas	39
Figure 41: Presence of a simple pre-audit for project ideas - distribution in types	40
Figure 42: Level of web-based assistance for applicants	40
Figure 43: Level of web-based assistance for applicants - distribution in types	40
Figure 44: Promotional activities to encourage project applications	41
Figure 45: Promotional activities to encourage project applications - distribution in types	41
Figure 46: Professional support for applicants	42
Figure 47: Professional support for applicants - distribution in types	42
Figure 48: Availability of templates (provided by administration concerning progress reports, documentation lists etc.)	43
Figure 49: Availability of templates (provided by administration concerning progress reports, documentation lists etc.) - distribution in types	43
Figure 50: Design of templates for easy use by project applicants	44
Figure 51: Design of templates for easy use by project applicants - distribution in types	44
Figure 52: Appropriateness of the level of information and data required in comparison with the level of subsidies and funding objectives	45
Figure 53: Appropriateness of the level of information and data required in comparison with the level of subsidies and funding objectives - distribution in types	45
Figure 54: Time period between application submission (= official application excl. screening phase) and acceptance (= legal funding commitment)	45
Figure 55: Time period between application submission (request levy excl. screening phase) and acceptance (= legal funding commitment) - distribution in types	46
Figure 56: Percentage of nature conservation projects which have been approved for funding so far	46
Figure 57: Percentage of nature conservation projects which have been approved for funding so far - distribution in types	47
Figure 58: Time period between the submission of invoices and reimbursement	47
Figure 59: Time period between the submission of invoices and reimbursement - distribution in types	48
Figure 60: Availability of pre-financing for funding applicants	48
Figure 61: Availability of pre-financing for funding applicants - distribution in types	48
Figure 62: Total funds allocated to nature conservation projects by the 31st March 2010	49
Figure 63: Total funds allocated to nature conservation projects by the 31st March 2010 - distribution in types	49
Figure 64: Overview of the OPs which have an allocation under code 51	50
Figure 65: Overview of the implementation of the OPs	51
Figure 66: Overview of the implementation of the OPs - distribution in types	51

European landscape is characterised by a particularly rich diversity of habitats. Pristine river beds, steep coasts, small terraced vineyards, wildflower meadows and vast natural forests define the character of Europe’s natural heritage but these habitats are increasingly under threat. Biodiversity has changed more dramatically in the last 50 years than in the whole history of humanity with some 100 species are being lost every day worldwide. This loss becomes increasingly more important from an economic perspective as it means we also lose the pollinators for our food production. Due to human activities (e.g. infrastructure, agriculture or general land use change), climate change and invasive species, the current extinction rate is much higher than the rate at which new species arise.

Against this background the European Union (EU) constituted major legal instruments: The Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive, as well as the related network of protected areas – Natura 2000 and The Water Framework Directive concerning integrated and ecologically driven river basin management. However, to implement a sophisticated system political will and financial backing are required. The European Union provides its Member States (MS) with different funding opportunities, with the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) being one of the biggest funding lines providing a wide range of funding opportunities for environmental and nature conservation measures. However, sound planning and implementation of this funding is a key requirement if it is to contribute to the protection and improvement of the environment.

This report provides an idea of the programme planning and implementation of ERDF funding for nature conservation in selected regions of the EU. It was written with the support of Suske Consulting and WWF Germany, and financially supported by the INTERREG IVc SURF Nature project. All SURF project partners have actively contributed to this report, analysing the ERDF Operational Programmes in detail and providing input at several stages of the overall analysis.

# Executive Summary



## Background

Biodiversity has changed more dramatically in the last 50 years than in the whole history of humanity, with some 100 species being lost every day worldwide. Biodiversity and nature conservation are protected under the Birds and Habitats Directives, but this protection is not enough without substantial EU financial backing. In allocating budget codes within EU structural funds there are several codes which can be allocated for financing measures for nature conservation, although only code 51 is explicitly dedicated to this aim. EU funding is a key driver in the ability of Member States to halt the loss of biodiversity and preserve precious natural assets and cultural landscapes. Funding for nature conservation is an opportunity for investment in natural capital as a source of economic development.

## Sustainable Use of Regional Funds for Nature (SURF Nature)

The SURF Nature project has been developed with partners from 14 public bodies in 10 EU Member States. SURF Nature aims to improve regional policies and practices for nature conservation and biodiversity, by increasing the opportunities for financing these measures. In the funding period 2007-2013, €3.8 billion was invested in nature across all ERDF Operational Programmes. However, the allocation of funds varies enormously between projects and between countries.

### SWOT Analysis



## Operation Programme (OP) analysis

The analysis of 46 selected OPs in 10 countries shows the success and opportunity of ERDF funding for biodiversity. In total 14 Convergence, 12 Regional Competitiveness and Employment, 12 Cross-Border and 8 Transnational Programmes were analysed in detail. The main objective was to identify good practice amongst the OPs, which could serve as a suggestion for future programme planning. The analysis consisted of two parts in relation to biodiversity; programme quality and implementation.

### Programme Quality

- In 91% of OPs SWOT analysis biodiversity is mentioned clearly or in a way that it can be interpreted.
- In 86% of OPs biodiversity is included as an objective, meaning that nature projects can be supported.
- 54% of the measures in the OPs provide a wide range of biodiversity activities, with a further 33% providing delineated or isolated biodiversity measures.
- Clear and very useable biodiversity related indicators are present in 22% of the programmes
- In accessing programmes there are restrictions to the eligibility of applicants in 48% of OPs.
- 63% of OPs have a clear budget for biodiversity measures which is expressed by budget code 51.
- On average, the programmes scored 56/100 in quality.

## Implementation

- In 47% of OPs nature conservation experts are represented within the Selection Committee.
- None of the OPs offered specific training relating to nature conservation to potential applicants.
- The most common approach for proposals is through 'thematic calls', the second most common approach is 'application is always possible'.
- Project screening differs across types of OPs, with 30% containing no screening.
- 61% of OPs offer very good web support and 62% of OPs offer very good promotional activities.
- 20% of OPs fund professional external support for applicants.
- 93% of OPs provide easily available guidelines and templates for application submission.
- None of the OPs request inappropriate amounts of data.
- The time period for project approval ranges from 3-9 months. 35% had an approval time > 6 months.
- For 26% of OPs the proportion of approved projects relating to nature conservation is below 50%.
- In 52% of OPs the time between transmitting invoices and receiving payments is longer than 3 months.
- 67% of OPs did not provide pre-financing assistance to applicants.

## Conclusions

The report illustrates that although the majority of OPs identify biodiversity as an important issue, improvement is needed in producing biodiversity indicators which are clear and very useable. There is potential for the inclusion of biodiversity in all programmes, but this potential was not always realised. There are significant differences between programmes in the quality of implementation, in particular there is opportunity to improve screening and support for applicants. The OP analysis provides valuable information which can be used to shape criteria for future programmes and therefore improve both programme quality and implementation.

## Recommendations

- Biodiversity and nature conservation to be included in one of the thematic priorities of each programme.
- Nature conservation experts to be represented within the Selection and Authorising Committees.
- Funding opportunities for biodiversity and nature conservation to be more visible.
- All OPs to communicate to applicants the possibilities for nature conservation.
- A more systematic approach to project screening to improve project quality.
- External application support funding to be available to a greater extent.
- The time period for approval to be less than 6 months.
- Improved pre-application procedures to result in fewer rejected applications.
- Improved pre-financing to assist and encourage applications from not for profit organisations, which are typical of the nature conservation sector.

## 1 ■ Introduction

Protecting the environment and improving the quality of life for European citizens are integral aims and purposes for the European Union (EU). EU's policies and activities are mandated to be defined and implemented in line with environmental protection requirements as declared in the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union, Article 11. After failing to meet the 2010 target to halt the loss of biodiversity, the EU made strong efforts to define a new biodiversity strategy. Consequently the Council adopted the conclusions that set out the EU 2020 headline target and its vision for the better protection of biodiversity in the EU by 2050. The new 2020 target aims at halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems services in the EU by 2020. The practical centerpiece of the EU's nature and biodiversity policy is Natura 2000 which is a network of nature conservation areas across Europe, covering around 18 % of the total area.

European Union funds provide different opportunities to complement the financing of national, regional and local nature conservation measures in the Member States to preserve precious natural assets and cultural landscapes. The European approach for financing of Natura 2000 suggests that nature conservation measures must be integrated into all EU funds. The current funding period 2007-2013 has shown great potential for financing the promotion of biodiversity and nature within the Operational Programmes of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Indeed, € 3.8 billion have been allocated for nature investments across all ERDF Operational Programmes. However, the country and current project allocations of these funding opportunities vary enormously across the Union.

The SURF Nature project financed by INTERREG IVc aims to identify good practice in financing biodiversity from ERDF and to provide ideas how to improve regional policy's funding for biodiversity. The project partnership consists of 14 public bodies from 10 countries in the EU, which are responsible for the implementation of ERDF funding or have experience in applying for them. There are two main activities the project is concentrating on, firstly the analysis of Operational Programmes, and secondly an analysis of good practice examples for nature conservation and biodiversity financed through ERDF.

This report summarises individual results of 46 Operational Programmes analysed by the partners between June and December 2010 and therefore only gives a snapshot of the still ongoing funding period and performance of the programmes analysed.

### The SURF Nature partnership consists of:

- Environment Agency Austria (Austria)
- Giurgiu County Council (Romania)
- Marshal Office of Warmia & Mazury Voivodship (Poland)
- Rieti Province (Italy)
- Municipal Enterprise For Planning & Development of Patras S.A. (Greece)
- Prefecture Preveza (Greece)
- DG Environmnet of the Region of Murcia (Spain)
- Forest Sciences Centre of Catalonia (Spain)
- Environment Agency Wales (United Kingdom)
- University Olomouc (Czech Republic)
- Austrian Federal Forests (Austria)
- Donau-Auen National Park (Austria)
- Côtes d'Armor General Council (France)
- Development Agency Savinja (Slovenia)

The lead partner of this project is the Environment Agency Austria. Project management and coordination is provided by WWF Germany.

One of the first and central activities of the project was the analysis of Operational Programmes in the partner regions in order to screen the programmes for their integration of biodiversity and nature conservation as well as the execution of "code 51"<sup>1</sup>. The target was to identify good practice amongst the programmes, which could serve as a suggestion for future regional programme planning. This document represents the summary of all individual Operational Programme analysis.

## 2 ■ Background

The SURF Nature partnership analysed 46 Operational Programmes (OPs). The analysis was based on a common evaluation matrix that enabled the quality of the programmes to be ranked in terms of programme design and implementation.

This report summarises the results of the Operational Programme analysis and identifies the most obvious weaknesses that have led to a low integration of biodiversity funding within the programmes, as well as key success factors where the programmes have had a positive influence.

Special attention was given to one country where a thorough analysis of 14 Operational Programmes was possible due to the support of three partners. With the detailed analysis a comprehensive picture could be drawn on the strengths and weaknesses of the programmes in Austria.

This report also includes some practical examples which are presented in the individual partner OP reports<sup>2</sup> as well as a brief overview of the most frequent activities that are directly or indirectly beneficial to nature conservation and biodiversity.

### Method of analysis

To assess the OPs, a matrix was created by the SURF Nature team based on an analysis of several Operational Programmes (see page 16). The matrix analysed two parts of the OPs: "quality" of the document and "implementation" experience, which are presented in Appendix I & II.

The completed matrix enabled each programme to be ranked according to the points it scored from a maximum of 100. A team of project experts, WWF and Suske Consulting developed a weighted set of points that were allocated to each question. In spring 2010 the whole SURF project team discussed the matrix and their comments were incorporated.

The partners then selected OPs operating in their country. In summary, 49 OPs from 11 Member States were identified<sup>3</sup>, of which 46 were included in the final results as some partners analysed the same programme. Each partner analysed their OPs, answered the questions of the matrix and gave points for each. In some cases the partners were not able to answer all questions of the matrix. Therefore,

the number ("n") in some figures is different from the total number of 46 OPs considered for the analysis.

All answers and results of the matrix were analysed using the statistical programme SPSS (version 16.0) for Windows. Firstly, a frequency analysis was performed to describe the sample. Thereafter, the samples were compared with the different programme types (e.g. Regional Competitiveness and Employment) using Crosstabs. All the results are displayed in the form of charts in the following appendices.

### Principles of EU Cohesion policy and Operational Programmes

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF) and Cohesion Fund are part of the European Cohesion policy which aims to reduce the gap in the different regions' levels of development, in order to strengthen economic and social cohesion. Within the framework of EU Cohesion policy priorities and objectives were defined that suggest ways the European regions can take advantage of the € 348 billion that has been made available for national and regional programmes for the 2007-2013 funding period.

The structure of Cohesion funding is very complex and is implemented through different policy stages, which are based on the principle of shared management<sup>4</sup> between the Union and the Member States and regions. In light of the following analysis it is helpful to give a short overview of the central issues of cohesion policy and its funding instrument the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The funding instruments European Regional Development Funds (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF) and Cohesion Fund are dedicated to three different objectives:

- The **convergence objective** aims to stimulate growth and employment in the least developed regions. It highlights innovation and the knowledge-based society, adaptability to economic and social changes and the quality of the environment and administrative efficiency. It is financed by the ERDF and the ESF as well as the Cohesion Fund and targets the least well developed Member States and regions.

<sup>1</sup> Code 51 is a financial category, which is part of all Operational Programmes. It stands for the promotion of biodiversity and nature conservation.

<sup>2</sup> Each partner provided an analysis of 3-4 Operational Programmes and respective short reports, which give a summary and assessment of the programmes analysed and can be found on: [www.surf-nature.eu](http://www.surf-nature.eu)

<sup>3</sup> This number doesn't correlate with the member states involved in the project which is due to a partner replacement.

<sup>4</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006: Article 14: The budget of the European Union allocated to the Funds shall be implemented within the framework of shared management between the Member States and the Commission, in accordance with Article 53(1)(b) of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities (1), with the exception of the technical assistance referred to in Article 45 of this Regulation.

- The **regional competitiveness and employment objective** covers all the areas of the European Union not eligible for the convergence objective. It aims to reinforce the regions' competitiveness and attractiveness as well as employment, by anticipating economic and social changes. It is funded by the ERDF and the ESF.
- The European **territorial cooperation objective** aims to reinforce cooperation at cross-border, transnational and interregional level. It acts as a complement to the two other objectives, as the eligible regions are also eligible for the convergence and regional competitiveness and employment objectives. It is financed by the ERDF and aims to promote common solutions for the authorities of different countries in the domain of urban, rural and coastal development, the development of economic relations and the setting up of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The cooperation is centered on research, development, the knowledge-based society, risk prevention and integrated water management.

Under the three objectives assistance from the Funds shall, according to their nature, take into account specific economic and social features on the one hand, and specific territorial features on the other hand. The regions targeted by the Convergence objective are those whose per capita gross domestic product (GDP) measured in purchasing power parities is less than 75 % of the Community average. Member States where the overall GDP for all regions is less than 90 % are also recipients of the Cohesion Fund. The

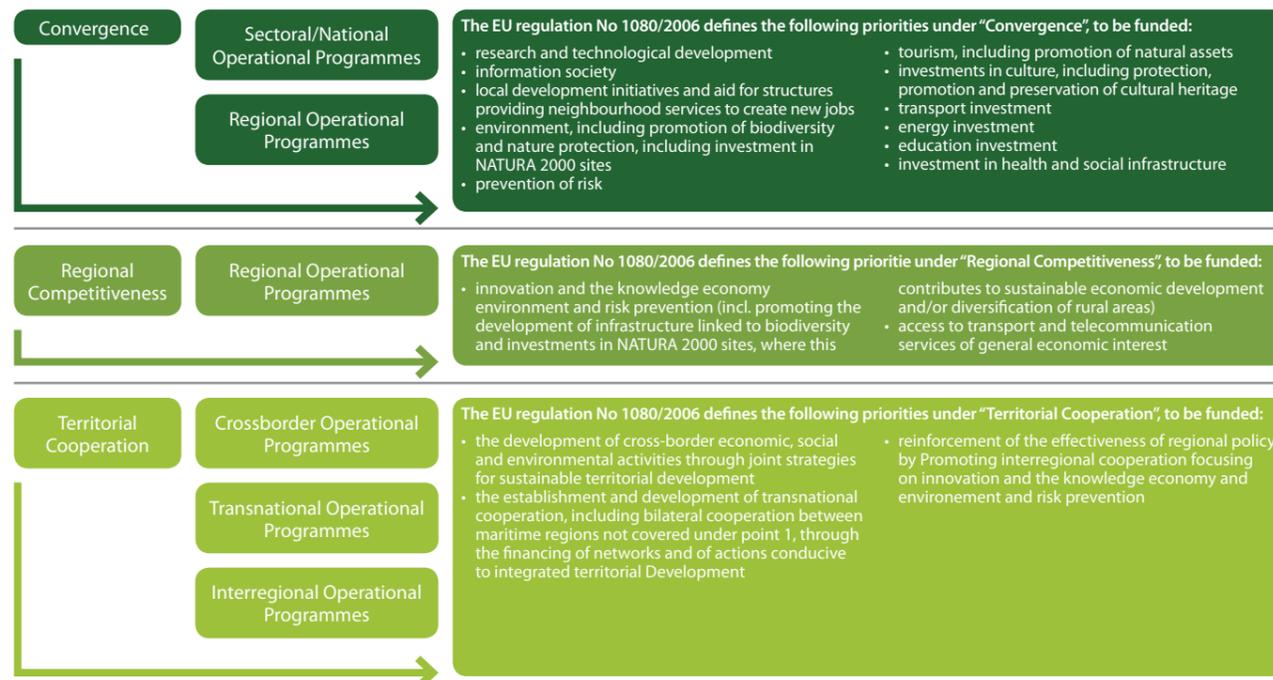
Figure 1: Funding Instruments according to the objectives. WWF Germany based on data from DG Regio



regional competitiveness and employment objective is to cover the territory of the Community outside the Convergence objective. The regions eligible are those under Objective 1 in the 2000 to 2006 programming period which no longer satisfy the regional eligibility criteria of the Convergence objective and which therefore benefit from a transitional aid, as well as all the other regions of the Community.

The European territorial cooperation objective is to cover regions having land or sea frontiers, the areas for transnational cooperation being defined with regard to actions promoting integrated territorial development and support for interregional cooperation and exchange of experience.<sup>5</sup>

Figure 2: Operational Programme categories in relation to cohesion policy objectives and possible measures. Source: WWF Germany based on data from DG Regio



### Cohesion policy stages:

- The Commission makes a proposal after having consulted closely with Member States over the **community strategic guidelines on cohesion**. This is the pillar of the policy which gives it a strategic dimension. The guidelines guarantee that Member States adjust their programming in line with the priorities of the Union. This will be changed in the next funding period to the common strategic framework.
- Each Member State prepares a **National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF)**, coherent with the strategic guidelines, over the course of an ongoing dialogue with the Commission. The NSRF defines the strategy chosen by the Member State and proposes a list of Operational Programmes that it hopes to implement. This is to be changed into partnership contracts in future.
- With consideration of the NSRF the Member States as well as regions prepare their Operational Programme (OP). The OPs are documents which define the priorities of the Member State (and/or regions) as well as the way in which it will lead its programming. For the 2007-2013 period, 455 (335 for ERDF and 120 for ESF) Operational Programmes are adopted by the European Commission. Economic and social partners as well as environmental partners should fully participate in the programming and management of the OPs.<sup>6</sup>

Figure 3: Policy Stages of EU Cohesion policy. Source: WWF Germany based on data from DG Regio



Operational Programmes from 10 different Member States and 14 regions, which are dedicated to all three objectives of Cohesion Policy are the focus of the SURF Nature analysis. For a better understanding of an Operational Programme it is helpful to briefly describe its general structure and content.

In general, Operational Programmes are structured into five parts: the SWOT analysis, the programme's strategy, priorities and objectives, financial overview and the evaluation. The centrepiece of an Operational Programme is the characterisation of its objectives and priorities with possible measures. This part determines what measures and activities are eligible and could be funded within the programme.

Figure 4: Common structure of Operational Programmes. Source: WWF Germany based on data from DG Regio

### SWOT Analysis



<sup>5</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006.  
<sup>6</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/policy/etap/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/etap/index_en.htm)

In all Operational Programmes the budget should be defined according to the “Codes by Dimension”, which is a list of 86 priority themes to be funded through the programmes. Special attention needs to be given to the “code 51” which represents a direct funding category for the “Promotion of biodiversity and nature protection (including Natura 2000)”<sup>7</sup>.

In addition codes such as “code 55”<sup>8</sup> or “code 56”<sup>9</sup> can provide funding for nature conservation and biodiversity indirectly.

All programmes are planned and implemented under consideration of the partnership principle, which refers to the close cooperation between the Commission and the Member States as well as the collaboration of authorities and bodies such as the economic and social partners, appropriate bodies representing civil society, environmental partners, non-governmental organisations, and bodies responsible for promoting equality between men and women.

In order to monitor the implementation of funding, different committees were introduced e.g. Programme Monitoring Committees (PMCs) or Selection Committees, which are made of authorities and the social and economic partners and NGOs, etc. The tasks of committee members vary from country to country but should include examining and approving the selection criteria for projects, evaluating the progress made on achieving the objectives and the results of the programme implementation, examination and approval of the annual reports and the final report, examination and approval of alterations to the programme.

## Overview of the programmes analysed

An overview of the 46 analysed Operational Programmes is presented in Figure 5. The table distinguishes between two different types of the OPs:

The Category “**OP Objective**” includes the types “Regional Competitiveness and Employment”, “Convergence” and “Territorial Cooperation”. The Category “**Regional Category**” includes the types “Regional Programme”, “National/ Sectoral Programme”, “Cross-Border” and “Transnational” (a detailed explanation of the terms can be found in chapter 2.2).



7 European Commission’s implementing regulation for the Structural and Cohesion Funds: [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/pdf/2007/fsfc/ce\\_1828%282006%29\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/pdf/2007/fsfc/ce_1828%282006%29_en.pdf)

8 Promotion of natural assets

9 Protection and development of natural heritage

Figure 5: Overview of all analysed Operational Programmes

No <sup>10</sup>	Name	Country, which analysed the OP	OP Objective	Regional Category
1	Regional Competitiveness – Upper Austria	Austria	Regional Competitiveness and Employment	Regional Programme
2	Regional Competitiveness of Vorarlberg	Austria	Regional Competitiveness and Employment	Regional Programme
3	Regional Competitiveness – Styria	Austria	Regional Competitiveness and Employment	Regional Programme
4	Strengthening the Regional Competitiveness of Tyrol	Austria	Regional Competitiveness and Employment	Regional Programme
5	Strengthening the Competitiveness of the Salzburg Region	Austria	Regional Competitiveness and Employment	Regional Programme
6	Strengthening the Regional Competitiveness of Lower Austria	Austria	Regional Competitiveness and Employment	Regional Programme
7	Strengthening the Regional Competitiveness of Vienna	Austria	Regional Competitiveness and Employment	Regional Programme
8	Cross-Border Collaboration Slovenia – Austria	Austria	Territorial Cooperation	Cross-Border
9	Cross-Border Cooperation Slovakia – Austria	Austria	Territorial Cooperation	Cross-Border
10	European Territorial Cooperation Italy – Austria	Austria	Territorial Cooperation	Cross-Border
11	European Territorial Cooperation Germany/Bavaria – Austria	Austria	Territorial Cooperation	Cross-Border
12	Cross-Border Cooperation Austria – Hungary	Austria	Territorial Cooperation	Cross-Border
13	European Objective for Territorial Co-operation Austria – Czech Republic	Austria	Territorial Cooperation	Cross-Border
14	Alpine Space	Austria	Territorial Cooperation	Transnational
15	European Territorial Cooperation Programme Greece – Italy	Greece	Territorial Cooperation	Cross-Border
16	OP Thessaly-Stereia Ellada-Epirus	Greece	Regional Competitiveness and Employment	Regional Programme
17	OP Western Greece-Peloponnese -Ionian Islands	Greece	Convergence	Regional Programme
18	Environment and Sustainable Development in Greece	Greece	Convergence	Sectoral Programme
19	Regional Operational Programme – Giurgiu	Romania	Convergence	Regional Programme
20	Sectoral Operational Programme for the Environment – Romania	Romania	Convergence	National/Sectoral Programme
21	Cross-Border Cooperation Romania-Bulgaria	Romania	Territorial Cooperation	Cross-Border

10 These numbers are used throughout the whole report.

No <sup>10</sup>	Name	Country, which analysed the OP	OP Objective	Regional Category
22	Transnational Cooperation Programme South East Europe	Romania	Territorial Cooperation	Transnational
23	Regional OP Competitiveness Region of Lazio	Italy	Regional Competitiveness and Employment	Regional Programme
24	Multiregional Operational Programme Research and Competitiveness – Italy	Italy	Convergence	Regional Programme
25	Mediterranean Operational Programme	Italy	Territorial Cooperation	Transnational
26	OP West Wales and the Valleys	Wales	Convergence	Regional Programme
27	East Wales Regional Competitiveness and Employment	Wales	Regional Competitiveness and Employment	Regional Programme
28	Cross-Border Programme Ireland – Wales	Wales	Territorial Cooperation	Cross-Border
29	Atlantic Area Transnational Cooperation Programme	Wales	Territorial Cooperation	Transnational
30	Transnational Territorial Cooperation – North West Europe	Wales	Territorial Cooperation	Transnational
31	OP of the Central Moravia Cohesion Region	Czech Republic	Convergence	Regional Programme
32	Environment – Czech Republic	Czech Republic	Convergence	National/Sectoral Programme
33	Central Europe	Czech Republic	Territorial Cooperation	Transnational
34	OP Catalonia	Spain	Regional Competitiveness and Employment	Regional Programme
35	OP Region of Murcia	Spain	Convergence	Regional Programme
36	POCTEFA – France-Spain-Andorra	Spain	Territorial Cooperation	Transnational
37	South West Europe	Spain	Territorial Cooperation	Transnational
38	Development of Eastern Poland	Poland	Convergence	Regional Programme
39	OP Warmia and Mazury	Poland	Convergence	Regional Programme
40	OP Infrastructure and Environment Poland	Poland	Convergence	National/Sectoral Programme
41	Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Lithuania-Poland	Poland	Territorial Cooperation	Cross-Border
42	Regional Development of Bulgaria	Bulgaria	Convergence	National/Sectoral Programme
43	Programme of Regional Competitiveness and Employment - Brittany	France	Regional Competitiveness and Employment	Regional Programme
44	INTERREG IVA France (Channel) England	France	Territorial Cooperation	Cross-Border
45	Strengthening Regional Development Potential of Slovenia	Slovenia	Convergence	National Programme
46	OP Slovenia - Hungary	Slovenia	Territorial Cooperation	Cross-Border

For the analysis the programmes were differentiated into following categories:

- Regional Competitiveness and Employment
- Convergence
- Cross-Border
- Transnational

Nearly one quarter of the OPs are each Convergence (14 OPs), Regional Competitiveness and Employment (12) or Cross-Border Programmes (12). One-sixth are Transnational Programmes (8).

Figure 7 shows 11 Member States which analysed the total of 46 OPs. Most of the programmes which were investigated originated from Austria (14), followed by United Kingdom with 5 programmes.

Error! Reference source not found. shows 11 Member States which analysed the total of 46 OPs. Most of the programmes which were investigated originated from Austria (14), followed by United Kingdom with 5 programmes.

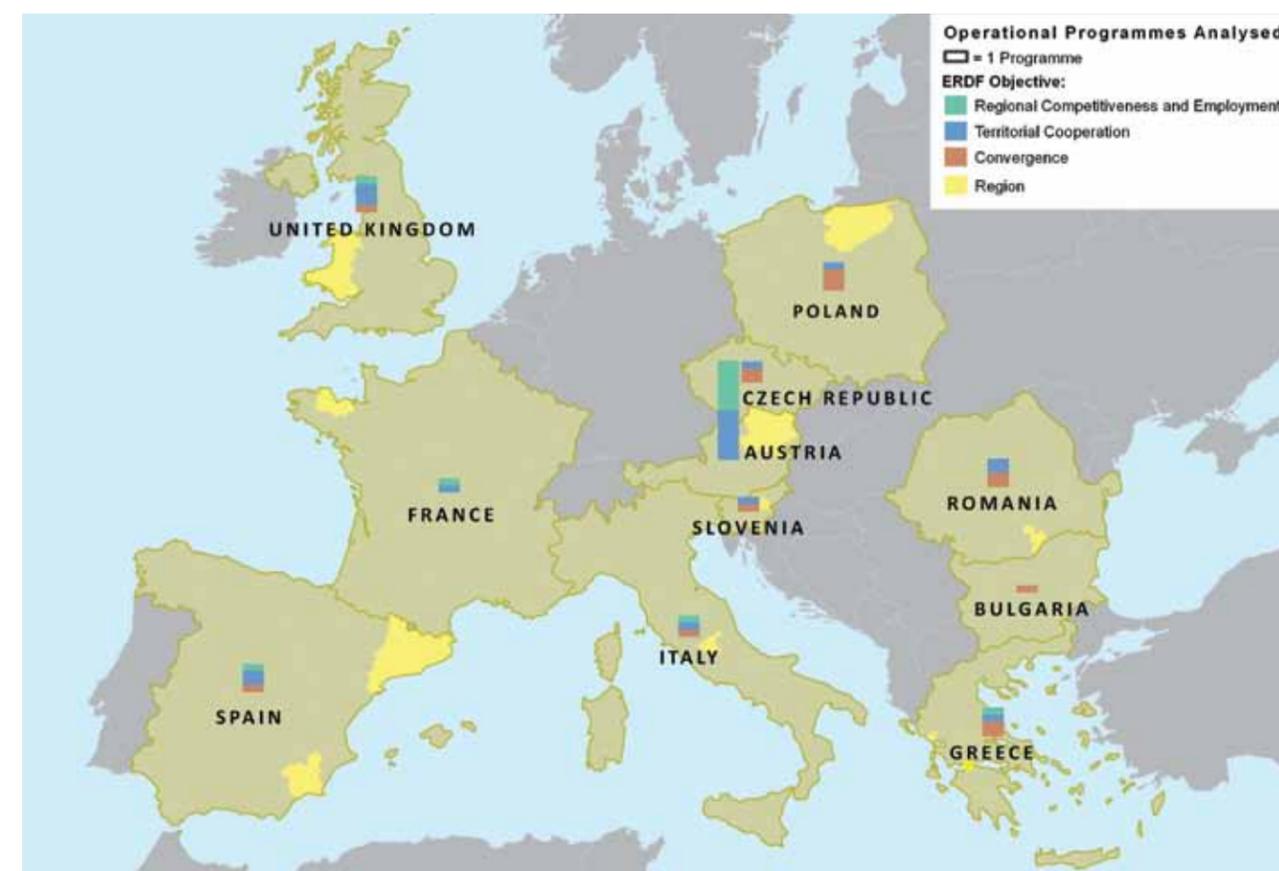
Figure 6: Types of Operational Programmes n=46<sup>11</sup>; Source: own surveys

### Types of Operational Programmes



Regional Competitiveness/ Employment	26%
Convergence	31%
Cross Border	26%
Transnational	17%

Figure 7: Map of the Member States which analysed the programmes Source: WWF Germany



### 3 | Overview of analysis results

#### Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes

As illustrated in Figure 8, these programmes feature some positive aspects during their implementation. In particular, the approval period is frequently rather short, pre-financing is easily or in exceptions possible, timing for payments is rather short or acceptable. However the programmes lack quality concerning activities and objectives with relation to biodiversity and nature conservation.

Nevertheless it is interesting, that one of these programmes shows quite high quality in terms of programming for nature – this shows that there is potential for implementation of Natura 2000 even in Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes.

#### Convergence Programmes

The quality of Convergence Programmes is good on average, weak points concerning the programme implementation are: Less project screenings are offered than in Regional Competitiveness Programmes and pre-financing is available in half of the Convergence OPs. In one-third of the programmes experts for nature conservation are not represented in the Evaluation and Selection Committees. These areas should be improved (see Figure 9).

#### Cross-Border Programmes

As shown in Figure 10, Cross-Border Programmes are, compared with all other categories, the best programmes both in quality and in implementation issues. Many Cross-Border Programmes give a valuable example of how nature conservation and biodiversity can be implemented and enforced by an Operational Programme. There are only two crucial aspects which might prevent applicants proposing projects. These are the delay in receiving payments and the fact that there are very few options for pre-financing. These aspects should be improved.

#### Transnational Programmes

In principle Transnational Programmes have a high quality - objectives, activities and indicators are mostly referring to biodiversity. The implementation of these programmes works well although some issues should be improved, for example Selection and Evaluation Committees experts in nature conservation are frequently not represented. Also the time taken for payments to be received is much too long and pre-financing should be established in more programmes (see Figure 11).



Figure 8: Overview of the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes  
n=12; In the case where "n" is different to 12, it is due to the fact that the relevant question was not answered by all OPs;  
Source: own surveys

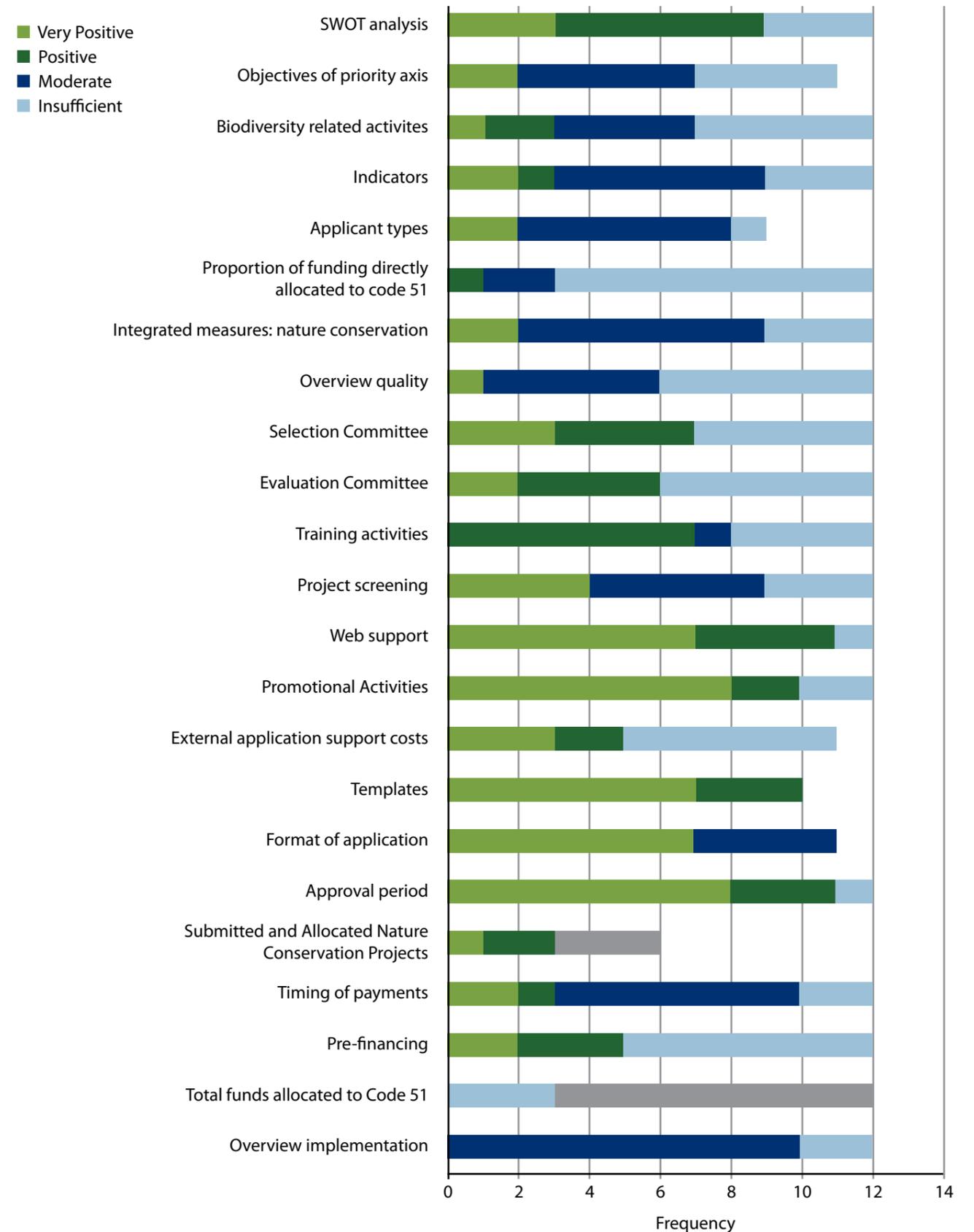


Figure 9: Overview of the Convergence Programmes

n=14; In the case where "n" is different to 14, it is due to the fact that the relevant question was not answered by all OPs; Source: own surveys

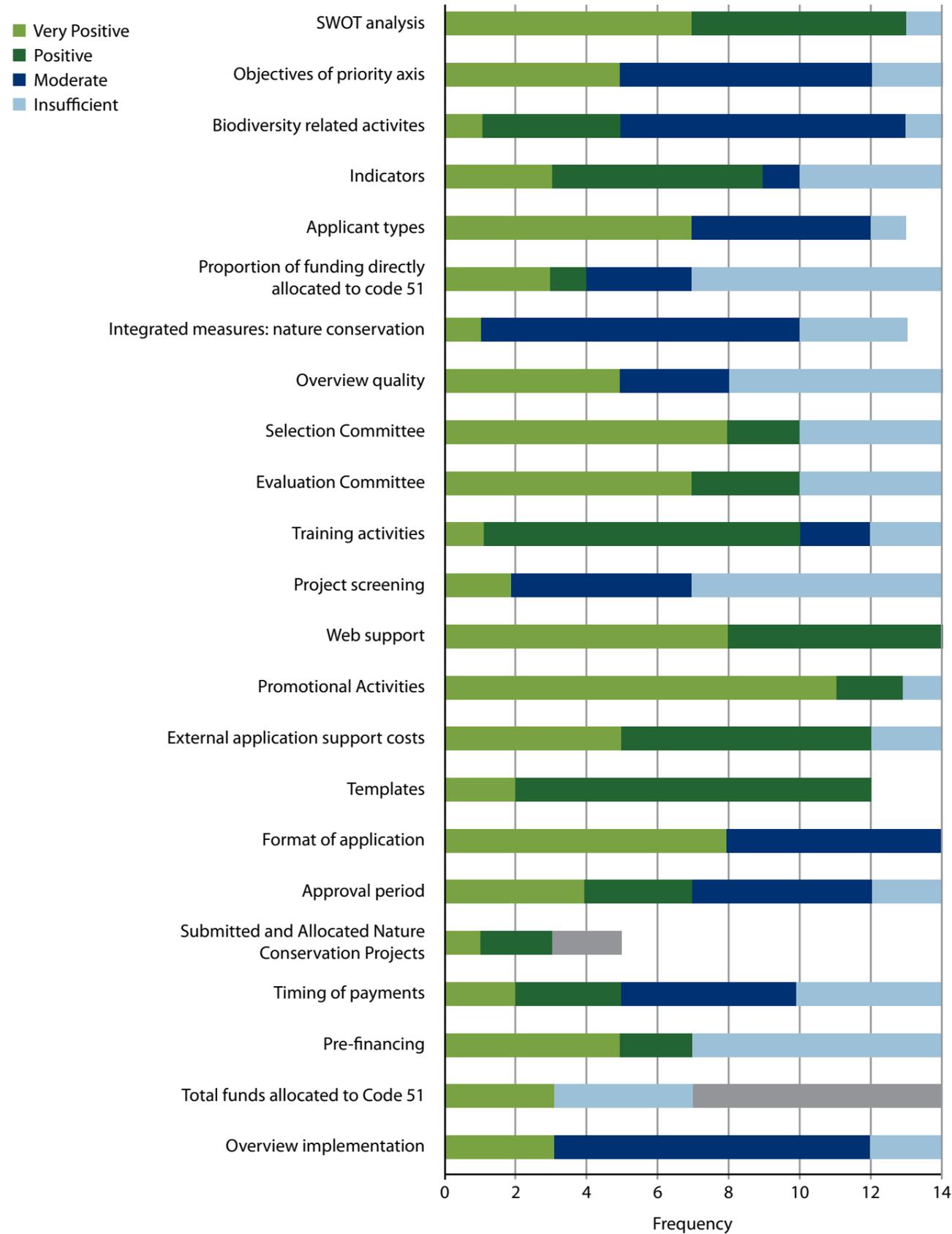


Figure 10: Overview of the Cross-Border Programmes

n=12; In the case where "n" is different to 12, it is due to the fact that the relevant question was not answered by all OPs; Source: own surveys

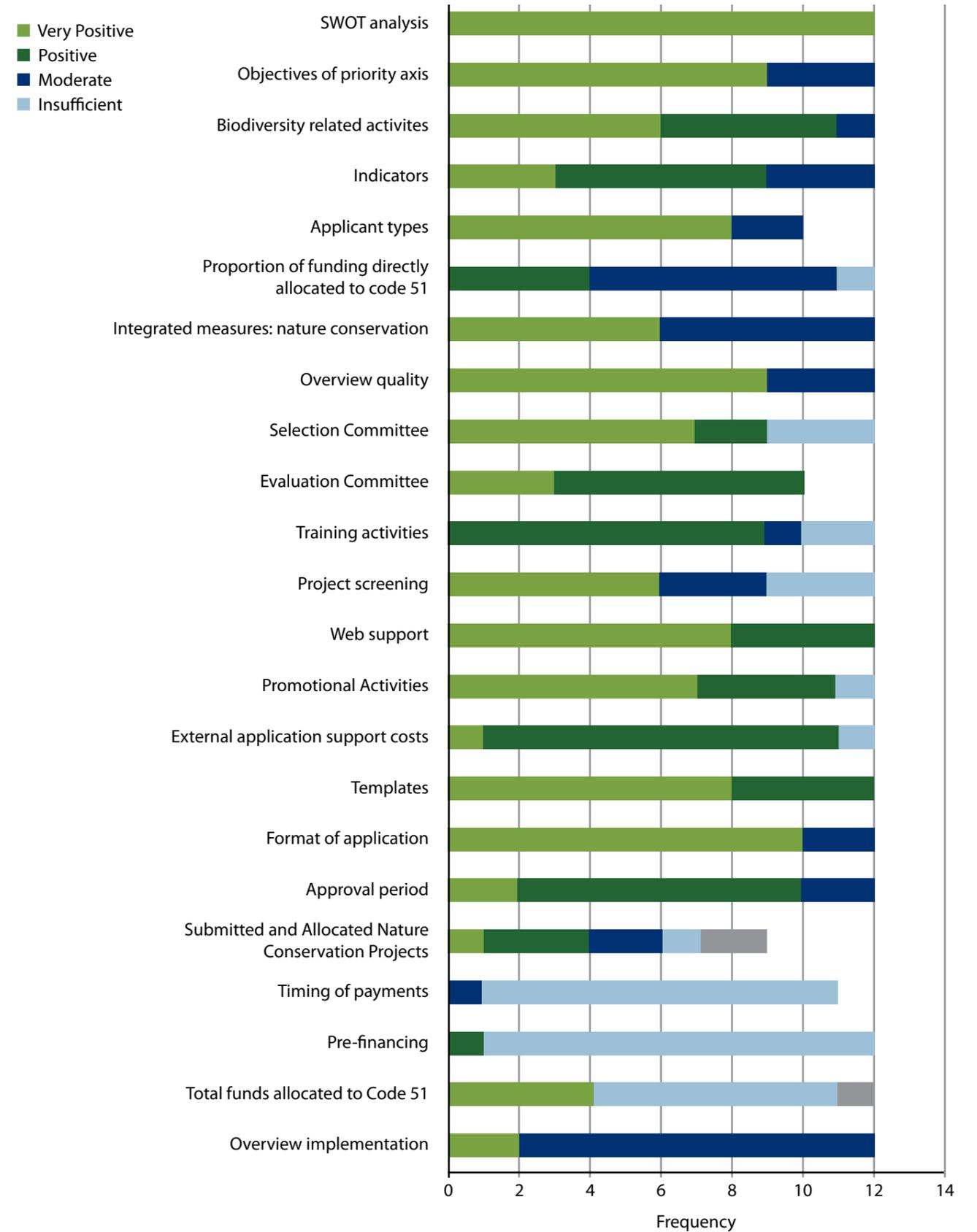
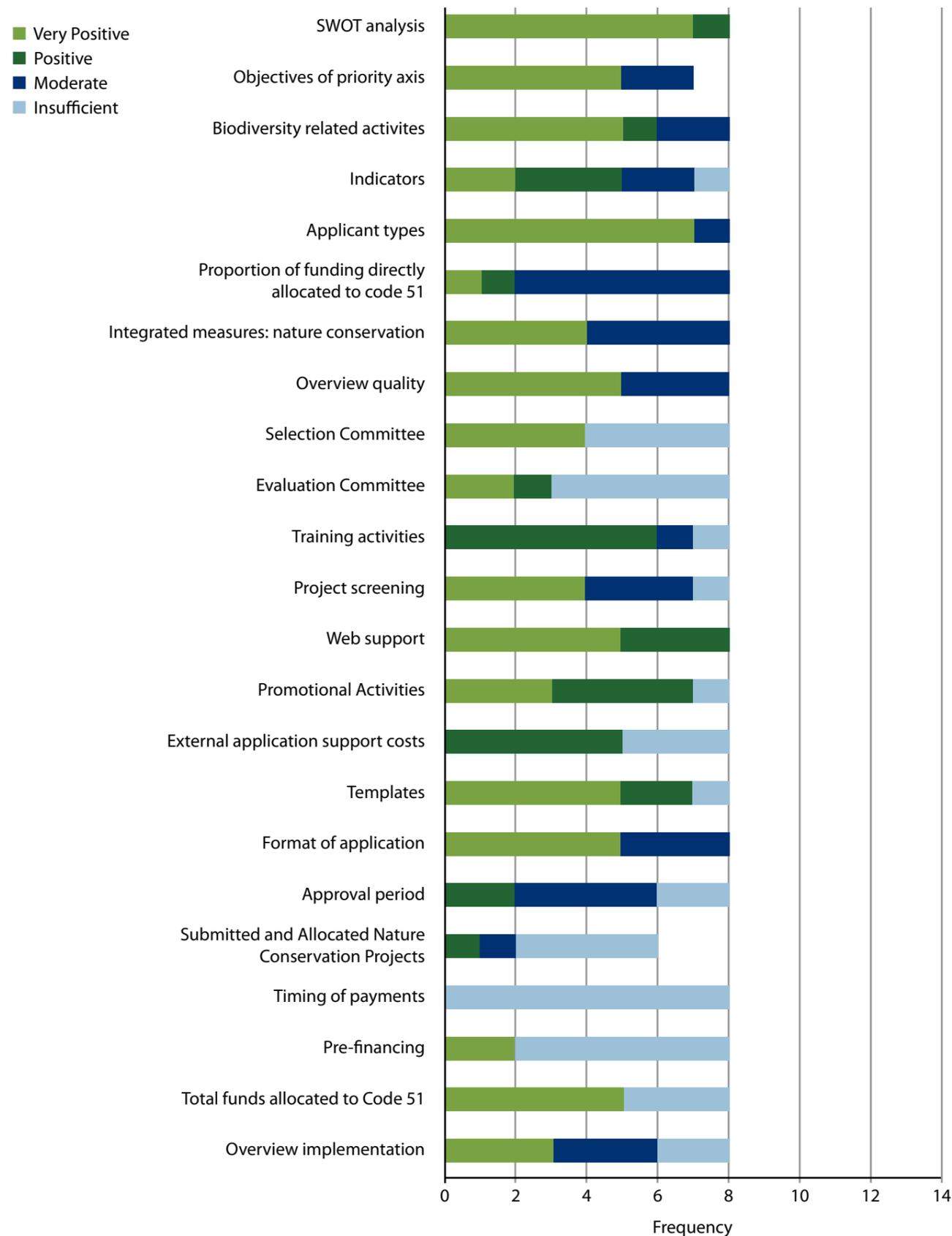


Figure 11: Overview of the Transnational Programmes  
 n=8; In the case where “n” is different to 8, it is due to the fact that the relevant question was not answered by all OPs; Source:  
 own surveys



## 4 Conclusions and recommendations

The comprehensive summary of tables, the interpretation of individual reports, along with the Operational Programme analysis results and key observations of the main success and failure factors, combine to provide a rich portfolio of ideas for improvements that are presented in the following conclusions and in full detail in the appendices.

### Conclusions concerning all aspects of the detailed analysis

#### Analysis of the Operational Programme quality

- In the majority of the OPs nature conservation and biodiversity issues were integrated into the **SWOT analysis**. The inclusion of these issues in this early part of the programmes draws a very important baseline for further integration and interpretation of activities and measures for nature conservation.
- In most of the OPs biodiversity is also well reflected in the **objectives** of the priority axes. This means that there is a strong basis for designing project proposals relating to biodiversity. In only 14 % of the OPs is biodiversity not included as an objective in any of the axes meaning that nature projects cannot be supported.
- The majority of the programmes have integrated biodiversity into their **activities**. Nearly one-third of them have a flexible interpretation of biodiversity, which in turn makes project applications in principle more flexible and more straightforward. In the rest of the programmes biodiversity is clearly defined but too often in delineated or isolated measures. It is completely absent mainly in those programmes that also lack biodiversity in the SWOT analysis and objectives.
- Clear and applicable biodiversity related indicators are present in around 20 % of the programmes. Indicators are completely absent in 8 OPs, which are mainly Regional Programmes. Consequently, more than 60 % of the analysed programmes use biodiversity indicators which are of limited practical use. Therefore it is recommended to raise the clarity of indicators throughout all programmes.
- More than half of the programmes are quite open to the different types of **applicants** and do not exclude specific types or forms. The rest of the programmes have set restrictions for certain measures. Two OPs have set restrictions for applicants who mainly refer to state-independent actors and individuals.

- Generally, the highest amounts of the **budgets under code 51** allocated to nature conservation are in the Sectoral Environment Programmes.
- In many of the assessed programmes, in addition to code 51, biodiversity can be funded through several other codes which can be interpreted to include biodiversity related actions. The majority of the Cross-Border and Transnational Programmes have integrated nature conservation measures apart from code 51. In contrast, Regional Competitiveness and Employment and Convergence Programmes offer less or no integrated nature conservation measures. In this context it has to be stressed that Convergence Programmes allocate the highest amounts to nature conservation under code 51. The use of codes 85 and 86 for assistance and capacity building is interesting as this code is most frequently applied across all programmes.

#### Analysis of the Programme implementation

- Nature conservation experts are represented in the **Selection Committee** in about half of the OPs and in one-third in the **Evaluation Committee**. In some cases, mainly in Transnational Programmes, OPs have a clear budget for biodiversity measures (code 51 etc.), but no nature conservation experts are represented within the authorising committee (Selection Committee and Evaluation Committee) as members or as guests. In addition, it is advisable to include the views of nature conservation experts in other OPs which do not support biodiversity actions but which might support projects that have a negative impact on biodiversity.
- Communication with potential applicants is very important to achieving successful funding. It is best achieved through **training activities** which are currently only in the planning stage in most OPs (two-thirds) and in one-fifth of OPs not planned at all.
- The Transnational Programmes have the best proportion of screening as opposed to Convergence Programmes. A more systematic approach to project screening e.g. through a two step application procedure could not only improve the projects quality but also help the managing authorities to better target the projects towards the programme goals.

- **Websites** offer the easiest and most accessible way of communicating nowadays. A high quality web service makes a programme highly accessible to the applicants which is an important step towards successful funding. Web support of the evaluated programmes is, in general, very good.
- The first contact between the programme and the potential applicant is usually accomplished through promotional activities. The role of this aspect is to reach the applicant and inform him about the information on the accessibility of the programme. On the regional and national level, **promotional activities** should pay additional attention to reach the “difficult to reach” applicants such as individuals, small enterprises, NGOs, etc. In the case of territorial cooperation, these activities have a primary goal to connect large areas of different countries and promote the potential of their cooperation. Evaluation of this aspect has shown that the majority of OPs have a good level of different promotional activities.
- **External application support cost** is a great convenience for the applicants. For that reason it should be available to a greater extent, especially in Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes which offer the lowest level of professional support. Together with Convergence Programmes, these types of programmes have the highest number of applicants with limited financial resources (individuals, NGOs, etc.) and for that reason, the biggest need for such a service.
- As one of the most important helpful tools in the application process, **guidelines** are available in almost all of the OPs.
- Bureaucracy is often seen as a particular problem for potential applicants. But in summary, the majority of the programmes require an appropriate **amount of information** and data in the application, which is a positive development that should be further encouraged.
- In the majority of Transnational Programmes the administration needs up to 9 or in some cases, more than 9 months for **approval of the projects**, in contrast to the majority of Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes, where the procedure is carried out in approximately 3 months.
- The **number of rejected projects** is significantly high in Transnational Programmes as well as in Convergence Programmes.

- Transnational Programmes and Cross-Border Programmes have significantly the longest **period for payment** of invoices to the applicant. 2 Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes and 2 Convergence Programmes show what is possible in the administration sector, needing only 1 month for payment.
- **Pre-financing** could be provided for half of the Convergence Programmes. In Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes it is in general only possible exceptional cases. For Transnational and Cross-Border Programmes pre-financing is almost not available.
- Out of all the programmes which have a **budget for code 51**, more than half did not succeed to **allocate** a significant part of the budget amount to nature conservation.

### Comparison between Programme types

The best programme is the **Convergence** Programme (National/Sectoral Programme) “Environment - Czech Republic” [no. 32]. Other good Convergence Programmes are 2 Environment Programmes: the National/Sectoral Programme “Infrastructure and Environment Warmia and Mazury” [no. 40] and the Regional Programme “Environment and Sustainable Development - Western Greece” [no. 18] as well as the Regional Programmes “Region of Murcia” [no. 35] and “Strengthening Regional Development Potential of Slovenia” [no. 45]. The remaining Convergence Programmes have a low score in terms of quality as well as implementation (except the National/Sectoral Programme “Environment – Romania” [no. 20] which has a good quality but poor implementation).

Most of the **Transnational** Programmes include nature conservation funding within their OPs, especially South-East Europe [no. 22] and South-West Europe [no. 37], Alpine Space [no. 14], Mediterranean [no. 25] and POCTEFA [no. 36]. However, the Atlantic Area [no. 29], Central Europe [no. 33] and North West Europe [no. 30] face some problems with programme implementation.

Most of the **Cross-Border** Programmes also integrate nature funding within their OPs. Slovakia-Austria [no. 9] and Austria-Czech Republic [no. 13] are of particularly high quality and have good programme implementation. The programmes Slovenia-Austria [no. 8], Slovenia-Hungary [no. 46], Austria-Hungary [no. 12], Ireland-Wales [no. 28], Germany/Bavaria-Austria [no.11], Romania-Bulgaria [no. 21], Italy-Austria [no. 10], Greece-Italy [no. 15] and France-England [no. 44] are average, but their design quality is often better than their implementation.

The Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes have the lowest scores in terms of quality as well as implementation. Only Catalonia [no. 34] and Brittany [no. 43] achieved high points for the quality of the programme.

### Overall conclusions

Combining analysis and implementation, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Sectoral Operational Programmes are generally of good quality but differ greatly in terms of implementation.
- Most of the Cross-Border and Transnational Programmes integrate biodiversity issues, about 50 % of these programmes are assessed as being high quality. It could be relevant that these programmes are designed by more than one Member State – and have therefore a broader understanding of biodiversity integration.
- Regional Competitiveness and Employment and Convergence Programmes show the worst performance, approximately half of these programmes are described as weak programmes for biodiversity.
- The 6 Regional Competitiveness and Employment and Convergence OPs which were identified as being good quality programmes show that biodiversity objectives can be successfully integrated into all types of programmes.
- Regarding the implementation of the OPs, the most relevant result is that the financial uptake is much too low after 3 years. The reasons for that could be:

- Pre-financing assistance is not offered in most programmes, causing difficulties for not-for-profit associations and NGOs.
  - Challenges in providing sufficient, easily accessible information and establishing efficient procedures.
  - The time period between the application submission and approval, and especially the time period between the submission of invoices and reimbursed payments, tend to be too long. This is a common issue in Transnational Programmes (OP “Mediterranean”, OP “European Territorial Cooperation in South-East Europe”, etc.), but it also occurs within some regional programmes.
  - Project screening, which can be a great support to applicants, especially beginners, is not offered for all programmes.
  - Up to now there have been less training activities related to nature conservation than for other areas, although some Member States are now starting such activities.
- Some aspects in the implementation process are quite positive and are therefore not the reasons for the low financial uptake:
    - Nearly all Operational Programmes are well promoted
    - Web-based assistance for applications is generally good
    - Application requirements are mostly moderate and reasonable

Figure 12: Overview of the distribution of the OPs quality and implementation  
n=46; Source: own surveys

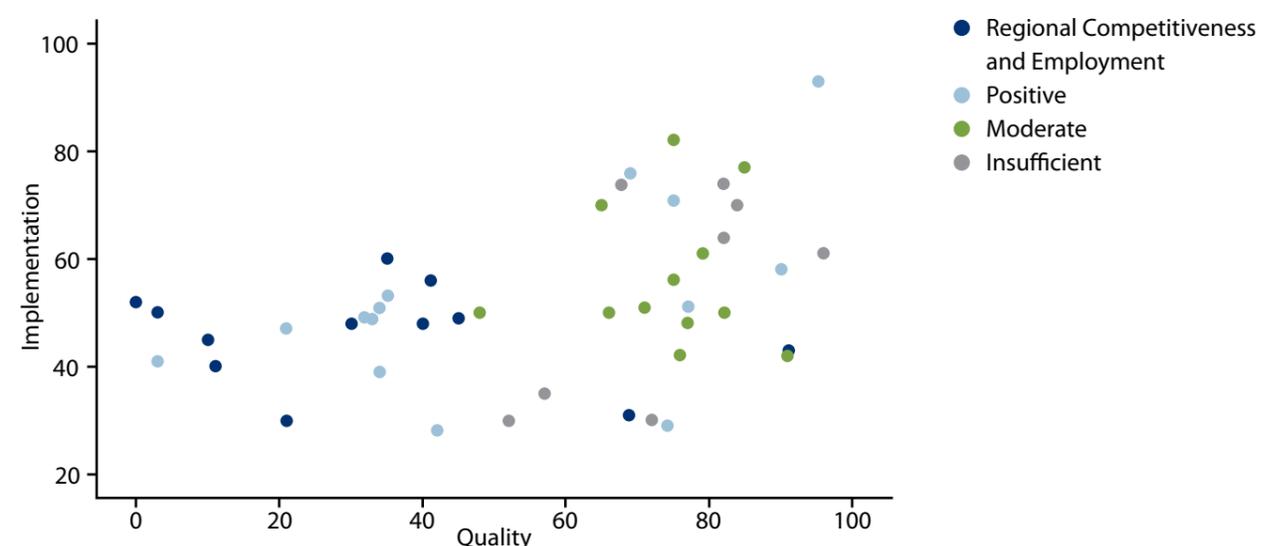
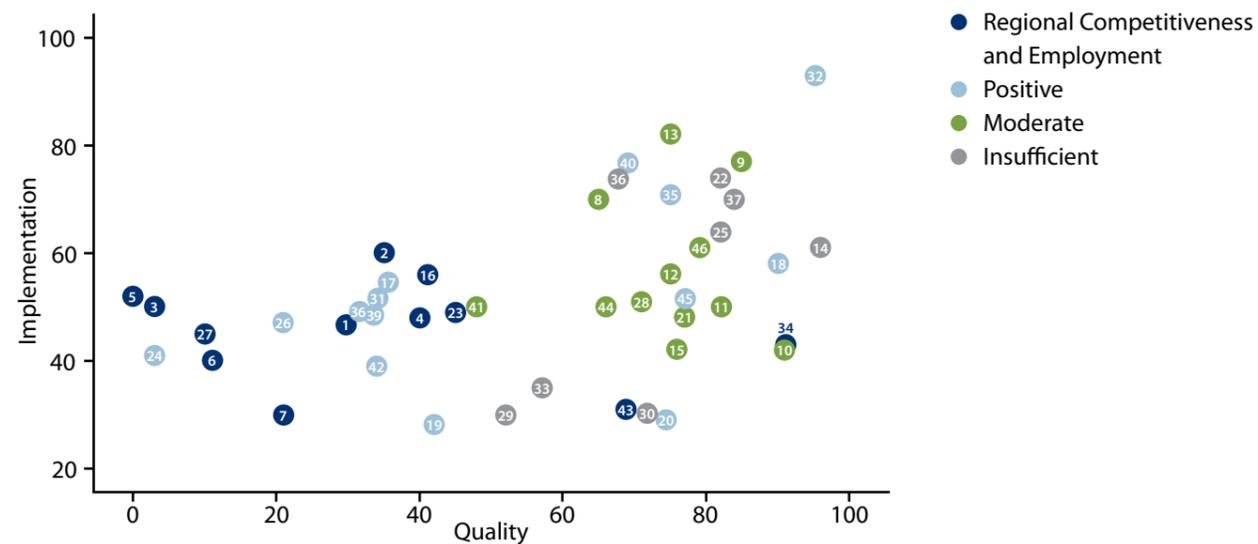


Figure 13: Overview of the distribution of the OPs quality and implementation including the name of the OPs  
n=46; Source: own surveys



No.	Name	No.	Name
1	Regional Competitiveness - Upper Austria	24	Multiregional Programme of Research and Competitiveness – Italy
2	Regional Competitiveness of Vorarlberg	25	Mediterranean Operational Programme
3	Regional Competitiveness - Styria	26	OP West Wales and the Valleys
4	Strengthening of Regional Competitiveness - Tyrol	27	Regional Competitiveness and Employment of Wales
5	Strengthening the Competitiveness of the Salzburg Region	28	Cross-Border programme Ireland-Wales
6	Strengthening the Regional Competitiveness of Lower Austria	29	European Territorial Cooperation. Atlantic Area
7	Strengthening of Regional Competitiveness of Vienna	30	Transnational Territorial Cooperation - North West Europe
8	Cross-Border Collaboration: Slovenia–Austria	31	Regional Programme of the Central Moravia Cohesion Region
9	Cross-Border Cooperation Slovakia-Austria	32	Environment - Czech Republic
10	European Territorial Cooperation Italy - Austria	33	Central Europe
11	European Territorial Cooperation Germany/ Bavaria - Austria	34	OP Catalonia
12	Cross-Border cooperation Austria-Hungary	35	OP Region of Murcia
13	European Territorial Co-operation Austria – Czech Republic	36	POCTEFA - France-Spain-Andorra
14	Alpine Space	37	South West Europe
15	European Territorial Cooperation Programme Greece - Italy	38	Development of Eastern Poland
16	OP Thessaly-Stereia Ellada-Epirus	39	Regional Operational Programme Warmia and Mazury
17	OP Western Greece-Peloponnese-Ionian Islands	40	Infrastructure and Environment Poland
18	Environment and Sustainable Development - Greece	41	Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Lithuania-Poland
19	Regional Operational Programme - Giurgiu	42	Regional Development of Bulgaria
20	Sectoral Operational Programme Environment - Romania	43	Regional Competitiveness/Employment Programme Brittany
21	Cross-Border Cooperation Romania-Bulgaria	44	INTERREG IVA France (Channel) England
22	Transnational Co-operation Programme - South East Europe	45	Strengthening Regional Development Potential of Slovenia
23	Regional OP Competitiveness Region of Lazio	46	OP Slovenia-Hungary

## Best case examples

Operational Programmes which received the highest scores in the overall quality and implementation are presented below.

## Programme quality

- The programme that received the highest score in overall quality is the OP “**Alpine Space**” [no. 14]. All aspects (SWOT analysis, objectives, measures and indicators) are very well presented. Besides being well structured, nature conservation and biodiversity are integrated within all aspects of the programme.
- The OP “**Environment Czech Republic**” [no. 32] stands out due to the very comprehensive way it was written. All the necessary information for the application is well presented, from the description of the actual situation, measures, possible strategies, deliverables, indicators, to the interconnection with other axes of this OP.
- A clear focus on nature conservation, Natura 2000 and natural heritage in general, is visible in the OP “**INTERREG Italy- Austria**” [no. 10]. These topics are well incorporated within every aspect of the programme which has resulted in very good opportunities to submit nature conservation projects with a positive assessment.
- The “**Mediterranean OP**” [no. 25] shows another important characteristic which high quality programmes should have. This refers to allowing for more flexibility towards the changes in EU policy. In this example the OP widened its previous transnational cooperative approach to better fit with the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI).

## Programme implementation

A prominent programme in terms of overall implementation is the OP “**Environment - Czech Republic**” [no. 32]. It has very clear guidelines and complete documentation available to applicants. The information offered is very helpful and easily accessible; there is a user friendly website, a free phone service and e-learning training. Applicants have the possibility to consult on project proposals before applying to the relevant authority (the Czech State Environmental Fund) or with regional consulting centres. There exists a variety of promotional activities such as TV slots, radio slots, leaflets, posters and journals.

## Recommendations for current and future funding

### For the current period (2007 – 2013)

The analysis has shown that currently the implementation of the Operational Programmes is weaker than their quality. Therefore recommendations for the current funding period refer to improvements of implementation procedures.

In this context it is recommended to

### Increase efficiency:

- Shorten as much as possible the period of approval for the project applications as well as the duration time for funding submitted invoices.
- Establish at least for specific applicants (e.g. non profit organisations, NGOs) the possibility of pre-financing ; several programmes in each category show how pre-financing can be improved.
- Establish screening systems. Project screening by the responsible authority or outsourced offices should be offered to the applicants in order to improve project quality and correspondence with national or regional goals.
- Make the applications formats more simple and useful, especially in the Convergence Programmes.
- Reporting formats should be reviewed, simplified and adapted to the technical evaluation and not just financial (focus should be on the quality of environmental related activities implementation, not on funds spending).

### Improve transparency and stakeholder participation:

- Improve transparency of implementation data – the management authorities should provide information related also to bad practices and thus provide a learning mechanism to beneficiaries and their consultants. The information (evaluation reports, Mid Term Report (MTR), annual ongoing reports, implementation data per measures and priorities etc.) should be published on their websites in a more structured manner.
- Maintain stakeholder participation during implementation phase - even if some of the programmes had a high level of the stakeholder involvement during the programme development stages, the stakeholders should be consulted also during the implementation stage and thus could help to improve the programme implementation.

**Strengthen the knowledge and science base:**

- Better use of technical assistance budgets and measures in OPs to develop knowledge and measures that are lacking– the output indicators of OPs Environment, OPs Regional etc. have to be reviewed and assessed if they still reflect well the expected environmental benefits; it should be requested that the environmental impact monitoring systems are put in place as parts of official monitoring systems for OPs.
- Intensify training programmes, especially at regional and local level and focussed on nature conservation issues.
- Appoint experts for nature conservation to all Selection and Evaluation Committees. Nature conservation experts should be sufficiently represented in Evaluation and Selection Committees, especially when budget under code 51 is allocated by the programme.

**For the next period (2014 – 2020)**

Based on the conclusions of the analysis, the following points are recommended for the preparation of new OPs:

- It should be an obligation that biodiversity is reflected in one of the thematic priorities of each programme even if is not the first priority and the main focus of the programme. This should also include clearer outlines if measures contribute directly or indirectly to biodiversity and Natura 2000. E.g. via a transparent financial coding system.
- Nature conservation experts should be represented in all Evaluation and Selection Committees.
- Biodiversity-friendly Operational Programmes should include nature conservation in each of its sections i.e. the SWOT analysis, priority axis and objectives, activities and indicators. The whole document should be written in an easily understandable way with no contradictions, i.e. with indicators and activities based on the objectives, and objectives based on the SWOT analysis etc.
- For successful implementation, it is recommended that biodiversity goals (within thematic and investment priorities, but also within the activities and programme budgets) are achieved by including a wide range of eligible nature conservation measures. This makes the funding opportunities more visible to potential project applicants and increases their chances of successful project applications.

- The objectives of the priority axis should be clear and not subject to differing interpretations.
- Indicators should be easy to calculate.
- To support applications from individuals, NGOs and small enterprises, financial support through pre-financing assistance should be provided.
- Professional support in the application phase should be eligible.
- Overall and especially in territorial cooperation programmes there should be less restrictions to NGOs especially those working on nature and environment in an European context which have no economic and financial interest in the programmes.
- Information should be provided to applicants in a clear and efficient way – though promotional activities, and later on though brochures, trainings, workshops or individual consultations.
- The programme should have a common, user-friendly website which provides all relevant data (templates, guidelines, news, etc.). Cross-Border and Transnational Programmes should have a website with translation in all regional languages.
- All this should be followed by a simple and straightforward implementation process with short time periods between project development, submission, approval and procurement.



# Appendix I: Analysis of the programme quality with regard to biodiversity

The quality of each programme document was evaluated considering the following points:

- How is biodiversity reflected within the following aspects of the programme?
  - SWOT analysis
  - Objectives
  - Activities
  - Indicators
- Are there any restrictions on funding applicants?
- What is the proportional amount of programme funds available for nature conservation?

## SWOT analysis

The SWOT analysis is a method that reflects the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats of a programme. It is the basis for the establishment of priorities, goals and measures within an OP. If biodiversity and nature conservation are not well presented in the SWOT analysis, it can be assumed that they do not play much of a role in the rest of the OP. The more accurately and precisely the SWOT analysis is presented in the OP and biodiversity is identified as an issue, the better the project objectives can build on this and include concrete activities addressing biodiversity.

The results show that biodiversity is present in most of the SWOT analysis. In 91 % of the OPs, biodiversity is mentioned clearly or in a way that it can be interpreted (see Figure 14).

Biodiversity is only absent in the SWOT analysis of 4 Operational Programmes, which are all Regional Programmes (3 Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes<sup>12</sup> and 1 Convergence Programme<sup>13</sup>). In the Cross-Border and Transnational Programmes biodiversity is clearly mentioned (see Figure 15).

Figure 14: Biodiversity in the SWOT analysis of OPs n=46; Source: own surveys

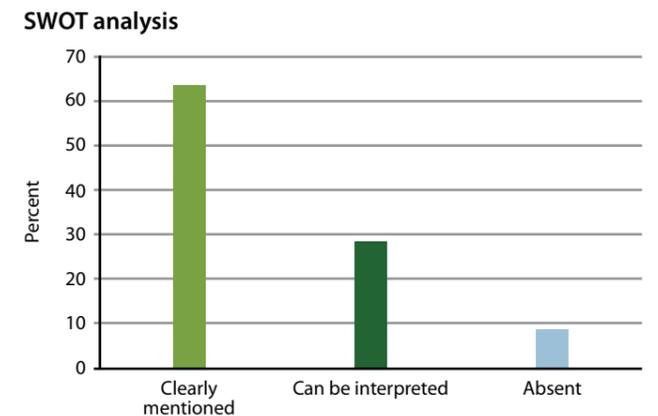
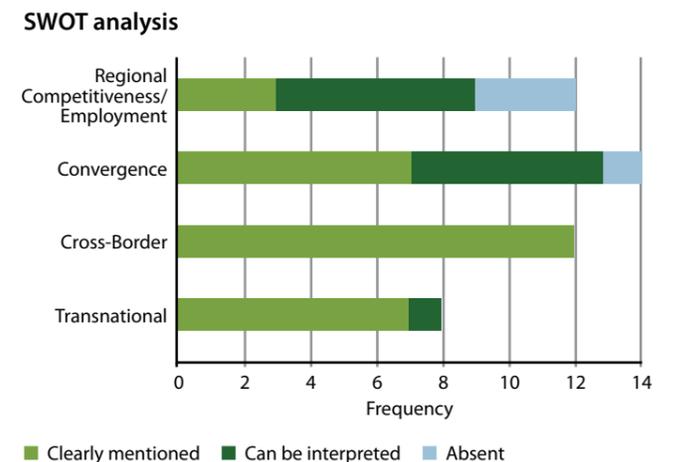


Figure 15: Biodiversity in the SWOT analysis of OPs - distribution in types n=46; Source: own surveys



<sup>12</sup> Styria [no. 3], Salzburg [no. 5], Lower Austria [no. 6]  
<sup>13</sup> Italy [no. 24]

The following example taken from the “Operational Programme for Infrastructure and Environment in Poland [no. 40]” shows how biodiversity can be clearly mentioned in a SWOT analysis:

“SWOT analysis for the environmental protection sector

**Strengths:**

- Variety of natural resources, a great diversity of species, ecosystems and landscapes
- A large surface of regions valuable from the environmental point of view
- A great diversity of genes, species, ecosystems and landscapes
- A great share of forests in the structure of exploitation
- Good identification of natural resources (...)

**Weaknesses:**

- Poor quality of surface water
- Insufficient system of protection against natural disasters, in particular floods and draughts
- Low reclamation and development rate of degraded, devastated and polluted land
- Insufficient identification of natural values in regions where conflicts may occur between investment projects and requirements of the environmental protection

- Limited capabilities of local governments to co-finance costly investments in the field of municipal infrastructure of the environmental protection. (...)”

**Conclusion:**

In the majority of the OPs, nature conservation issues were integrated into the SWOT analysis. That means we could state an overall perception of biodiversity and nature issues in the project countries and regions. The discussion of biodiversity in this very first part of the Programmes draws a very important baseline to further integration and interpretation of activities and measures for nature conservation.

**Objectives of the priority axis**

The more precisely objectives of the priority axis in the programmes are formulated the easier it is for project applicants to refer to them. Project proposals with clear activities relating to the priority objectives are most likely to be approved. In addition, measurable outputs of the activities are of major importance for programme evaluation and form the foundation from which to assess success or failure.

As shown in Figure 16, biodiversity is mostly reflected in the objectives of the priority axis (in 86 % it is clearly established or interpretable).

Figure 16: Biodiversity in the objectives of the priority axis n=44, in 2 programmes this question was not answered; Source: own surveys

**Objectives of priority axis**

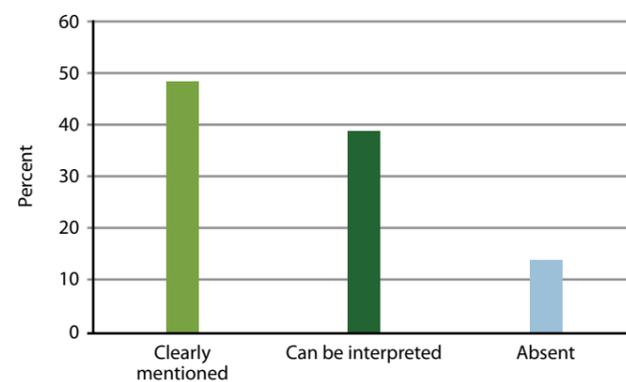
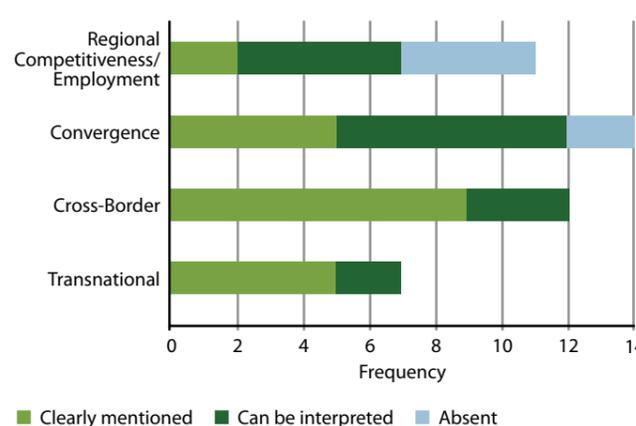


Figure 17: Biodiversity in the objectives of the priority axis - distribution in types n=44, in 2 programmes this question was not answered; Source: own surveys

**Objectives of priority axis**



Biodiversity is absent in only 6 Operational Programmes, which are Regional Programmes (4 Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes<sup>14</sup> and 2 Convergence Programmes<sup>15</sup>). Biodiversity is most clearly established in the objectives of the priority axis of Cross-Border and Transnational Programmes (see Figure 17).

The programme “European Objective for Territorial Cooperation Germany/Bavaria – Austria [no. 11]” is an example of how biodiversity objectives can be clearly integrated within the objectives of the priority axis:

“Priority 2: Attractive habitat through sustainable development of the region

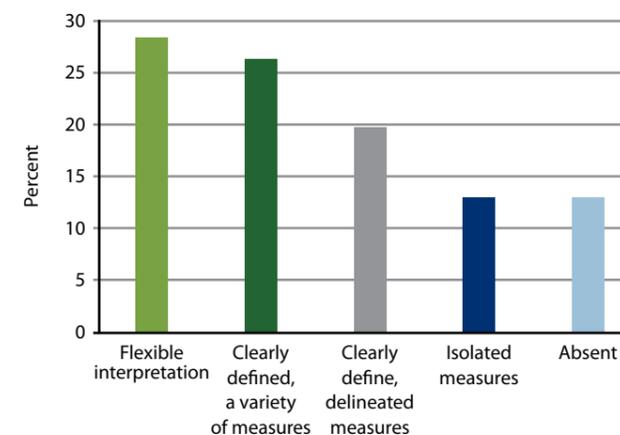
Activity field 2.2 Preserve natural and cultural resources by means of environmental protection, nature conservation and other preventive measures as well as sustainable regional development

**Objectives:**

- Improvement and conservation of cultural landscapes and natural ecosystems (including water bodies)
- Conservation and sustainable use of cultural and natural heritage
- Integration of nature and landscape protection in the regional economic cycle”

Figure 18: Biodiversity in the activities under the priorities of the OPs n=46; Source: own surveys

**Biodiversity related activities in OPs - Overview**



**Conclusion:**

In most of the OPs biodiversity is well reflected in the objectives of the priority axis. This means that there is a strong basis for designing project proposals. In only 14 % of the OPs biodiversity is not an issue in any objective of the axis. In these cases there is definitely no scope of interpretation for applicants - these programmes cannot be supportive towards nature conservation related projects. For the future it should be an obligatory requirement that protection of biodiversity is an general objective under one of the priority axis of each programme even if it is not the main focus of the programme.

**Biodiversity related activities**

Just as the objectives are of major importance to the strategic direction of projects, the described “activities” are important as they define the eligible measures. Therefore activities should be formulated broadly, as this allows applicants more flexibility for individual and specific measures to be applied. If the activities are clearly defined in the programmes they should offer at least a high variety of different types of interventions.

Half of the measures in the programmes provide a wide range of biodiversity activities (see Figure 18). In about one-third of the programmes biodiversity is only mentioned in delineated/isolated measures.

14 Styria [no. 3], Salzburg [no. 5], Lower Austria [no. 6], Wales [no. 27]  
15 Italy [no. 24], West Wales and the Valleys [no. 26]

16 Styria [no. 3], Salzburg [no. 5], Lower Austria [no. 6], Vienna [no. 7], Wales [no. 27]  
17 Italy [no. 24]

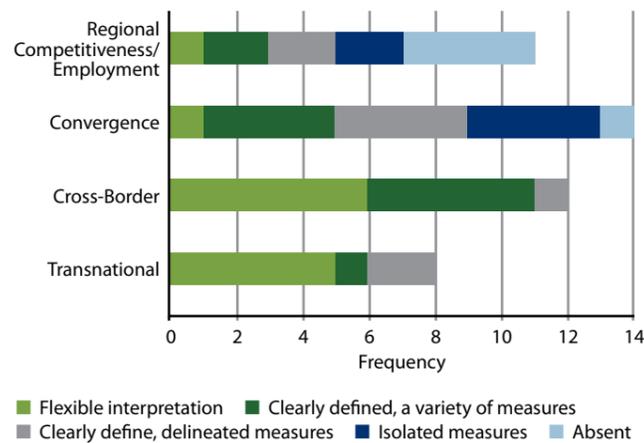


Biodiversity is absent in 6 Regional Programmes (5 Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes<sup>16</sup> and 1 Convergence Programme<sup>17</sup>). In most of the Cross-Border and Transnational Programmes biodiversity activities are well covered either with high flexibility or by clearly defining it within a number of measures (see Figure 19).

The Operational Programme “Cross-Border Cooperation Programme, Slovakia – Austria [no. 9]” shows that a flexible interpretation of biodiversity activities is possible:

Figure 19: Biodiversity in the activities under the priorities of the OPs - distribution in types  
n=46; Source: own surveys

### Biodiversity related activities in OPs - Overview



“Cooperation and joint management of protected areas

- exchange of relevant information and data, comparative studies
- exchange of good practices and approaches proven to be effective,
- support in implementation of the new standards and instruments into the practice,
- assessment of cross-border impacts on environment, specifically protected areas and development of common approaches to minimize the negative impacts,
- identification of further opportunities for coordinated actions and their exploitation,
- common management, monitoring, reporting, marketing of protected areas,
- environmental infrastructure of the protected areas,
- increasing the public awareness”

The Operational Programme “Regional Competitiveness - Styria” [no.3] is an example for insufficient nature protection integration in the main aspects of the programme. Even though this programme promotes environmental investments, nature conservation is not mentioned in the SWOT analysis, the priority axis objectives or activities.

A similar result was reported by the partners analysing the programme “Strengthening the Competitiveness of the Salzburg Region” [no. 5]. This OP was evaluated as being

“unsuitable for any sort of nature conservation projects” because programme strategies and objectives were not at all linked to nature conservation. Generally, in Austria nature conservation measures and activities to preserve biodiversity are mainly funded through the Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and not through ERDF.

As illustrated in Figure 20, most of the activities identified as being supportive to biodiversity are “educational measures” (mentioned 34 times), “management plans” (mentioned 30 times), “monitoring” (mentioned 29 times) and “background work” like surveys and research (mentioned 29 times). The least eligible activity is “land purchase”.

### Conclusion:

The majority of the programmes have integrated biodiversity in their activities. Nearly one-third of them have a flexible interpretation of it which makes project applications in principle more flexible and therefore easier. In the rest of the programmes biodiversity is clearly defined but too often in delineated or isolated measures. It is completely absent mainly in those programmes which also lack biodiversity in the aspect of SWOT analysis and objectives. For future OPs the inclusion of a clear biodiversity related objective is recommended which will allow the activities for nature conservation to be flexible so that individual needs in the regions can be better reflected in the projects.

### Indicators

An indicator should be defined as the measurement of an objective to be met. The programme indicators are selected for monitoring and evaluation purposes. In principle, indicators should be clearly inferred from the SWOT analysis and goals. They are necessary to precisely assess the success of an OP.

Project applicants should be familiar with the indicators in the programme. Authorities use these indicators frequently as a basis for the approval of projects. Projects clearly contributing to the achievement of an indicator have a better chance for success.

More than half of the programmes provide indicators which are clearly related to biodiversity and very or moderately useable. However, biodiversity related indicators are absent in 8 OPs (see Figure 21).

As Figure 22 shows, biodiversity related indicators can be found across all programme types. The aspect of biodiversity is completely absent in 7 Regional Programmes (3 Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes<sup>18</sup> and 4 Convergence Programmes<sup>19</sup>) and 1 Transnational Programme<sup>20</sup>.

Figure 20: Types of activities which are eligible within OPs Multiple answers were permitted; Source: own surveys

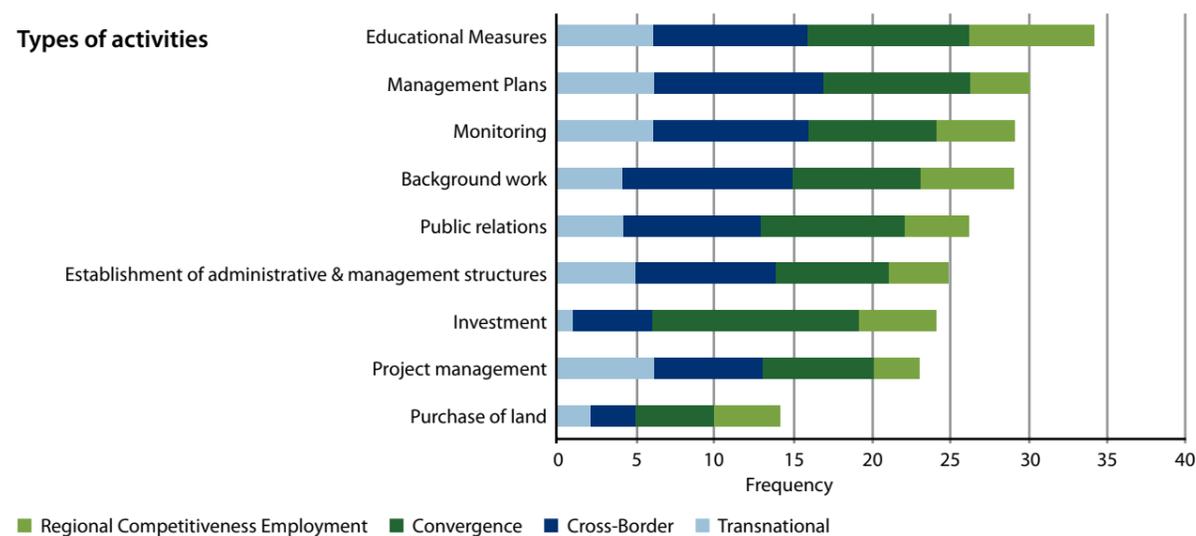


Figure 21: Indicators relating to biodiversity in the OPs  
n=46; Source: own surveys

### Indicators in programmes

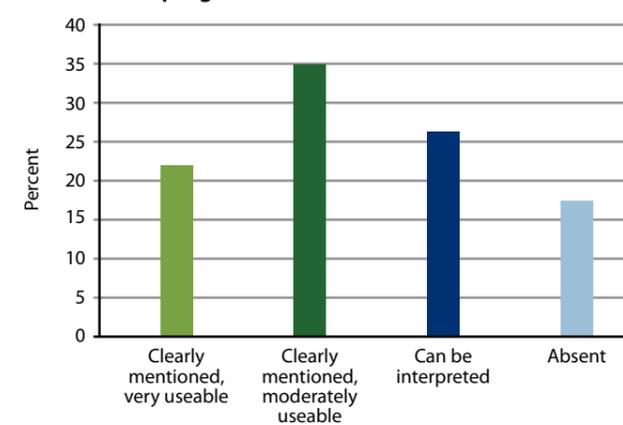
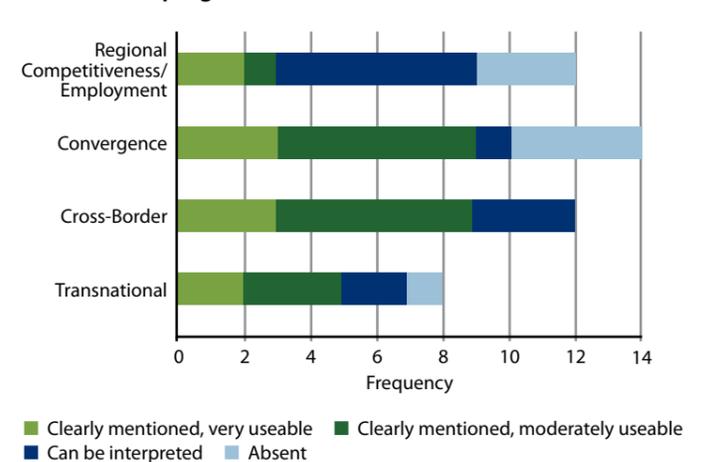


Figure 22: Indicators relating to biodiversity in the OPs - distribution in types  
n=46; Source: own surveys

### Indicators in programmes



18 Salzburg [no. 5], Vienna [no. 7], Wales [no. 27]  
19 Western Greece-Peloponnese-Ionian Islands [no. 17], Italy [no. 24], Eastern Poland [no. 38], Warmia & Mazury [no. 39]  
20 Atlantic Area [no. 29]

In the Operational Programme “Infrastructure and Environment – Poland” [no. 40] some biodiversity indicators are listed which are clearly mentioned and very usable:

- “Number of completed projects in the field of education or promotion of ecological attitudes (numbers): Value in the base year: 0 Estimated value in the target year: 20
- Number of completed projects aiming to protect habitats, plant communities and species (numbers): Value in the base year: 0 Estimated value in the target year: 150
- Number of completed projects aiming to protect Natura 2000 areas (numbers): Value in the base year: 0 Estimated value in the target year: 50
- Total surface area, in which protection of the proper condition of ecosystems has been restored or guaranteed (ha): Value in the base year: 0 Estimated value in the target year: 1,550
- Total surface of Natura 2000 areas, within which projects were implemented that contributed to their protection (ha): Value in the base year: 0 Estimated value in the target year: 500”

**Conclusion:**

Clear and applicable biodiversity related indicators are present in around 20 % of the programmes. Indicators are completely absent in 8 OPs, which are mainly Regional Programmes. Consequently, more than 60 % of the analysed programmes use biodiversity indicators which are of limited practical use.

**Applicant types**

The more open the OP is for the different types of applicants, the higher the possibility is for environmental projects to apply. Associations, societies, NGOs and municipalities often submit applications for nature conservation projects.

In more than half of the programmes no relevant restrictions exist (see Figure 23). Two Regional Programmes (Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programme<sup>21</sup> and Convergence Programme<sup>22</sup>) restrict funding applicants.

In the Cross-Border and Transnational Programmes no relevant restrictions on funding applicants exist (see Figure 24).

In the programme “Strengthening the Regional Competitiveness of Vienna” [no. 7] many types of applicants are excluded. For the “Integrated measures of urban sustainable development” and “Development of several important areas” funding applicants are restricted to state, federal state, city bodies and allied institutions, which means that no state-independent actors are able to apply for projects.

In the programme “Regional Operational Programme of the Central Moravia Cohesion Region” [no. 31], applicants are obliged to submit a compulsory annex with confirmation from authorities that the project has no negative effect on the environment. This restriction is supposed to ensure that no damage or deterioration is done to the environment belonging to Natura 2000 network.

An interesting and specific example is the OP “Cross-Border Collaboration Slovenia–Austria” [no. 8]: In Austria applications are not allowed from “individuals”. However, in Slovenia the programme is more open and individuals may apply if they are a “one-man-enterprise”.

The most numerous mentions of potential funding applicants within the OPs are: municipalities (mentioned 42 times), state institutions (mentioned 40 times), associations (mentioned 37 times), small/medium enterprises (mentioned 35 times) and NGOs (mentioned 34 times). Individuals can only be funding applicants in 11 OPs. The different types of funding applicants are distributed across all types of OPs (see Figure 25).

**Conclusion:**

More than half of the programmes are quite open to the different types of applicants and do not exclude specific types or forms. The rest of the programmes have set restrictions for certain measures. Two OPs have set restrictions for applicants which mainly refer to state-independent actors and individuals.

**Proportion of funding directly allocated to nature conservation (code 51)**

In the European Commission’s implementing regulation for the Structural and Cohesion Funds 2007-2013 the Commission requests all Member States to submit an indicative breakdown by category of the planned use of the Funds at Operational Programme level. The breakdown by category should refer to a list of 86 “codes” provided by the Commission, in which the priority themes are compiled, e.g. “Research and technological development (R&TD), Innovation and entrepreneurship”, “Information society”, “Transport”, “Energy”, “Environmental protection and risk prevention”, “Tourism” etc.. Several codes are directly or indirectly linked to biodiversity and nature conservation issues. The code directly linked is code 51 “Promotion of biodiversity and nature protection (including Natura 2000)” classed among the priority theme “Environmental protection and risk prevention”.

Nearly two-thirds of all OPs analysed have a clear budget for biodiversity measures which is expressed by budget code 51. Nearly one-tenth of all assessed OPs allocate more than 5 % of their whole budget, more than half of the OPs allocate up to 5 % of the budget under code 51. However, more than one-third of all OPs do not have any allocation under code 51 (see Figure 26).

Figure 23: Restrictions on funding applicants in the OPs n=45, in 1 Programme this question was not answered; Source: own surveys

**Application types**

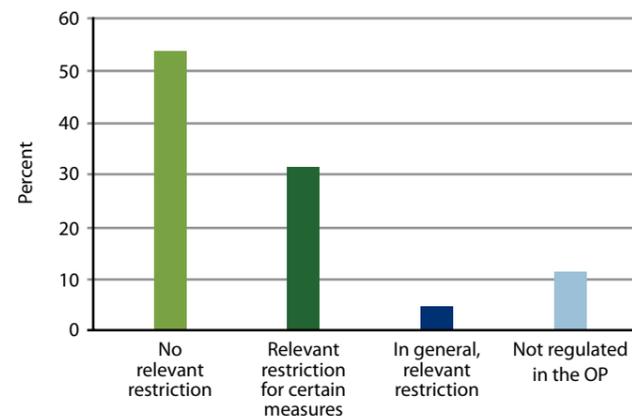


Figure 24: Restrictions on funding applicants in the OPs - distribution in types n=45, in 1 programme this question was not answered; Source: own surveys

**Application types**

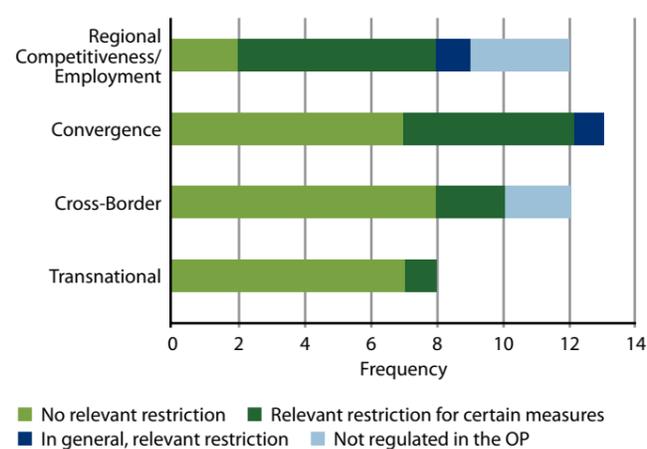


Figure 25: Potential applicants mentioned within OPs - distribution in types Multiple answers were permitted; Source: own surveys

**Types of potential applicants**

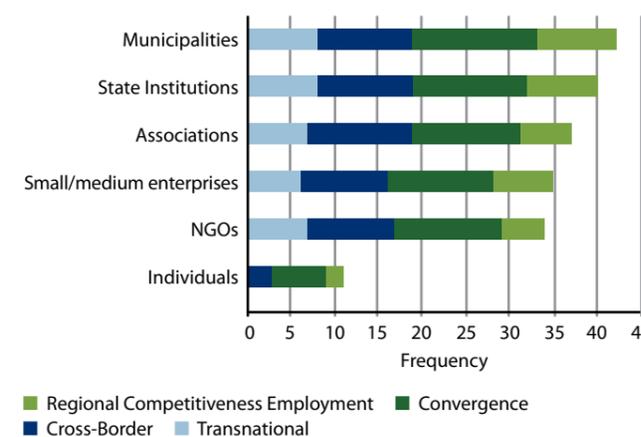
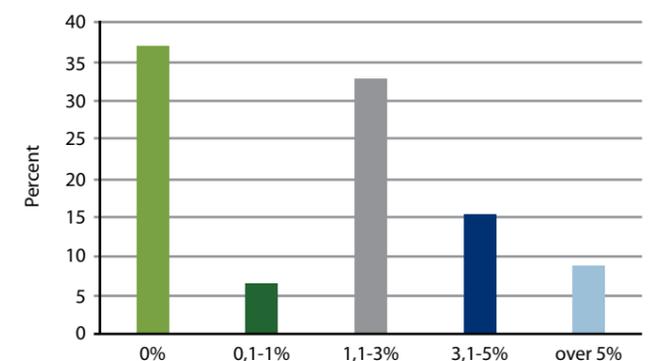


Figure 26: Proportion of funding directly allocated to nature conservation (code 51) n=46; Source: own surveys

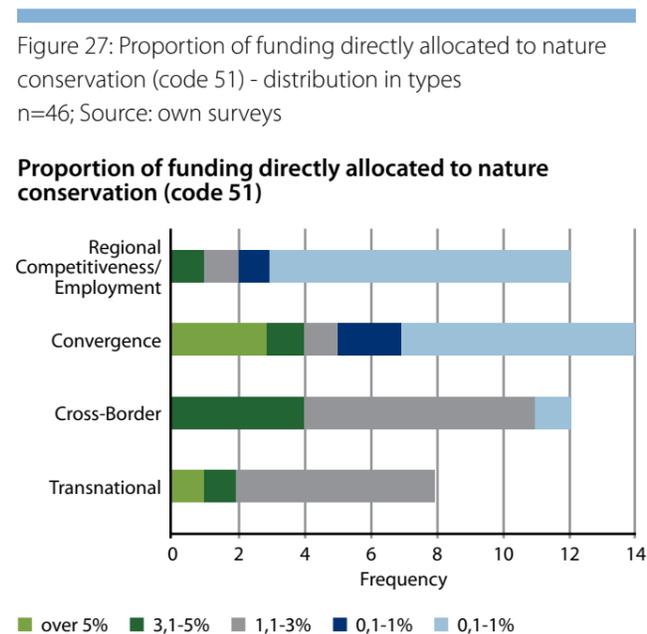
**Proportion of funding directly allocated to nature conservation (code 51)**



21 Vienna [no. 7]  
22 Central Moravia [no. 31]

Figure 27 shows that nearly all Cross-Border<sup>23</sup> and Transnational Programmes<sup>24</sup> and half of the Convergence Programmes have calculated a certain budget for “biodiversity and nature conservation” under code 51. In the main, Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes which are more focussed on social and economic objectives have not allocated any budget for biodiversity under code 51 – therefore some positive exceptions are mentionable and interesting: Thessaly-Stereia Ellada-Epirus [no. 16], Catalonia [no. 34] and Brittany, France [no. 43] have allocated budget for “biodiversity and nature conservation” under code 51.

The 4 Environment Sectoral Programmes (all of them are Convergence Programmes) allocate the highest amounts to nature conservation (code 51). They are followed by 2 Convergence Programmes, 2 Regional Competitiveness Programmes and 2 Transnational Programmes (see Figure 28).



The budget for code 51 of all analysed programmes amounts to a total of € 1,201,881,129<sup>25</sup>. This represents around 45 % of the total € 2.7 billion allocated across all Operational Programmes in Europe.

The allocations for code 51 of the different types of programmes are:

- Convergence: total amount € 1,069,623,237 (7 OPs)
- Regional Competitiveness and Employment: total amount € 56,583,798 (3 OPs)
- Transnational: total amount € 48,735,269 (8 OPs)
- Cross-Border: total amount € 26,938,825 (11 OPs)

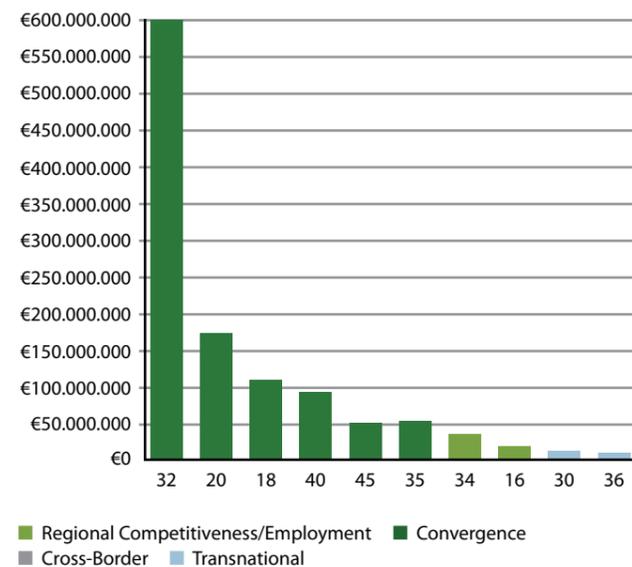
The highest share for nature conservation is allocated in the Convergence OP “Environment for the Czech Republic” [no. 32] (12.2 %) and the Regional Convergence OP Murcia [no. 35] (7.7 %); followed by the Convergence Programme “Environment and Sustainable Development in Greece” [no. 18] (6.0 %) and the Transnational Programme POCTEFA [no. 36] (5.3 %).

- **Code 56:** Protection and development of natural heritage
- **Code 58:** Protection and preservation of the cultural heritage
- **Code 61:** Integrated projects for urban and rural regeneration
- **Code 81:** Mechanisms for improving good policy & programme design, monitoring & evaluation at national, regional & local level, capacity building in the delivery of policies & programmes
- **Code 84:** Support to compensate additional costs due to climate conditions & relief difficulties
- **Code 85:** Preparation, implementation, monitoring and inspection
- **Code 86:** Evaluation and studies, information and communication

Figure 29 shows the programmes which have allocated funds under these codes. The most frequently included codes were 85 (41 times - multiple answers were permitted) and 86 (41 times). It is necessary to emphasise that these figures do not allow a quantitative or qualitative estimation of funding support for nature conservation. In addition code 85 and code 86 are mainly about administrative and technical assistance or improvement dedicated to the programmes.

Figure 28: OPs, which allocate the highest amount of nature conservation (code 51) n=10; Source: own surveys

**Highest amounts allocated for code 51**



Nr.	Name of the OP	Code 51
32	Environment - Czech Republik	€ 599.423.825
20	Sectoral Operational Programme Environment Romania	€ 171.988.693
18	Environment and Sustainable Development Western Greece	€ 107.610.000
40	Infrastructure and Environment Warmia and Mazury	€ 89.800.000
45	Strengthening Regional Development Potential Slovenia	€ 49.555.411
35	OP Region of Murcia	€ 49.145.308
34	OP Catalonia	€ 31.530.798
16	OP Thessaly-Stereia Ellada-Epirus	€ 18.753.000
30	Transnational Territorial Cooperation - North West Europe	€ 10.866.302
36	POCTEFA - France-Spain-Andorra	€ 8.994.213

**Conclusion:**

The highest amounts and proportion of the budgets allocated to nature conservation are in the Sectoral Environment Programmes. The Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes, due to their stronger focus on socio-economic issues, allocate less or in most cases no budget at all to nature conservation.

**Financing integrated measures**

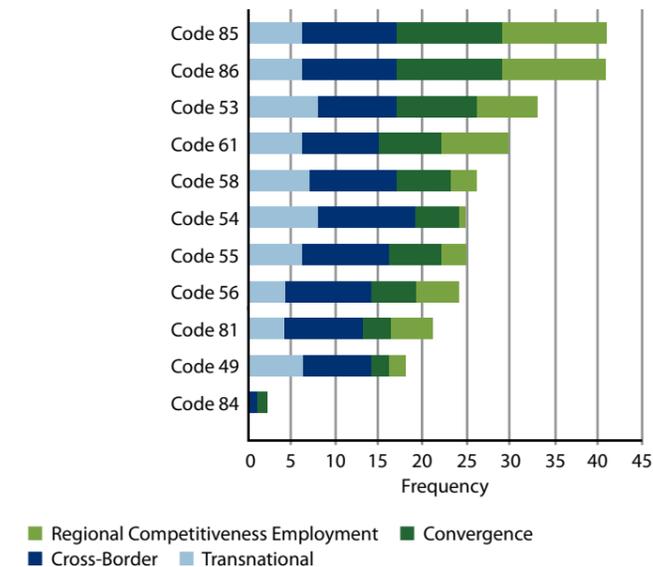
As well as code 51, other codes can also indicate funding possibilities for biodiversity, but they are not explicitly dedicated to this aim. Although the codes are mainly used for other purposes they could also be interpreted to support nature conservation measures.

The relevant codes are:

- **Code 49:** Mitigation and adaptation to climate change
- **Code 53:** Risk prevention
- **Code 54:** Other measures to preserve the environment and prevent risks
- **Code 55:** Promotion of natural assets

Figure 29: Financing of measures which could potentially integrate biodiversity - distribution in types Multiple answers were permitted; Source: own surveys

**Financing of measures which could potentially integrate biodiversity**



23 Except “Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Lithuania-Poland” [no. 41]  
 24 More than 5 %: Environment and Sustainable Development Western Greece [no. 18], Environment Czech Republic [no. 32] and Region of Murcia [no. 35]

25 n=29, 17 programmes do not have any allocation under code 51

Other codes which are referred to on numerous occasions, indicating possible funding for nature conservation, are: code 53 (33 times), code 61 (30 times), code 58 (26 times) and code 54 (25 times).

Figure 30 illustrates how frequently “integrated measures” are included in the analysed programmes. In the majority of the OPs the integrated measures contain nature conservation.

Cross-Border and Transnational Programmes include many of these “integrated measures”. Regional Competitiveness and Employment and Convergence Programmes are rather focussed with a small range of integrated measures (see Figure 31).

**Conclusion:**

In many of the assessed programmes, in addition to code 51, biodiversity can be funded through several other codes which can be interpreted to include biodiversity related actions. The majority of the Cross-Border and Transnational Programmes have integrated nature conservation measures apart from code 51. In contrast, Regional Competitiveness and Employment and Convergence Programmes offer less or no integrated nature conservation measures. In this context it has to be stressed that Convergence Programmes allocate the highest amounts to nature conservation under code 51. The use of codes 85 and 86 for assistance and capacity building is interesting as this code is most frequently applied across all Programmes.

**Summary of the quality of the OPs with code 51**

As expected, programmes with budget for code 51 have a high quality; their SWOT analysis, objectives, activities etc. are referring to biodiversity. Nevertheless, in two OPs the aspect of biodiversity and nature conservation is completely absent in the indicators and in one OP within the “integrated measures”. In summary, there are no low quality programmes; more than two-thirds are high quality programmes in terms of their structure and inclusion of biodiversity aspects, as well as in terms of activities and budget forecasts.

**Summary of the quality of the programme documents**

To compare the total quality of the OPs, they were divided into three classes. The classification was based on the total number of points which were allocated for the questions in the quality part of the matrix:

- 70-100 points: high quality programme
- 35-69 points: moderate quality programme
- 0-34 points: low quality programme

On **average**, the programmes achieved 56 points in the quality part. Almost 50 % are ranked as high quality and 30 % of the OPs reach moderate quality. Only one quarter are low quality programmes.

More than the half of the Cross-Border and Transnational Programmes have a high quality. None of the Cross-Border and Transnational Programmes are a “low quality programme”. In contrast, almost 50 % of the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes and Convergence Programmes are ranked as “low quality programme” (see Figure 34).



Figure 32: Overview of the answers from the OPs which have a budget for code 51  
n=29, 17 programmes do not have any allocation under code 51; Source: own surveys

**Overview of the OPs which have a budget for code 51**

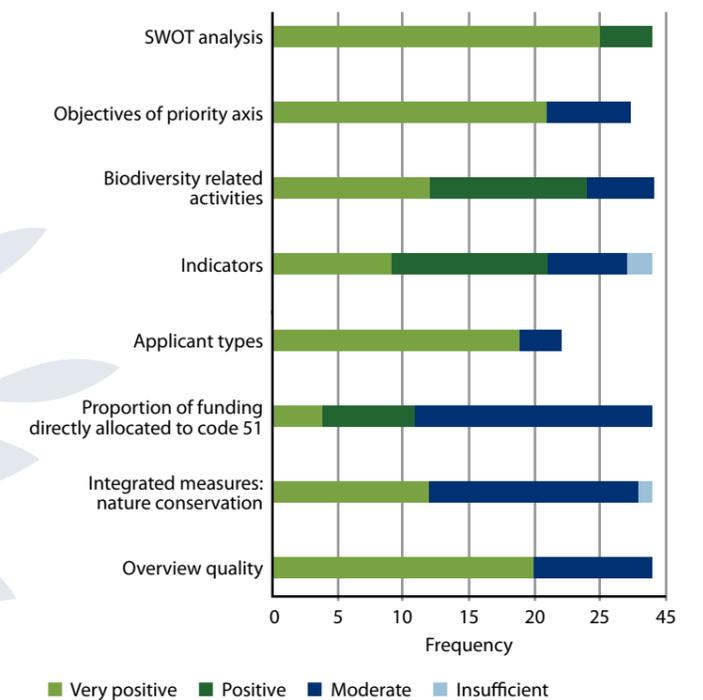


Figure 30: Integrated measures which could potentially include nature conservation  
n=45, in 1 programme this question was not answered; Source: own surveys

**Integrated measures: nature conservation**

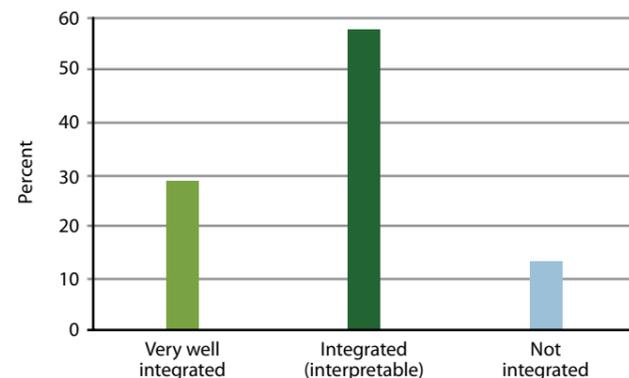


Figure 31: Integrated measures which include nature conservation - distribution in types  
n=45, in 1 programme this question was not answered; Source: own surveys

**Integrated measures: nature conservation**

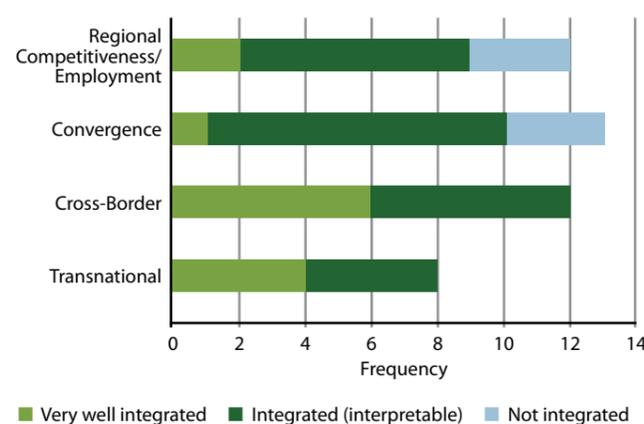


Figure 33: Overview of the quality of the OPs  
n=46; Source: own surveys

**Overview of the quality of the OPs**

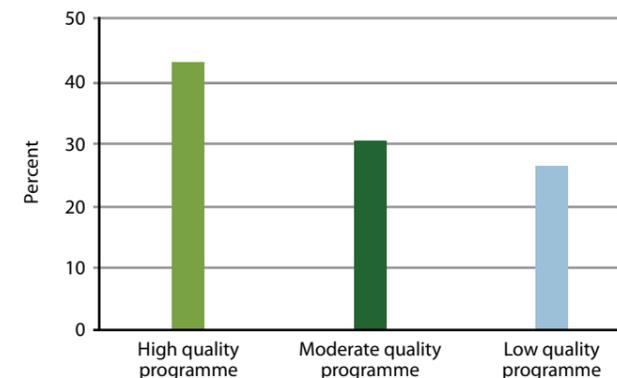
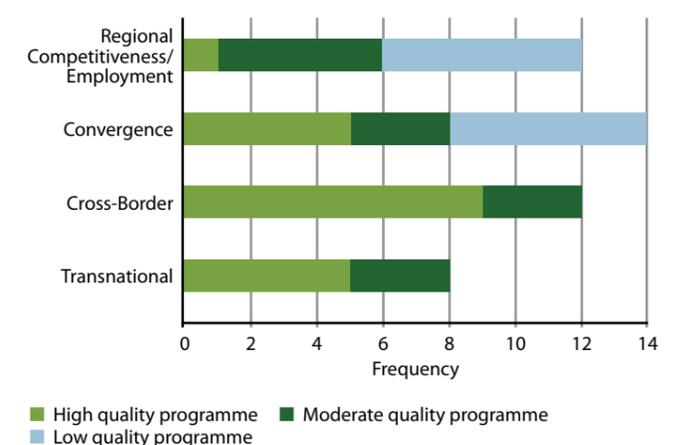


Figure 34: Overview of the quality of the OPs - distribution in types  
n=46; Source: own surveys

**Overview of the quality of the OPs**



## Good practice programmes

During the evaluation of the OPs the SURF project team was asked to rate the analysed programmes.

The following table offers an overview of the programmes which were classified as being “top” programmes (high quality programme), together with a selection of their best characteristics:

### Regional Competitiveness and Employment

#### Thessaly - Sterea Ellada – Epirus [no. 16]

- The OP is oriented towards funding of projects dedicated to the protection of natural environment, enhancement of natural resources, promotion of biodiversity and sustainable management of Natura 2000 sites.
- The OP has managed to link regional development with environmental sustainability in an effective way.
- The OP finances investments based on innovative projects – projects that envisage the use of new technologies for environmental protection and sustainable management.

#### Catalonia [no. 34]

- The OP is very coherent.
- Nature conservation is very well integrated into all axis and objectives, including specific measures related to those issues. For instance, a more economic oriented axis such as “knowledge economy” includes specific funds to promote environmental management systems and eco-labelling of products in enterprises to promote their competitiveness.

### Convergence

#### Regional Programme: Environment and Sustainable Development in Greece [no. 19]

- Biodiversity is well reflected in the SWOT analysis and the objectives of priority axis. Activities of the priorities are clearly defined with a variety of measures.
- 6 % of the OP budget is allocated for nature conservation under the code 51.

#### National/Sectoral Programme: Environment Romania [no. 20]

- The OP contributes to the development of management plans for NATURA 2000 sites and to the institutional capacity building.
- Nature conservation is one of the main strategic directions of the programme (Improvement of environmental protection as a pre-requisite for sustainable development) and one of the priority axis.
- Biodiversity is well reflected in the SWOT analysis and in the specific objectives of the programme.

#### National/Sectoral Programme: Environment Czech Republic [no. 32]

- The OP is written in a very comprehensive way; planned priorities, targets, tools and activities are described clearly.
- The applicant can find all that is necessary for the application, from description of the actual situation, planned aims and tools, strategy for achievement of goals, specification of deliveries, to indicators and interconnection with other axis of this OP.

#### Regional Programme: Strengthening Regional Development Potential Slovenia [no. 45]

- The OP is oriented towards funding of regional development projects, biodiversity protection and stimulation of the development in the Natura 2000 areas.
- Biodiversity is clearly mentioned in the SWOT analysis and the objectives.
- 3 % of the budget is dedicated to nature conservation.

### Cross-Border

#### Germany/Bavaria – Austria [no. 11]

- The OP is written in a very comprehensive way.
- The OP is user friendly even for the inexperienced applicants.

#### Austria – Slovakia [no. 9]

- Proportion of the OP budget for nature conservation is 4 % - all under measure code 51.
- The SWOT analysis and activities/priorities reflect each other.

#### Italy – Austria [no. 10]

- The priorities and indicators are well structured.
- The complete OP is written in a very comprehensive way. It is easily understandable even to the inexperienced applicants.

#### Romania - Bulgaria [no. 21]

- The OP responds to the needs of environment protection identified in the SWOT analysis.
- Nature conservation is well integrated in the programme and represents one of the priority axis.
- The programme offers the financial opportunity for the development of concrete projects on nature conservation.

#### Austria – Czech [no. 13]

- The OP offers a lot of opportunities for nature conservation projects: the list of activities allows a broad and flexible interpretation and the indicative breakdown by categories shows that the proportion of the budget of the financing integrated measures (without codes 85 and 86) is about 16%.

#### Greece – Italy [no. 15]

- There is strong competitiveness and territorial cohesion in the programme area towards sustainable development. By linking the potential from both Greece and Italy, maritime life can set a good example for other neighbour countries in the EU.
- The OP aims for a polycentric spatial development with a new relationship between urban and rural areas along with wise management of the natural and cultural heritage, which represents the main objectives for balanced and sustainable growth.

### Transnational

#### Alpine Space [no. 14]

- The OP is very well structured, generally understandable, all essential information is included
- The objectives of the overall programme, its priorities with the findings of the SWOT analysis, the identified main challenges for the programme and the orientation given by the European Union in the cohesion guidelines are well presented. The programme is well prepared with regard to the framework conditions (EU, national).

#### Mediterranean [no. 25]

- The OP is focused on reaching a balanced development among participant countries and regions by means of respecting the main objectives and strategies defined on European institutional level
- It provides examples on how sectoral field of intervention (among which sustainable development and nature conservation) deemed of priority importance by different community plans such as the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategies, the Regions for Economic Change Initiative, the Community Strategic Guidelines, and the Cohesion Policy can be integrated in a transnational approach from the starting point of the valorisation of the strength and the solving of the weakness of each territorial specificity. The actions and activities encouraged come out of a best-approach analysis referred both to the key European strategies and the Mediterranean Area features. Countries which aim at finding the most effective way to tackle relevant issues could find useful to follow the same method in order to define the action which best fits each objective.

#### South East Europe [no. 22]

- Nature conservation is one of the main priority axis of this OP. It is well reflected in the SWOT analysis and in the objectives of the priority axis.
- The OP offers financial opportunity for the development of concrete projects in nature conservation.
- The beneficiaries receive assistance from National Authority in the project generation, application and implementation process.

#### POCTEFA [no. 36]

- The OP has a good structure in terms of links and relationships between the diagnosis, objectives, activities and challenges to overcome based on lessons learned in previous programmes.
- The main challenges of the OP are also very well presented and based on the lessons learned in the previous programmes implementation in terms of giving priority to those projects that enhance a deep common understanding, that promote links between territories, that manage common resources (for example the Pyrennes) and that engage in approaching complementary economic activities.

# Appendix II: Analysis of the programme implementation

Following the assessment of the quality of the Programme documents, the second part of the analysis was to evaluate the implementation process. This was assessed using the matrix which considered the following questions:

- Is nature conservation represented within the authorising committee (e.g. a Selection Committee)?
- Is nature conservation represented within the expertise of the committee which evaluates the projects (e.g. an Evaluation Committee)?
- Does the administration provide opportunities to train applicants in writing applications?
- How many calls for proposals are there per year?
- Is there a regulated procedure with a simple pre-audit for project ideas?
- Is web-based assistance for applications available?
- Are there any other kinds of promotional activities to encourage project applications?
- Is personal advice available to project applicants?
- Is professional support for the application eligible?
- Are easily available templates provided by the administration concerning progress reports, documentation lists etc.?
- Is the level of information and data required for the application appropriate to the level of subsidy and the funding objectives?
- What is the time period between the application submission (= official application excl. screening phase) and acceptance (= legal funding commitment)?
- How many nature conservation projects have been declined or allocated funding so far?
- What was the time between the transmission of invoices and the reimbursement of payment?
- Can the funding applicant get pre-financing assistance?
- What is the total amount of funding allocated to nature conservation projects by 31st March 2010?

## Selection and Evaluation Committees

To accept or reject a nature conservation project application it is important that experts, including those covering the nature conservation sector, are involved in discussions about the project (e.g. in an advisory board) or that they are at least consulted during the process of opinion-gathering (e.g. by written statements). The most relevant boards for decision making within OPs are the Selection and the Evaluation Committees.

It is also important to include nature conservation experts in the relevant committees of those OPs which do not support nature conservation projects. In this way experts can ensure that the proposed projects do not have negative impacts on biodiversity.

As shown in Figure 35, in about half of the OPs nature conservation experts are represented within the Selection Committee as members or as guests. In 17 %, opinions about nature conservation are included via written submissions; however, in more than one-third of the OPs there was no discussion or consultation with nature conservation experts.

In only one-third of the OPs nature conservation experts are represented within the Evaluation Committees and therefore have the opportunity to comment either as members or guests. Similarly to the situation with Selection Committees, more than one-third of the OPs Evaluation Committees did not include the opinions of nature conservation experts.

Within Cross-Border Programmes the views of nature conservation experts (Selection and Evaluation Committees) were often represented. They are followed by Convergence Programmes (see Figure 36).

The OP “Environment - Czech Republic” [no. 32] is an example of a programme with a very high level of participation by nature conservation experts within its committees. In this case, there was no specific “Selection Committee”, but a “Regulation authority” which is the Ministry of Environment. Steering Committee Members were nominated representatives from the Ministry of Environment, Agency for Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection of the Czech Republic, Ministry of Regional Development, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, Regional Associations, Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic and NGOs. The Evaluation Committee included representatives from the Ministry of Environment and the Agency for Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection of the Czech Republic.

The OP “Catalonia” [no. 34] is an example for a Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programme which ensured the presence of nature conservation experts in the Selection Committee with a permanent representative from the authorities in charge of the environment and related issues. Representatives of “nature conservation” are also present in the Evaluation Committee, through written submissions.

### Conclusion:

Nature conservation experts are represented in the Selection Committee in about half of the OPs and in one-third in the Evaluation Committee. In some cases, mainly in Transnational Programmes, OPs have a clear budget for biodiversity measures (code 51 etc.), but no nature conservation experts are represented within the authorising committee (Selection Committee and Evaluation Committee) as members or as guests. In addition to secure the presence of nature conservation experts in those programmes that do not foresee biodiversity funding it would be advisable to include the views of nature conservation experts also in other OPs who have not included biodiversity spending but might support projects that have negative impacts on biodiversity.

Figure 35: Presence of nature conservation experts within the authorising committees

E.g. Selection Committee (n=46) and Evaluation Committee (n=44, in 2 programmes this question was answered falsely); Source: own surveys

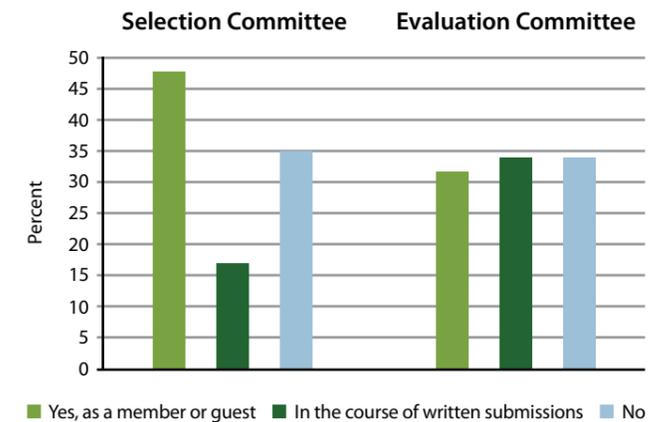
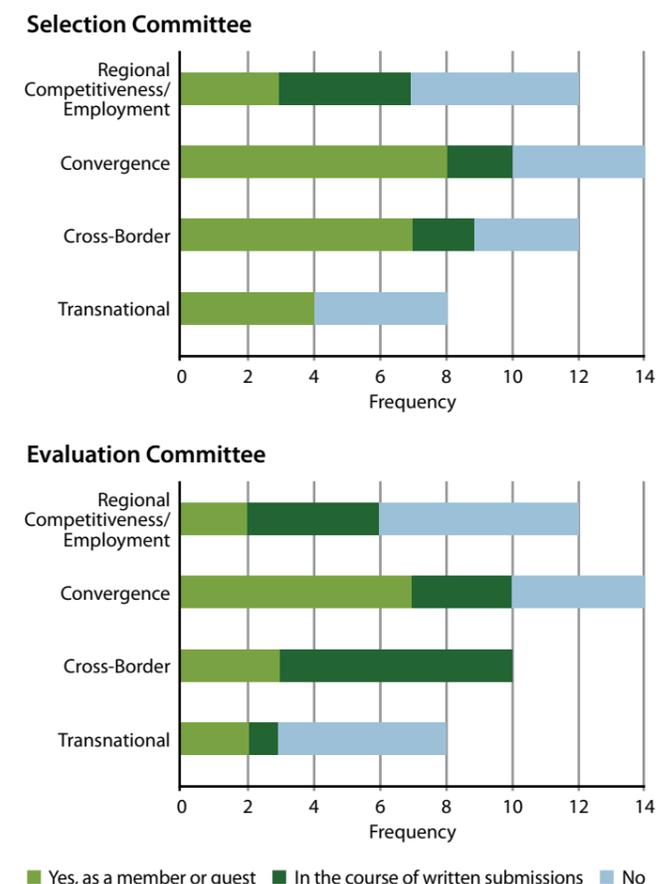


Figure 36: Presence of nature conservation experts within the authorising committees – distribution according to types of programmes

E.g. Selection Committee (n=46) and Evaluation Committee (n=44, in 2 programmes this question was answered falsely); Source: own surveys



## Training activities

In order to make better use of opportunities provided in the OPs for nature conservation projects, it is necessary that potential applicants are well informed about the programmes possibilities and its implementation procedures. One effective way to do so is through “training sessions”, in which the questions and concerns of potential beneficiaries can be addressed.

As shown in Figure 37, no specific training relating to nature conservation is offered in the analysed programmes. Only one Convergence Programme offers a centralised training related to nature conservation<sup>26</sup>.

However, regional training for the whole programme or training relating to nature conservation is in the planning stage for two-thirds of the OPs. One-fifth of the OPs offer no training activities at all.

As shown in Figure 38, the situation is similar across all types of programmes.

The Transnational OP “POCTEFA” [no. 36] gives an example of well provided training activities. Regional training activities in form of workshops are held when calls are launched and before the final results are presented. Additionally, several guides and documents have been developed to assist in project applications and financial reporting.

### Conclusion:

Communication with potential applicants is of major importance in achieving successful funding. One effective way to achieve this is through training activities. Currently in most cases (two-thirds of the OPs) only general information is provided or specific nature conservation is only included at the planning stage. It is a weakness that in one-fifth of the OP’s no training is available.

Figure 37: Opportunities available to train applicants in writing applications

n=46; Source: own surveys

### Training activities

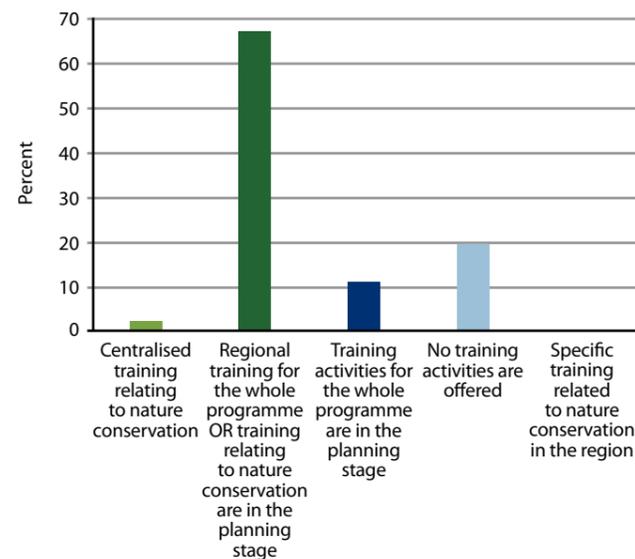
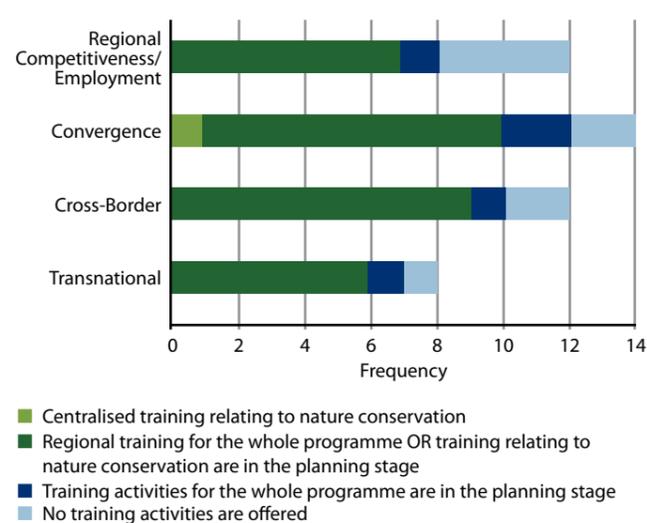


Figure 38: Opportunities available to train applicants in writing applications - distribution in types

n=46; Source: own surveys

### Training activities



## Calls for proposals

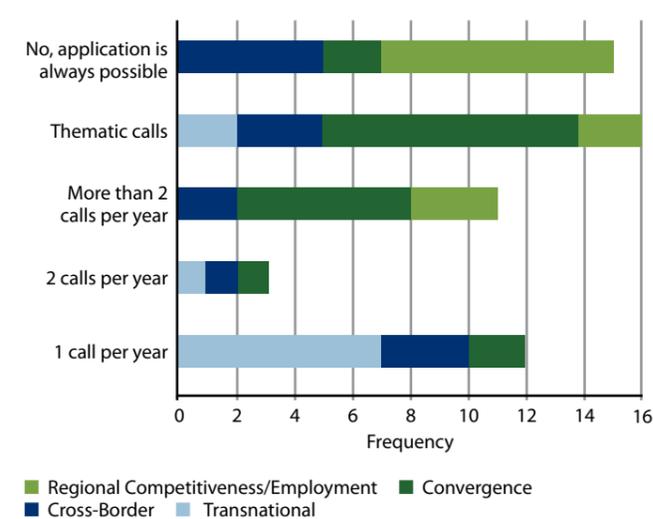
Thematic calls are a useful way for managing authorities to emphasise their priorities and make it easier for applicants to ensure their applications fit their goals. The number of calls for proposals (if there are any) is important especially when calls are focussed on specific themes. The more calls are launched, the more different issues can be covered by applicants. The bottleneck for this issue is the availability of staff within the responsible authorities.

Figure 39 illustrates the number of calls for proposals per year. The most common approach is through “thematic calls” (16 times) which is most frequently used in Convergence Programmes. The second most common approach is “application is always possible” (15 times). Whilst Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes are typically open for applications to be submitted at any time, most of the Transnational Programmes offer one call per year. Cross-Border and Convergence Programmes in general offer all different types of calls.

Figure 39: Number of calls for proposals per year

Multiple answers were permitted; Source: own surveys

### Calls for proposals



## Project screening

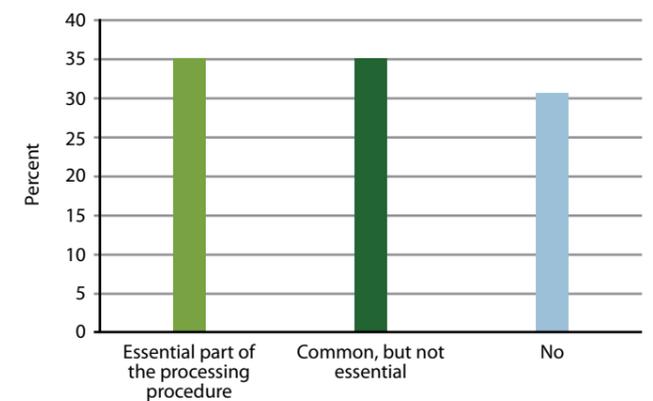
Project screening is an effective tool, where potential projects are screened in the early stages of application to determine whether they have any chance of being accepted. Project screening serves to avoid time consuming preparation for projects with no chance of selection, and helps to match the projects with the national or regional goals.

A regulated procedure with a simple pre-audit for project ideas exists for more than one-third of the OPs. For another third of the OPs, project screening is common but not essential and 14 OPs do not have any project screening (see Figure 40).

Figure 40: Presence of a simple pre-audit for project ideas

n=46; Source: own surveys

### Project screening



As illustrated in Figure 41, project screening differs across all types of OPs. The Transnational Programmes have most frequently included screening in the application process as opposed to Convergence Programmes which have a very low level of screening.

**Conclusion:**

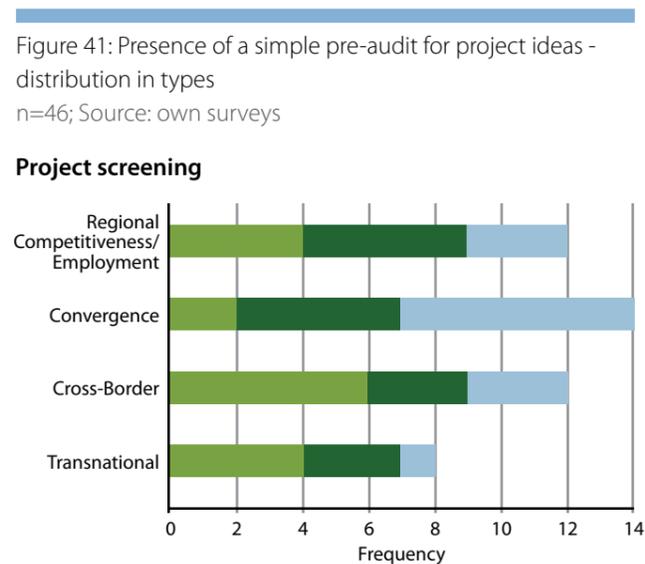
A more systematic approach to project screening e.g. through a two step application procedure could not only improve the projects quality but also help the managing authorities to better target the projects towards the programme goals.

**Web support**

Web support is essential in the 21st century. It can increase the transparency of an OP and helps to communicate its implementation. In addition it can serve as a resource to help applicants with all stages of application and implementation.

As shown in Figure 42, web-based assistance for applications is very good in nearly two-thirds of the analysed programmes, and moderate in more than one-third.

Only one Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programme<sup>27</sup> has been evaluated as inadequate in web support. All types of OPs have a good web-based assistance (see Figure 43).



An example of good web support is demonstrated in case of the OP "South East Europe" [no. 22]. Information on the programme's website is well structured and offers answers to the majority of questions regarding the programme. It also contains a separate section with news and updates.

The OP "Strengthening of the Regional Competitiveness of Lower Austria" [no. 6] is an example of providing inappropriate web-based information. This website offers all needed information but due to its complicated layout/structure, it is very hard to find and use this information. The administration of the various activities is outsourced to many different institutions and companies which makes it hard for applicants to find all needed files and information.

The OP "Central Europe" [no. 33] is another example of providing insufficient web-based information. It is graded as moderate but complete information concerning this programme is only available for the international level. For the national level there is a significant gap and some information has been reported during the evaluation as being wrong. Beside this, requirements for the applicants are not clearly defined and materials for applications are only available in English. Interpretation of the programme in general is very unclear with many possible ways of interpreting the information.

**Conclusion:**

Websites offer the easiest and most accessible way of communicating nowadays. A high quality web service makes a programme highly accessible to the applicants, which is an important step towards successful funding. With the exception of the one non-user friendly example, web support of the evaluated programmes is generally very good.

**Promotional activities**

In addition to providing training and web-based information, promotional activities are very important to motivate potential applicants to design and submit applications for nature conservation projects. This can be achieved by disseminating information about the activities supported by the programme, communicating the goals in different regions and explaining how applicants can engage with the programme.

Promotional activities to encourage project applications (e.g. personal advice, public relations via brochures, newsletters, seminars, workshops, flyers) are well implemented in the majority of cases or moderate in a quarter of the OPs (see Figure 44).

Inadequate promotional activities were, however, found across all types of OPs (see Figure 45): for 2 Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes<sup>28</sup>, 1 Convergence Programme (National/Sectoral Programme<sup>29</sup>), 1 Cross-Border Programme<sup>30</sup> and 1 Transnational Programme<sup>31</sup>.

Figure 42: Level of web-based assistance for applicants  
n=46; Source: own surveys

**Web support**

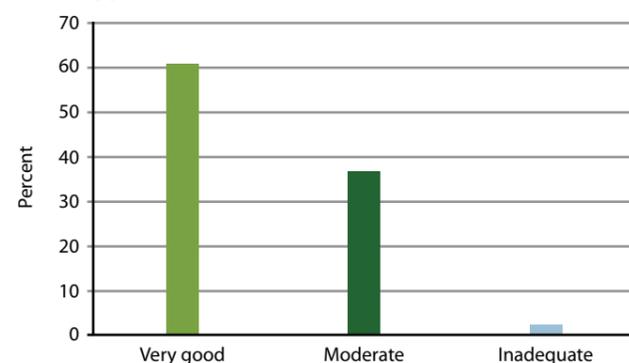


Figure 43: Level of web-based assistance for applicants - distribution in types  
n=46; Source: own surveys

**Web support**

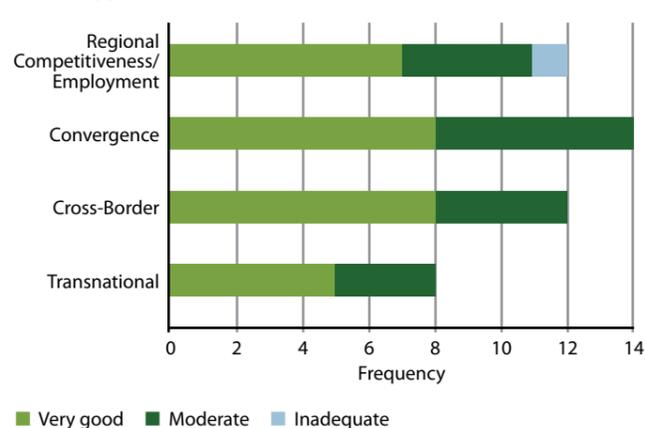


Figure 44: Promotional activities to encourage project applications  
n=46; Source: own surveys

**Promotional activities**

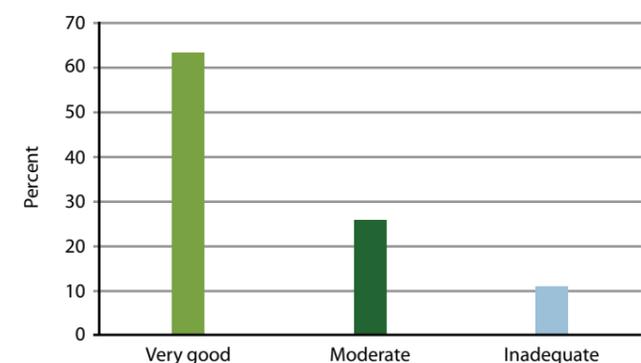
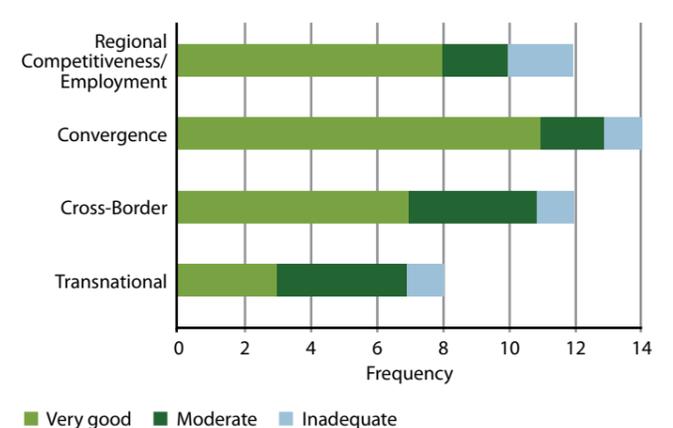


Figure 45: Promotional activities to encourage project applications - distribution in types  
n=46; Source: own surveys

**Promotional activities**



28 Vienna [no. 7], Catalonia [no. 34]  
29 Romania [no. 20]  
30 Italy-Austria [no. 10]  
31 POCTEFA [no. 36]

27 Lower Austria [no. 6]

An example of well designed and effective promotional activities is apparent in the OP “European Objective for Territorial Co-operation Austria – Czech Republic” [no. 13]. It initiated the establishment of a cooperation project between regional development organisations in order to support ideas, initiatives and projects both between and within the regions.

The OP “Strengthening the Competitiveness of the Salzburg Region” [no. 5] includes the provision of a contact person to advise project applicants personally from the outset. This person acts as a project developer and supports project applicants in creating and submitting applications and in implementing projects.

**Conclusion:**

The first contact between the programme and the potential applicant is usually accomplished through promotional activities. The role of these activities is to reach potential applicants and inform them of the programme’s accessibility. On the regional and national level, promotional activities should pay additional attention to ‘difficult to reach’ applicants such as individuals, small enterprises, NGOs etc. In the case of territorial cooperation, these activities have a primary goal to connect large areas of different countries and promote the potential of their cooperation. Evaluation of this aspect has shown that the majority of OPs have a good level of different promotional activities.

**External application support costs**

Providing professional support is a valuable investment to assist the applicants. Competent agencies can help with issues such as interpretation of goals, requested input and output, estimation of costs, etc. They usually have some experiences in dealing with relevant authorities and can significantly advise the applicant in such issues.

Professional support for applicants can be requested and funded in only one-fifth of the OPs regardless the project approval. For more than half, it is an eligible expenditure when the project is approved (see Figure 46).

For 12 OPs (especially Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes) professional support for applicants is not allowed (see Figure 47). For most of the Cross-Border Programmes it is an eligible expense.

In the Transnational Programme OP “South East Europe” [no. 22], beneficiaries received assistance for project preparation, application and implementation from the National Authority who provides continuous consultation via e-mail. They also organise individual meetings with beneficiaries and offer different kinds of information depending on the level of involvement, for example: general information about the programme, partnership details, information about the documents for the specific call, reasons for rejection at the first stage, etc.

One of the examples of insufficient external application support is the OP “North West Europe” [no. 30]. In this programme, no eligible professional support is provided. This, combined with the lack of pre-financing assistance and training, has a very negative impact on all potential applicants, especially individuals, NGOs and small enterprises.

**Conclusion:**

External application support cost is a great convenience for the applicants. For that reason it should be available to a greater extent, especially in Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes which offer the lowest level of professional support. Together with Convergence Programmes, these types of programmes have - in certain activities - the highest number of applicants with limited financial resources (individuals, NGOs, etc.) and for that reason, the greatest need for such a service.

**Guidelines/Templates**

Guidelines are, similarly to comprehensive websites, an essential service which should always be offered in project applications. This chapter reviews whether guidelines exist for different OPs, and how helpful they are to applicants.

For almost all OPs (93 % - see Figure 48), easily available templates are provided by the administration (concerning progress reports, documentation lists etc.).

Only 2 Convergence Programmes<sup>32</sup> and 1 Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programme<sup>33</sup> do not provide any guidelines (see Figure 49).



Figure 46: Professional support for applicants n=45; in 1 programme this question was not answered; Source: own surveys

**External application support costs**

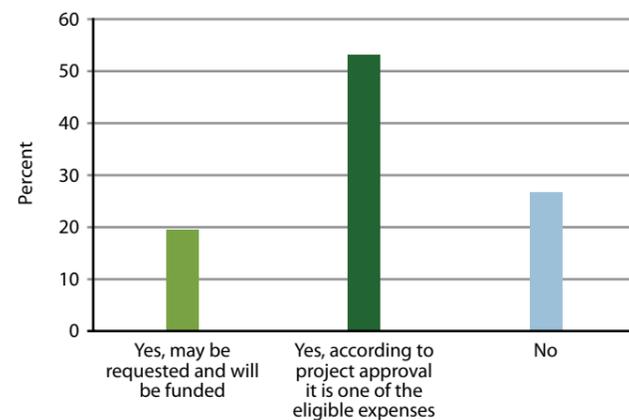


Figure 47: Professional support for applicants - distribution in types n=45; in 1 Programme this question was not answered; Source: own surveys

**External application support costs**

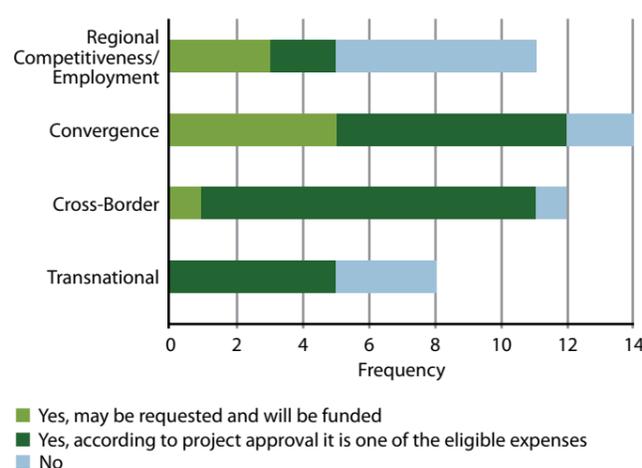


Figure 48: Availability of templates (provided by administration concerning progress reports, documentation lists etc.) n=46; Source: own surveys

**Provided Guidelines**

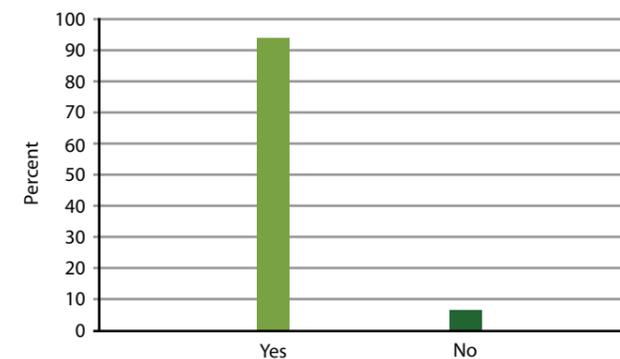
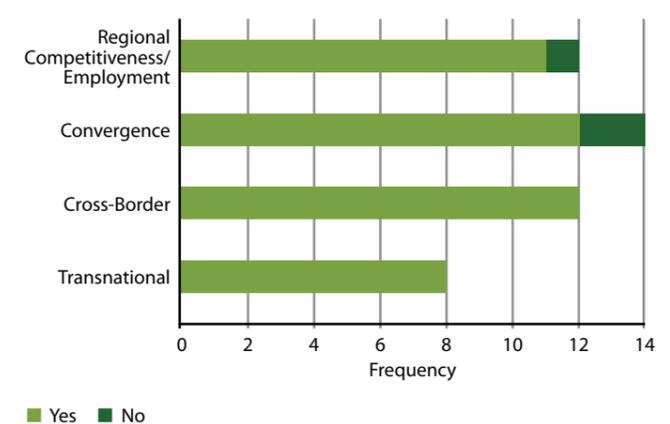


Figure 49: Availability of templates (provided by administration concerning progress reports, documentation lists etc.) - distribution in types n=46; Source: own surveys

**Provided Guidelines**



32 Regional Programme Giurgiu [no. 19] and the National/Sectoral Programme Environment Romania [no. 20]  
33 Brittany [no. 43]

For more than half of all OPs, templates are simple and useful and for the remainder they are moderately useful (see Figure 50).

Only in one Transnational Programme<sup>34</sup> guidelines are described as complicated and not very helpful (see Figure 51). Simple and very useful templates differ across all types of the OPs.

An interesting type of guidelines was provided for the OP "European Objective for Territorial Co-operation Austria – Czech Republic" [no. 13]. An addition to the OP, a "Programme Complement" was developed and approved by the Monitoring Committee. In this document, the purpose and aim of each individual activity field is explained in detail and examples are given of potential activities, as well as descriptions of projects that should receive special support.

**Conclusion:**

As one of the most important helpful tools in the application process, guidelines are available in almost all of the OPs. It is recommended that they should be made more simple and useful, especially in the Convergence Programmes.

**Format of the application**

The paperwork for the application as well as the information and data requested by the administration should be appropriate to the expected level of funding. If the application form is inappropriately large, potential applicants may be discouraged. Nevertheless, the requested details must be sufficient to guarantee adequate project assessment and evaluation.

For the majority of the OPs the level of information and data required is appropriate to the level of subsidies and the funding objectives. For one-third of the OPs the level of information and data required is moderately appropriate. None of the OPs request inappropriate amount of data (see Figure 52).

Figure 53 below shows that a suitable level of information and data required differs across all types of OPs.

**Conclusion:**

The analysis of the matrix responses show that bureaucracy is seen as a particular problem for potential applicants. However, in summary, the majority of the Programmes require an appropriate amount of information and data in the application, which is a positive development that should be further encouraged. It is recommended that the complexity of the application should be also appropriate to the expected level of funding.

Figure 50: Design of templates for easy use by project applicants n=42, in 4 programmes this question was not answered (3 programmes do not provide any guidelines); Source: own surveys

**Use of the templates**

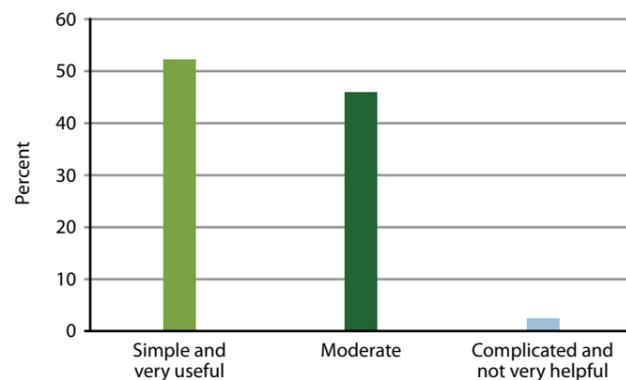
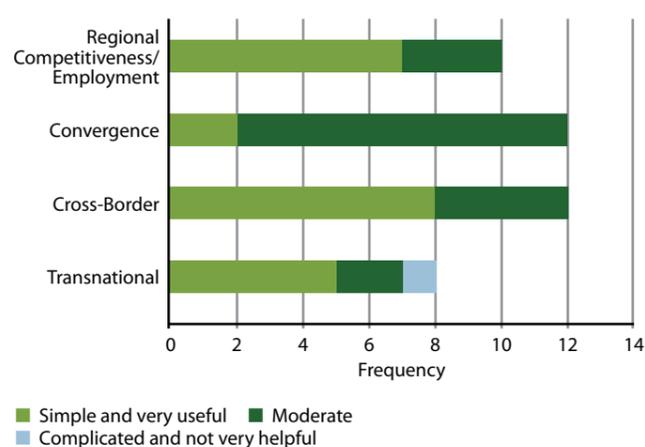


Figure 51: Design of templates for easy use by project applicants - distribution in types n=42, in 4 programmes this question was not answered (3 programmes do not provide any guidelines); Source: own surveys

**Use of the templates**



34 Atlantic Area Transnational Cooperation Programme [no. 29]

Figure 52: Appropriateness of the level of information and data required in comparison with the level of subsidies and funding objectives n=45, in 1 programme this question was answered falsely; Source: own surveys

**Format of the application**

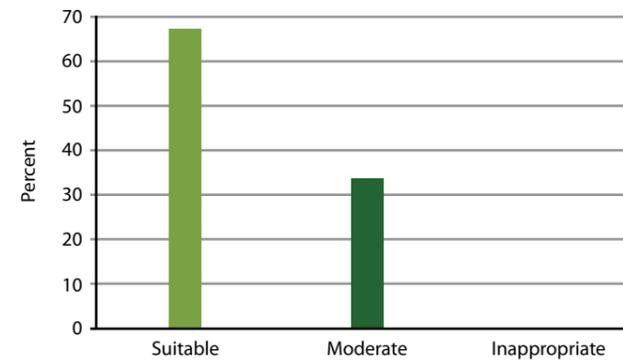
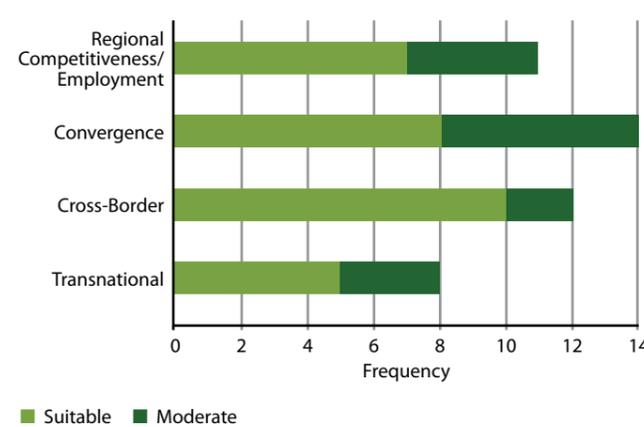


Figure 53: Appropriateness of the level of information and data required in comparison with the level of subsidies and funding objectives - distribution in types n=45, in 1 programme this question was answered falsely; Source: own surveys

**Format of the application**



35 POCTEFA [no. 36], Alpine Space [no. 14]  
 36 Regional Programme Romania/Giurgiu [no. 19] and National/Sectoral Programme "Environment Romania" [no. 20]  
 37 Wales [no. 27]

**Approval period**

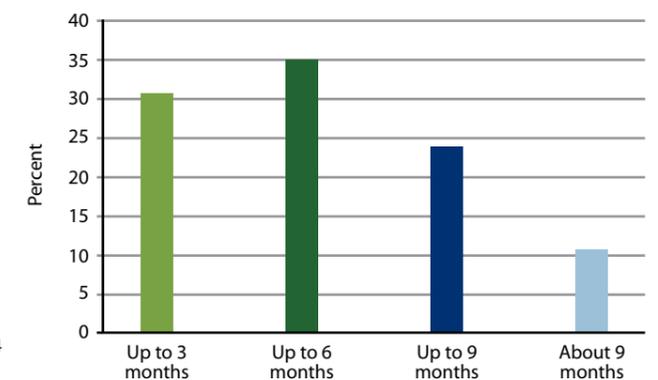
The duration of an application process demonstrates how well the administration is prepared for programme implementation. The shorter the time-frame, the better for the applicant. If the application process takes a long time, it might become very difficult for the applicant to carry out the project. Often the projects include partners, financial commitments or other factors which are time limited, which may need to be reorganised after a few months when the project is finally approved.

The time period for project approval - between project application (= official application excl. screening phase) and official acceptance (= legal funding commitment) - ranges from "up to 3 months" to "about 9 months". Two-thirds of the OPs have a timeframe of "up to 3 months" or "up to 6 months" (see Figure 54).

5 OPs (2 Transnational Programmes<sup>35</sup>, 2 Convergence Programmes<sup>36</sup> and 1 Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programme<sup>37</sup>) need "about 9 months".

Figure 54: Time period between application submission (= official application excl. screening phase) and acceptance (= legal funding commitment) n=46; Source: own surveys

**Approval period**



As Figure 55 shows, the shortest time-frames (“up to 3 months”) were mostly within Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes.

In the case of the “Romanian Sectoral Operational Programme – Environment” [no. 20], the time period between the submission of the project application and the acceptance mostly exceeds 10 months. Such delays, together with an absence of pre-financing funds have the strongest negative influence on individuals, NGOs and small enterprises because of their limited cash-flow capacity.

#### Conclusion:

In the majority of Transnational Programmes the administration needs up to 9 or in some cases, more than 9 months for approval of the projects, in contrast to the majority of Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes, where this procedure is carried out in approximately 3 months. Unfortunately these are the programmes with the weakest links to biodiversity. It is crucial to keep the approval period as short as possible in order for the applicant to manage their budget planning, the project team availability and necessary licences for the investments. Practice shows that the approval period should not last more than 6 months.

### Submitted and allocated nature conservation projects

The number of the approved projects is the most realistic indicator for successful programme implementation. Assuming that there are sufficient applicants, this number reflects the ability of an Operational Programme to reach and provide beneficiaries with all needed assistance (information, professional support, etc.). Since this number refers to nature conservation projects, it also reflects the programme’s orientation towards nature conservation (presence of the corresponding expertise within the Committees, reflection of nature conservation within the objectives, etc.).

Only in 2 OPs (Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programme<sup>38</sup> and Cross-Border Programme<sup>39</sup>) have 100 % of nature conservation projects been approved so far. Nearly a quarter of the OPs approved between 75% and 99% of nature conservation projects (3 Cross-border Programmes<sup>40</sup>, 2 Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes<sup>41</sup> and 1 Transnational Programme<sup>42</sup>). For more than a quarter of the OPs the proportion of approved projects relating to nature conservation is below 50% (see Figure 56). More than a quarter of the programmes have no submitted nature conservation projects.

As presented in Figure 57, Cross-Border Programmes have the highest proportion of approved nature conservation projects. It is significant that most of the OPs approve below 50 % of the submitted projects or none, because no nature conservation project has been submitted so far.

#### Conclusion:

The number of rejected projects is significantly high in Transnational Programmes as well as in Convergence Programmes. Improved procedures before official application (e.g. establishing screenings) or better advice to applicants about the objective of the programme or the current call for proposals could result in less rejections of applications.

### Timing of payments

For societies and NGOs the time difference between project expenditure and reimbursement is key to deciding whether to make an application or not. The longer the gap between expenditure and reimbursement, the more difficult it becomes for the applicant.

In more than half of the OPs the time between transmitting invoices and receiving payments is longer than 3 months (see Figure 58). In only 4 OPs the time delay for receiving payments is less than 1 month (2 Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes<sup>43</sup> and 2 Convergence Programmes<sup>44</sup>). In 4 cases the time delay is less than 2 months, 1 Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programme<sup>45</sup> and 3 Convergence Programmes<sup>46</sup>.

Figure 55: Time period between application submission (request levy excl. screening phase) and acceptance (= legal funding commitment) - distribution in types n=46; Source: own surveys

#### Approval period

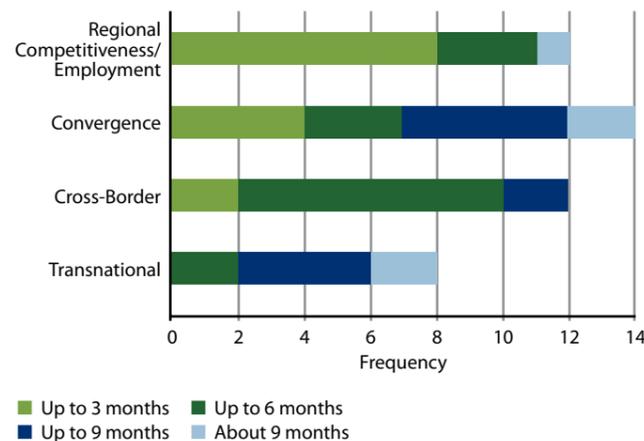


Figure 56: Percentage of nature conservation projects which have been approved for funding so far n=27, in 19 programmes the answer could not clearly be attributed to a category; Source: own surveys

#### Percentage of submitted nature conservation projects which were allocated

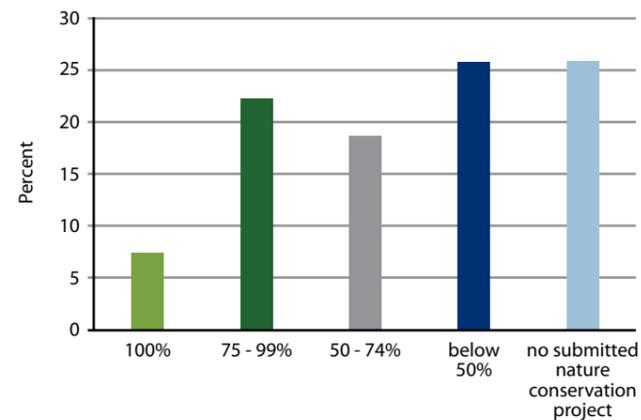


Figure 57: Percentage of nature conservation projects which have been approved for funding so far - distribution in types n=27, in 19 programmes the answer could not clearly be attributed to a category; Source: own surveys

#### Percentage of submitted nature conservation projects which were allocated

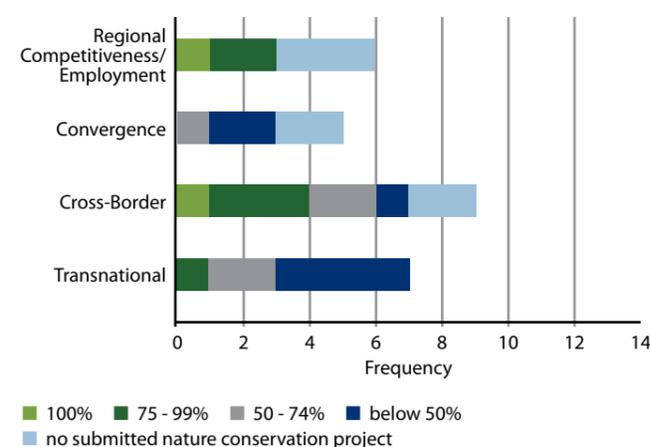
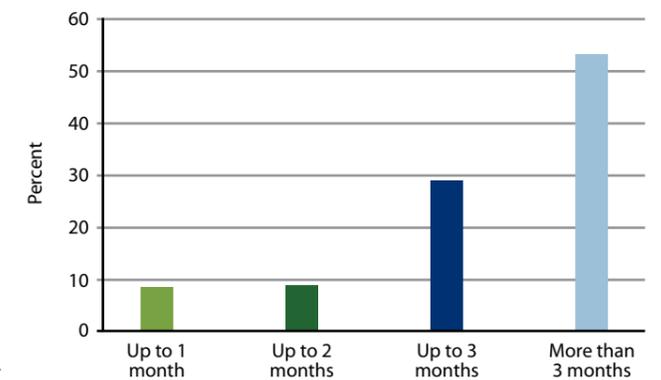


Figure 58: Time period between the submission of invoices and reimbursement n=45, in 1 programme this question was not answered; Source: own surveys

#### Timing of payments



38 Upper Austria [no. 1]  
 39 Austria-Slovakia [no. 9]  
 40 Austria-Hungary [no. 12], Austria-Czech [no. 13], France-England [no. 44]  
 41 Catalonia [no. 34], Brittany [no. 43]  
 42 POCTEFA [no. 36]

43 Vorarlberg [no. 2], Lazio [no. 23]  
 44 National/Sectoral Programme Environment Czech Republic [no. 32] and Regional Programme Development of Eastern Poland [no. 38]  
 45 Tyrol [no. 4]  
 46 Regional Programme Italy [no. 24], Slovenia [no. 45] and the National/Sectoral Programme Infrastructure and Environment Programme Poland [no. 40]

Mainly in Cross-Border and Transnational Programmes the time between transmitting invoices and receiving payments is longer than 3 months (see Figure 59).

**Conclusion:**

Transnational Programmes and Cross-Border Programmes have significantly the longest period for payment of invoices to the applicant. A short time between “already spent money” and “received funding” is especially important for not-for-profit organisations, who are typical applicants for Nature Conservation projects. 2 Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes and 2 Convergence Programmes show what is possible in the administration sector, needing only 1 month for payment.

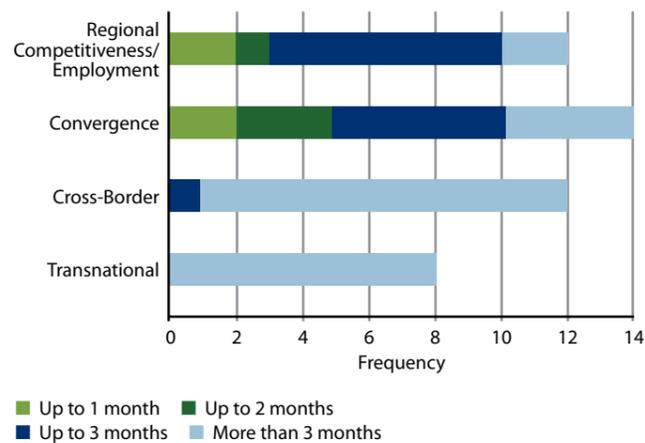
**Pre-financing**

Some applicants are unable to pre-finance their projects. This is especially the case for nature conservation applicants who often work on a not-for-profit basis and therefore have limited financial resources available. For those applicants, pre-financing is crucial.

Pre-financing assistance for funding applicants is not common (67 % of the OPs do not provide it) as it is shown in the Figure 60 below. Only in one-third of the OPs it is easily available or available in exceptional cases.

Figure 59: Time period between the submission of invoices and reimbursement - distribution in types  
n=45, in 1 programme this question was not answered;  
Source: own surveys

**Timing of payments**



Pre-financing would be provided for half of the Convergence Programmes. In Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes it is mostly only possible in exceptional cases; for Transnational and Cross-Border Programmes pre-financing is almost not available (see Figure 61).

**Conclusion:**

Pre-financing is a very important factor of the application process. This especially refers to the applicants with limited financial resources which are typical for the nature conservation sector (not-for-profit organisations) and where it can even be a decisive factor for the application. The overall low availability of pre-financing that can be seen in the results reflects the big need for improvement of this aspect, especially in the case of Convergence Programmes which is where the majority of the applicants with limited financial resources can be expected.

**Total funding allocated (Mid-term evaluation)**

Finally, the partners analysed how much money has already been allocated against code 51 (by 31st of March 2010). The date was set on 31st of March 2010 because it is approximately the mid-term of the project period (2007-2013) and the matrix was developed by the end of March 2010.

As shown in Figure 62, over half of the OPs with a code 51 budget had only allocated between 0 % and 9 % of this budget and less than half of the OPs have had allocated more than 9 % of the budget amount. These OPs have already started the allocation of the budget for nature conservation projects. As detailed in Chapter 4.6, 17 programmes do not have any allocation under code 51.

12 programmes (5 Transnational, 4 Cross-border, 3 Convergence Programmes) had allocated more than 9 % of the budgeted amount to nature conservation projects (Figure 63).

Transnational Programmes had already allocated a considerable part of the budgeted amount to nature conservation projects. Most of the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes do not have any allocation under code 51, and the few programmes which have a budget for code 51, do not use this budget. Convergence and Cross-Border Programmes differ in the utilisation of the budget for nature conservation.

Figure 60: Availability of pre-financing for funding applicants  
n=46; Source: own surveys

**Pre-financing**

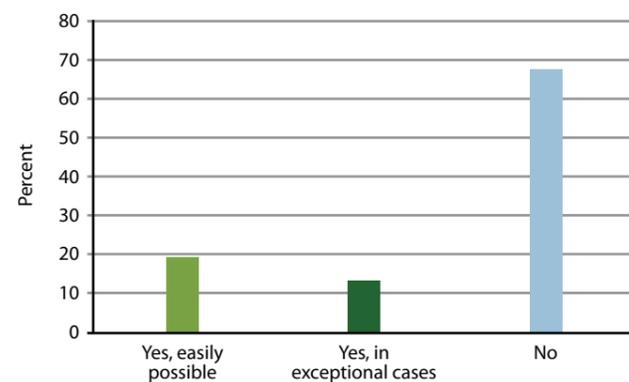


Figure 61: Availability of pre-financing for funding applicants - distribution in types  
n=46; Source: own surveys

**Pre-financing**

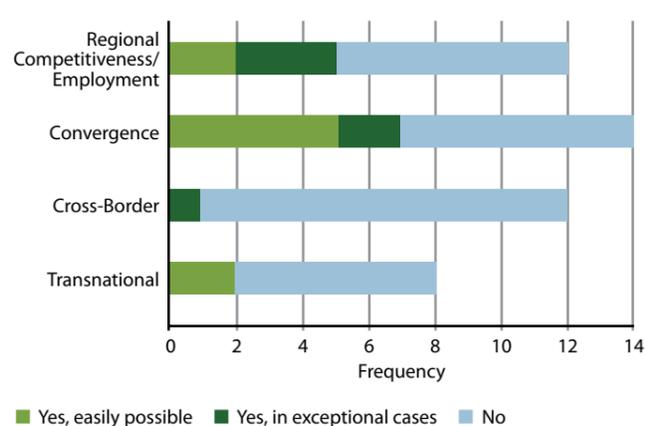


Figure 62: Total funds allocated to nature conservation projects by the 31st March 2010  
n=29, 17 programmes do not have any allocation under code 51; Source: own surveys

**Total fund allocated up to the 31st March 2010 (code 51)**

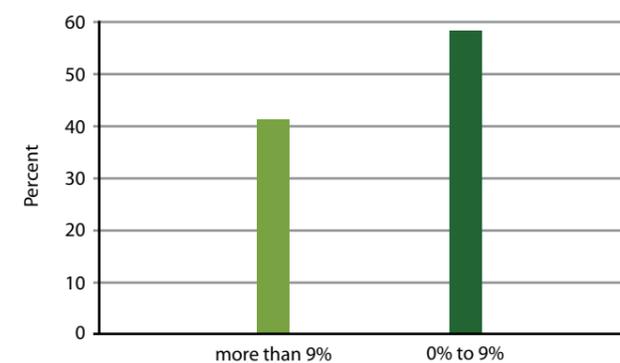
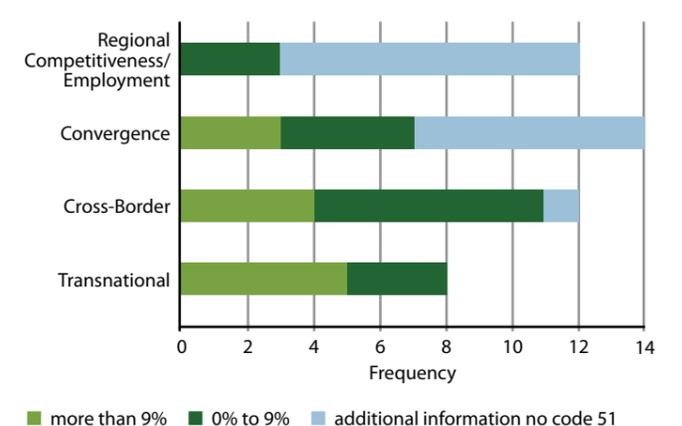


Figure 63: Total funds allocated to nature conservation projects by the 31st March 2010 - distribution in types  
n=46; Source: own surveys

**Total fund allocated up to the 31st March 2010 (code 51)**



**Conclusion:**

Out of all programmes which have a budget for code 51, more than a half did not succeed to allocate a significant part of the budget amount to nature conservation. Comparing the types of those programmes, the most common profile of their applicants, and the implementation evaluation (Chapter 5.15), it can be concluded that the low availability of pre-financing, long approval period and time of received payment, low possibility of screening and possibly low involvement of the conservation experts in the Evaluation Committee, have a strong negative impact on the applicant's success, especially for those with limited financial resources. On the other hand, the most successful programmes in this aspect are mainly Transnational and Cross-Border Programmes which are generally less influenced by the above mentioned factors. The improvement of these aspects is therefore an important step in achieving the overall implementation success.

**Summary of the implementation of the OPs with code 51**

In contrast to the high quality of the programme documents that include code 51, the implementation shows only moderate results. The reason for this could be that in one-quarter of the programmes nature conservation experts are not represented in the Evaluation and Selection Committees and training activities are not well developed. Time between spending money and receiving payments is often too long and pre-financing is not offered. With these obstacles even when a programme has an allocation under code 51 it does not always mean that this is well implemented.

**Summary of the implementation**

To compare the total implementation of the OPs, the OPs were divided into three classes (see Chapter 4.9). The classification was based on the total number of points which were allocated for the questions in the implementation part of the matrix:

- 70-100 points: high implementation programme
- 35-69 points: moderate implementation programme
- 0-34 points: low implementation programme

On average, the programmes allocate 52 points in the implementation part. More than two-thirds are moderate implementation programmes, one-fifth of the OPs have a high implementation. 6 OPs are low implementation programmes.

9 programmes have a high implementation: 3 examples from each of the Cross-Border Programmes<sup>47</sup>, Convergence Programmes<sup>48</sup> and Transnational Programmes<sup>49</sup>.

2 examples from each of the Transnational, Convergence and Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes are low implementation programmes. The others have moderate implementation programmes.

**Conclusion:**

Compared to the quality of the OP programme documents (mean: 56 points), analysis of the implementation of the OPs reveals more difficulties (mean: 52 points). In total 20 programmes have been identified as being of high quality in relation to the documentation (see 4.9) but only 9 show high quality in implementation.



Figure 64: Overview of the OPs which have an allocation under code 51 n=29; In the case where "n" is different to 32, it is due to the fact that the relevant question was not answered by all OPs; Source: own surveys

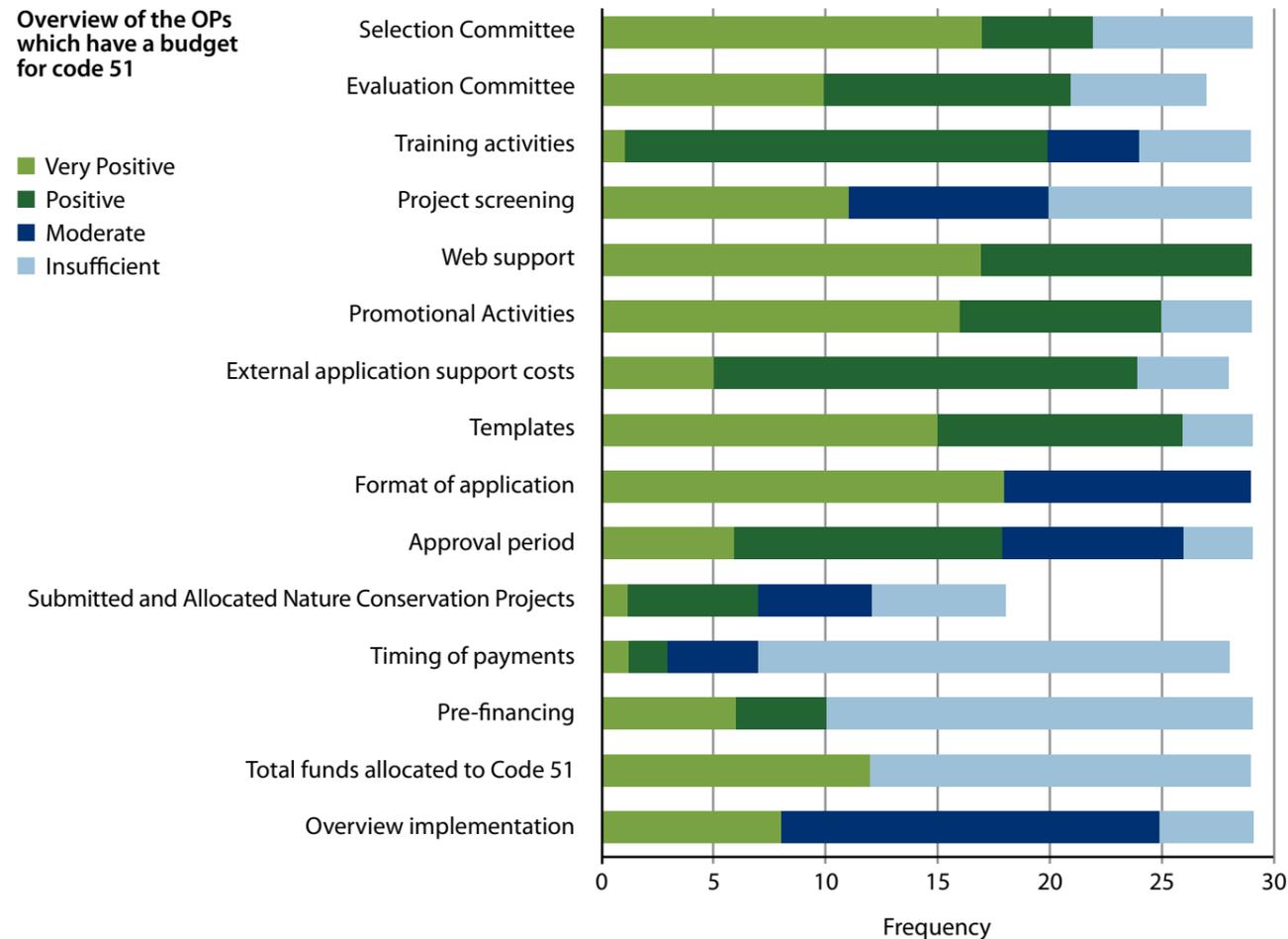


Figure 65: Overview of the implementation of the OPs n=46; Source: own surveys

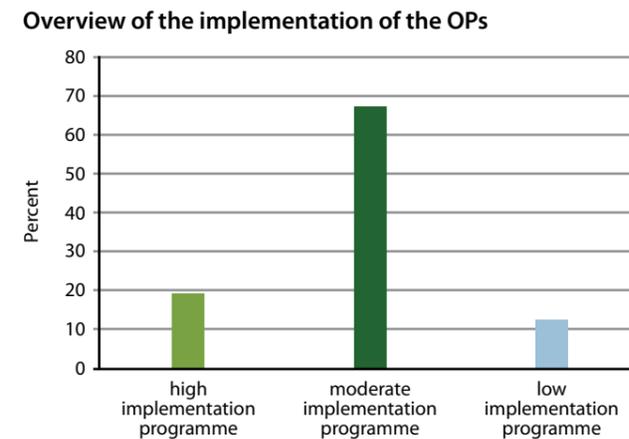
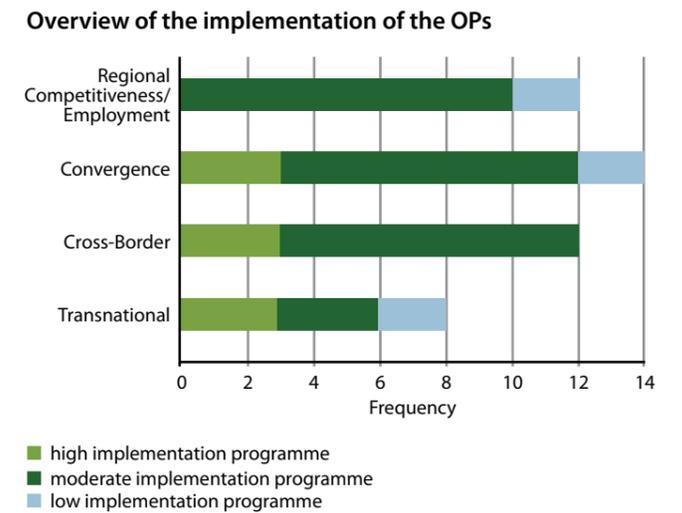


Figure 66: Overview of the implementation of the OPs - distribution in types n=46; Source: own surveys



47 Slovakia – Austria [no. 9], Austria – Czech Republic [no. 13], Slovenia–Austria [no. 8]  
 48 Environment – Czech Republic [no. 32], Region of Murcia [no. 35], Infrastructure and Environment Poland [no. 40]  
 49 South East Europe [no. 22], POCTEFA [no. 36], South West Europe [no. 37]

# Annex: an example of a completed matrix

**KEY**

	MEANS: JUST BACKGROUND INFORMATION - NOT FOR FILLING IN!
	MEANS: PLEASE COMPLETE IT! For example, a number, the amount in € or a cross
	MEANS: AUTOMATICALLY GENERATED

## MATRIX: ANALYSIS OF THE PROGRAMME

Country:	X
Region:	X
Programme analysed:	X
Programme short title:	X
Name of the person in charge:	X
Contact Details	X

## 1. Quality of the programme

### 1.1. On which topic the analysed programme is generally focused?

	mark with a cross	Your Programme Evaluation X-axis
Tourism		
Environment		x
Regional Competitiveness		
Interregional Cooperation		
Others	topic	

### 1.2. In which way is biodiversity reflected in the following 4 aspects of the programme?

1.2.1. Aspect 1: SWOT analysis	6
Clearly mentioned	6
Can be interpreted	4
Absent	0

SWOT analysis for the environmental protection sector

#### Strengths

- The variety and richness of the biodiversity in X important natural resources;
- The protected areas in X are already identified.

#### Weaknesses

- Low awareness of population and economic operators regarding the management of special protected areas;
- Limited number of management plans for protected areas in place;

### 1.2.2. Aspect 2: Objectives of priority axis

20

Priority Axis 4 "Implementation of Adequate Management Systems for Nature Protection"

#### Objectives

- Conserve biological diversity, natural habitats, wild species of fauna and flora
- Ensure efficient management of protected areas, including Natura 2000

Clearly established	20
Can be interpreted	10
Absent	0

### 1.2.3. Aspect 3: Activities of priorities

10

Development of infrastructure and management plans to protect biodiversity and Natura 2000

Flexible interpretation	20
Clearly defined, a variety of measures	18
Clearly defined, delineated measures	10
Isolated measures	8
Absent	0

#### 1.2.3.1. Ad aspect 3: Which activities are actually eligible with the OP?

Types of activities	mark with a cross; multiple answers are permitted
Management Plans	x
Establishment of administrative and management structures	x
Monitoring	x
Background work (studies, research, etc.)	x
Educational Measures	x
Public relations	x
Investments	x
Purchase of land	x
Project management	x
Others	measure
Not clearly defined	

### 1.2.4. Aspect 4: Indicators

7

Clearly mentioned, very useable	10
Clearly mentioned, moderately useable	7
Can be interpreted	3
Absent	0

#### 1.2.4.1. Ad aspect 4: Which indicators relating to nature conservation are actually used?

Indicator

Indicator: Protected areas and Natura 2000 sites, with management plans in force. Value in the base year (2006): 3 Estimated value in the target year (2015): 240

Indicator: Surface of protected areas and Natura 2000 sites benefiting from nature conservation measures. Value in the base year (2006): 0 % of protected area surface. Estimated value in the target year (2015): 60 % of protected area surface.

### 1.2.4.2. Ad aspect 4: Are the targets of the indicators achievable?

indicators are not achievable, at the level of 2010 there are no management plans elaborated and approved

### 1.3. Are there any restrictions on funding applicants?

Funding applicants		6	
No relevant restriction for funding applicants	6		
Relevant restriction for funding applicants for certain measures	3		
In general, relevant restriction for funding applicants	0		
Not regulated in the OP (make a cross)			

The beneficiaries within the framework of the X may be municipalities, associations of municipalities, companies owned by municipalities, public entities and NGOs.

### 1.3.1. Ad Funding applicants: Please precise potential applicants of the OP

Funding applicants	mark with a cross; multiple answers are permitted	Administrators and Custodians of protected areas, Research Institutes, Universities, Museums
Individuals		SME only if they are custodians or administrators
NGOs	x	
Associations	x	
Small and medium enterprises	x	
Municipalities	x	
State Institutions	x	
Others	applicant	
Comments		

### 1.4. What is the proportional amount of programme funds available for nature conservation?

1.4.1. Financing "51"		20
Total financing OP: ..... €	€ 4.512.470.138,00	
Funds measure code 51: in €	€ 171.988.693,00	
Total of funds under measure code 51 in €	€ 171.988.693,00	
Proportion of the OP budget for nature conservation	4%	
0%	0	
0,1 - 0,5%	4	
0,51 - 1%	8	
1,1 - 2%	10	
2,1 - 3%	15	
3,1 - 4%	20	
4,1 - 5%	24	
over 5%	28	

### 1.4.2. Financing integrated measures

		mark with a cross; multiple answers are permitted
Funds measure code 49		
Funds measure code 53	x	
Funds measure code 54	x	
Funds measure code 55		
Funds measure code 56		
Funds measure code 58		
Funds measure code 61		
Funds measure code 81		
Funds measure code 84		
Funds measure code 85	x	
Funds measure code 86	x	

### 1.4.2.1. Ad: integrated measures

		5	
Nature Conservation is very well integrated	10		TEXT
Nature Conservation is integrated (interpretable)	5		TEXT
Nature Conservation is not integrated	0		TEXT

### 1.5. Overall programme assessment

		mark with a cross; multiple answers are permitted
Top	x	
Flop		
Top or Flop		
Justification		TEXT
1.6. Why is this programme a good example to other countries?		TEXT
1.7. Which section of this programme is a particularly good example?		TEXT
1.8. Which section of this programme is a particularly bad example?		TEXT
1.9. Additional Comments to the Quality of the programme		TEXT
<b>TOTAL Quality of the programme</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>Max. 100</b>

## 2. Programme Implementation

### 2.1. Is nature conservation represented within the authorizing committee (e.g. Selection Committee)?

Selection Committee		4
Yes, as a member or as guests who present the project	4	
In the course of written submissions	2	
No	0	

Your Implementation Evaluation Y-axis

**2.2. Is nature conservation represented within the committee which evaluates the projects (e.g. Evaluation Committee)?**

Evaluation Committee		6
Yes, as a member	6	
In the course of written submissions	4	
No	0	

**2.3. Does the administration provide opportunities to train applicants in writing applications?**

Training activities		0
There are specific training activities relating to nature conservation in the region	6	
There are centralised training activities relating to nature conservation	5	
There are regional training activities for the whole programme	4	
Training activities relating to nature conservation are in the planning stage	4	
Training activities for the whole programme are in the planning stage	2	
No training activities are offered	0	TEXT

**2.4. How many calls for proposals are there per year?**

Calls for proposals	mark with a cross; multiple answers are permitted	
No, application is always possible		
Thematic calls	x	
more than 2 calls per year		
2 calls per year		
1 call per year	x	

**2.5. Does a regulated procedure with a simple pre-audit for project ideas exist?**

Screening		0
Project screening is an essential part of the processing procedure	4	www.
Project screening is common, but not essential	2	
No project screening	0	

**2.6. Is there web-based assistance for applications?**

Web Support		4
Very good	6	
Moderate	4	
Inadequate	0	

The information on websites is quite general and interpretable, the websites should be more dynamic and should have an interactive section of questions and answers or lessons learned which would support the beneficiaries to develop correctly new projects.

**2.7. Are there any other kinds of promotional activities to encourage project applications (e.g. personal advices, public relations via brochures, seminars, workshops, flyers)?**

Promotional Activities		0
Very good	6	
Moderate	4	
Inadequate	0	

The OP wasn't good promoted and even if the training sessions and workshops were provided not all the potential beneficiaries had access to them. It depended by the Intermediate Body from each development region how it organized the promotion of the programme. In most cases, only in the stage of application the beneficiaries receive advice in writing the project from the Intermediate Bodies from the development regions. There wasn't a national strategy for the promotion of programme

**2.8. Is professional support for the application eligible?**

External application support costs		6
Yes, may be requested and will be funded (regardless of project approval)	6	
Yes, according to project approval it is one of the eligible expenses	4	
No	0	

**2.9. Are easily available templates provided by the administration concerning progress reports, documentation lists etc.?**

<b>2.9.1. Guidelines</b>		0
Yes; please go to the "additional question guidelines"	6	
No	0	

**2.9.2. Ad "Additional question guidelines": Are the templates designed in such a way that project applicants can use them easily?**

		0
Simple and very useful	4	
Moderate	3	
Complicated and not very helpful	0	

**2.10. Is the level of information and data required for the application, appropriate to the amount of subsidies and the funding objectives?**

Amount of the application		4
suitable	8	
moderate	4	
inappropriate	0	

The information and data required are not relevant for the amount of subsidies and the funding objectives. They ask documentation which is not relevant for application and project implementation and makes the evaluation of the projects more difficult.

**2.11. Time period between project application (request levy excl. screening phase) and allowance (= legally funding commitment)?**

Allowance period		0
Up to 3 months	6	
Up to 6 months	4	
Up to 9 months	2	
About 9 months	0	

**2.12. How many nature conservation projects have been declined or allocated funding so far?**

Nature conservation proposals submitted:  
Declined nature conservation projects > = % allocated nature conservation projects

Number of submitted projects		0
100% of allocated proposals	6	
75 - 99% of allocated proposals	4	
50 - 74% of allocated proposals	2	
below 50% of allocated proposals	0	

For nature conservation: 83 submitted projects during sessions 1 and 2; 35 projects were approved and 28 projects were contracted and allocated so far (the percent of projects approved and contracted from the total number of projects submitted is below 50%)

**2.13. Time between transmission of invoices and received payment**

Time of received payment		0
Up to 1 month	6	
Up to 2 months	4	
Up to 3 months	2	
More than 3 months	0	

**2.14. Does the funding applicant get pre-financing assistance?**

Pre-financing		0
Yes, easily possible	6	
Yes, in exceptional cases	4	
No	0	

**2.15. Total funds allocated for nature conservation projects up to the 31st March 2010** 5

**2.15.1. Budgeted amount for nature conservation projects (code 51)** € 171.988.693,00

**2.15.2. Amount allocated to nature conservation projects up to the 31st March 2010** € 13.583.986,00

<b>2.15.3. yields %</b>	8%
more than 30% of the budget	20
10 to 30% of the budget	10
below 10% of the budget	5
0% of the budget	0

**2.15.4. Budgeted amount for nature conservation projects (each other code)** € 400.457.562,00

**2.15.5. Amount allocated to nature conservation projects up to the 31st March 2010** € 13.583.986,00

**2.15.6. yields %** 3%

**2.16. What are the difficulties in programme implementation?** TEXT

**2.17. Which aspects of the programme implementation are exemplary in quality for other countries?** TEXT

**2.18. Additional comments to the implementation of the programme** TEXT

**TOTAL PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION** 29 **Max. 100**



**SURF**  
nature

Other Project Partners:

AT | Environment Agency Austria

RO | Giurgiu County Council

PL | Marshal Office of Warmia & Mazury Voivodship

IT | Province of Rieti

GR | Municipal Enterprise For Planning & Development of Patras S.A.

GR | Prefecture Preveza

ES | DG Environmnet of the Region of Murcia

ES | Forest Sciences Center of Catalonia

UK | Environment Agency Wales

CZ | University Olomouc

AT | Austrian Federal Forests

AT | Donau-Auen National Park

FR | Côtes d'Armor General Council

SL | Development agency Savinja

Project Partner:

**Environment Agency Wales**

29 Newport Road

Cardiff

Wales

UK

CF24 0TP

Contact:

David Letellier

Phone:+044 29 20466160

[David.letellier@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:David.letellier@environment-agency.gov.uk)

<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/>



Leadpartner:

**Environment Agency Austria**

Spittelauer Lände 5

1090 Wien

Austria

Contact:

Peter Tramberend

Klara Brandl

Phone: + 043 1313 045935

[coordination\(at\)surf-nature.eu](mailto:coordination(at)surf-nature.eu)

[www.umweltbundesamt.at](http://www.umweltbundesamt.at)



Project coordination:

**WWF Germany**

Reinhardtstraße 14

10117 Berlin

Germany

Contact:

Peter Torkler

Melanie Hillmann

Julia Steinert

Phone: + 049 30 311777222

[coordination\(at\)surf-nature.eu](mailto:coordination(at)surf-nature.eu)

[www.wwf.de](http://www.wwf.de)





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