This is a background document and a 'user manual' for those interested to participate in the public consultation on the biogeographical conservation status assessments produced by ETC-BD. The public consultation will start on 28th July 2008 and will finish on 15 September 2008 on following website:

http://biodiversity.eionet.europa.eu/article17

This is a draft which will be updated and finalised in due course

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Introduction

The 1992 EU Habitats Directive, together with the 1979 Birds Directive, is the most important European legislation aimed at the conservation of the European Union’s wildlife. The Directive is presented as a series of articles together with a number of annexes. Article 11 requires countries to monitor the habitats and species listed in the annexes and Article 17 requires a report to be sent to the European Commission every 6 years following an agreed format – hence ‘Article 17 reporting’. The 2nd report covers the period 2001-2006 and concerns 25 EU Member States (Bulgaria and Romania are not concerned by this report given their recent accession to the EU).

A major part of the Article 17 report is an assessment of the conservation status of all the habitats and species listed on Annexes I & II of the Directive (those for which the countries must propose & designate sites forming part of the Natura 2000 network) together with species noted on Annex IV (species strictly protected) and Annex V (species whose exploitation requires management). This assessment, which is based around the definition of ‘Favourable Conservation Status’ given in the Directive, is carried out following a methodology agreed by the European Commission and the Member States with technical support of the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity (ETC/BD).

The assessment of the conservation status is carried out for each biogeographical region present in a Member State. This division of Europe into biogeographic regions aims to allow a comparison between areas with similar geography and biodiversity. There are nine regions mentioned in the Directive to which four marine regions (Atlantic – North east, Atlantic – Macaronesia, Baltic & Mediterranean) have been added for the purpose of Article 17 reporting.

Where a Member State is entirely within one region, such as Luxembourg, only one report is required (one for each habitat type and species). If a Member State has part in two or more regions a report is required for each region, for example for Bombina variegata (Yellow-Bellied toad) Germany has reported separately for the Alpine, Atlantic and Continental regions as the species is found in all three regions.

The European Commission has asked the European Environment Agency and its ETC/BD to prepare assessments of conservation status across each region based on the data sent by the Member States. This assessment followed a method which is described below and which was developed in close cooperation with experts of the Habitats Directive Scientific Working Group.

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Conservation status as assessed by Member States

According to the Habitats Directive, conservation status is made by combining assessments of four parameters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Habitats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>Range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suitable habitat</td>
<td>Structure &amp; Functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future prospects</td>
<td>Future prospects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of these parameters is reported as one of the following four classes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Favourable</td>
<td>FV ('green')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfavourable – inadequate</td>
<td>U1 ('amber')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfavourable – bad</td>
<td>U2 ('red')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>XX ('grey')</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each class is defined in the Habitats Committee document\(^2\) in the form of evaluation matrices (see Annex 3 & 4 of this document). The overall assessment is made by combining the result for the 4 parameters. The method is described in more detail in a guidance note prepared by the ETC-BD\(^3\).

The countries reported during the second half of 2007 for a period covering 2001-2006; the next report will be due in 2013 and will cover the period 2007-2012.

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\(^3\) Assessment, monitoring and reporting under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive: Explanatory Notes & Guidelines October 2006
Assessing conservation status by biogeographical region

For approximately half of the habitats and species the conservation status for a whole region is the same as reported by the countries as the habitat and species only occurs in one Member State (e.g. habitat type ‘91C0 Caledonian forest’ only occurs in the United Kingdom) or all the Member States where it is present have reported the same evaluation as for Castor fiber (beaver) in the Boreal region assessed as ‘favourable’.

Ideally the assessment for each biogeographic region would follow the same method and evaluation matrices as used by the Member States. This assumption is taken as a starting point. However, for three of the conservation status parameters only the final result is available (suitable habitat for species, structure & functions of habitats, future prospects). Therefore, it was necessary to find some way of bringing together the national assessments. For ‘range’ and ‘population’ of species and for ‘area’ of habitats it is possible, at least in theory, to follow the method used by the Member States. However, in many cases a combination of missing data or incompatible data (e.g. population sizes reported using different units) makes this impossible.

Where it was not possible to use the background data provided by the countries directly, the assessments of conservation status for the individual parameters have been weighed and then evaluated. The preferred weighting is by population size (species) and surface area (habitats) with weighting by range where that is not possible. Where possible the four parameters are evaluated individually and then combined to give a regional assessment using the same method as used by the countries. In some cases missing data means that only a weighted assessment of the overall conservation status of each country is possible and in a very small number of cases (estimated at 1%) no regional assessment is possible.

For example the habitat type ‘2110 - Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria’ is present in five countries in the Boreal region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member State</th>
<th>% of total area of habitat in each country</th>
<th>Assessment for the parameter ‘future prospects’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Amber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Amber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Amber</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, 43% (18 + 25) of the habitat has been reported as favourable and 57% as unfavourable – inadequate.
Where a weighting has to be used, thresholds are required and the following have been used; they are applied in sequence.

- If more than 25% is ‘red’, then the result is ‘red’
- If more than 75% is ‘green’, then the result is ‘green’
- If more than 25% is ‘unknown’, then the result is ‘unknown’
- For all other combinations the result is ‘amber’

For the example above, following the thresholds in sequence leads to an overall assessment of ‘amber’ for the parameter ‘future prospects’.

These thresholds are to some extent arbitrary, but tests using a range of thresholds showed that the overall assessment is not very sensitive to the thresholds chosen.

A more detailed explanation, together with examples, is given in the paper ‘Article 17 Reporting – Habitats Directive: Guidelines for assessing conservation status of habitats and species at the biogeographic level’.

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**Presentation of Assessments and Public Consultation**

The assessments, both by countries and for the biogeographical regions are available to the public using a dedicated website designed by the ETC/BD and co-developed by the European Environment Agency at [http://biodiversity.eionet.europa.eu/article17](http://biodiversity.eionet.europa.eu/article17).

This website will also be used for the public consultation that will be open from **28 July until 15 September 2008** when it will be possible to comment on the regional assessments from the ETC/BD. Once the consultation period is finished the ETC/BD will revise the biogeographical assessments.

The use of the website is explained in further detail below.

The homepage of the Article 17 Consultation Tool is [http://biodiversity.eionet.europa.eu/article17](http://biodiversity.eionet.europa.eu/article17)

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**Note:** All web pages of Article 17 Consultation Tool are still under construction and, therefore, subject to changes.
Viewing Data

Anybody is able to view the data as provided by Member States as well as the assessments that are finalised by the ETC/BD before the start of the consultation period.

All the assessments and the progress of ETC/BD work on assessing the conservation status at biogeographical level, can be seen under the link “Species/(habitat types) regional assessments in all bioregions”, that will open the following page:

By selecting a certain parameter (range, future prospects etc) for each species/habitat and corresponding biogeographical region the cell gives the assessment using the 'traffic light' colours. Many assessments were made automatically i.e. using algorithms that compute the assessments; these are marked with an 'A'. The assessments that have been reviewed or re-assessed by the ETC/BD are marked with 'OK'. After the consultation period, the final assessments will be marked with 'END'. The method retained for final assessment is indicated as well in a coded way.

By clicking on any cell in the above page the “Species/habitat type data and assessment per bioregion” page will be opened.
The page presents the conservation status of each of the four parameters together with some of the data used (and links to more) for each Member State together with automatic assessments for the region using different methods of combing the country reports (e.g., weighting by area/population, weighting by range, assessing the parameters separately or just combining the overall assessments). The webpage also shows the ETC-BD assessment with access to an 'audit trail' which justifies the final choice. There is an option to see the reports from the countries on a map.

Select habitat/species and region

See data sheet info

See audit trail

See map

Data from countries

Final regional assessment (shaded in blue) and registered users corrections (not highlighted)

On mouse over the text in blue

See automatic assessments (hidden by default)

Adenophora liliifolia

Click to open original report in a new window
Commenting the Biogeographical Assessments

Any user can view the data, but only registered users can insert comments during consultation period. Registration process is described in Annex 1.

From 28 July until 15 September 2008 registered users will be able to comment on the following issues:

1. The biogeographical assessments at the EU level as assessed by the ETC/BD
2. The Member States biogeographical assessments as reported by MS
3. The text from the data sheet info.

Any registered user is allowed to add only one record (for each assessment and type of comment), edit his/her records, mark own records for deletion and undelete own records. The registered users are not able to delete their own records, but just to mark them as deleted; therefore, inserting a new record should be made only when the user knows exactly what he/she wants to write.

How to comment on the biogeographical assessment at the EU level assessed by the ETC/BD?

1. Verify that under the heading “MS/EU” the value “EU25” (default choice) is selected
2. Insert a CORRECTION by filling ONLY the fields that are considered to be wrong and that differs from ETC/BD ones. For example, if the conclusion on population assessed by ETC/BD as 'U2' is considered wrong, you may select for example 'U1' from the drop down list. You will not be allowed to insert the same values as those inserted by ETC/BD
3. Click the “Add” button

4. Insert a text in ENGLISH in the window that will be opened. The text should contain the explanation of why the EU assessment performed by ETC/BD is not correct. If no explanation is provided the comment will not be taken into consideration. As an example, you may give an explanation like "The automatic assessment for sub-conclusion on population seems correct as sub-conclusions provided by the Member States are reliable, but the favourable reference population provided by the Member State X seems overestimated"

5. Click the 'Submit' button
How to comment on the biogeographical assessment at MS level as provided by MS?
A registered user may comment on a biogeographical assessment at the MS level if this is influencing the EU biogeographical assessment.

The process is similar to that described above, except for step 1. To comment on a specific Member State select its two digit code under the heading 'MS/EU' (instead of the default value 'EU25')

Important note for Member States' National Data Coordinators: you may use this functionality to indicate (and correct) any possible mistakes in the original data reported in Reportnet. You may use the final QA/QC report to track such errors.

How to comment the text from the data sheet information?
Anybody can view the audit trail and the text inserted by ETC/BD in the data sheet information, but only registered users are able to comment that text or to propose new formulations. No comment regarding the assessment should be done here.

To comment the 'data sheet info'
1. Click the “View data sheet info” button
2. Read the text inserted by ETC/BD
3. Click the 'Add comment' button
4. Write your comment
5. Click the “Submit” button
6. You may edit your comment or mark it as deleted
Annex 1 - Registration

Anybody is able to view data without being registered. But only registered users are able to comment on the biogeographical assessment at the regional level as assessed by ETC/BD and to comment on MS reports if relevant for the EU assessment.

The consultation is running between 28 July and 15 September 2008.

Important: All the National Data Coordinators for the Article17 delivery will be registered with their EIONET account so there is no need for them to register again for the consultation. The National Data Coordinators may insert comments before consultation period to highlight possible mistakes in their data.

To register:

- Go the Article 17 web page [http://biodiversity.eionet.europa.eu/article17](http://biodiversity.eionet.europa.eu/article17)
- Click on the button 'Register'
- Fill and submit the registration form
- An e-mail will be sent to the address provided by the user: click on the confirmation link in the body of the email
- If the user is already registered as user of EIONET, then it is just necessary to fill in a simplified form where the username and password need to be provided

On 15 September the consultation will be closed and all the interested parties will be notified by email that the consultation period was finished.
Annex 2 - Additional explanation on how Member States data was processed and the biogeographical assessments made by the ETC/BD

The Article 17 website gives direct access to the core data used for the biogeographical assessments and provides a link – by clicking the MS code – to access the original reports stored in the Common Data Repository (CDR - [http://cdr.eionet.europa.eu/](http://cdr.eionet.europa.eu/)). In the CDR all the data is stored in the form of XML files for non spatial data and GML files for the spatial information on range and distribution.

In order to ensure data integrity, to harmonise data and to allow computation, the ETC/BD performed certain modifications to the data as supplied by the MS as follows:

- All text inserted in numerical fields was deleted and treated as information not provided or unknown
- For population (species), any units reported as unknown ('X') that could be referred to one of the agreed categories were changed
- All reference values were filled with the actual values as well if only the qualifiers (~, >, >>, <) were provided
- If only the minimum or maximum values for species population was provided the other value was filled with the same number and enclosed in parenthesis
- All the habitats and species that were reported or identified as occasional, marginal, vagrant, errors, etc were indicated as such and not taken into account when performing the biogeographical assessment at regional level. All these records are shown in light grey text.
- For all the marine species or habitats that were reported as terrestrial or vice-versa, the biogeographical/marine regions were changed accordingly
- For all species that were reported under another name than the one listed in the Annexes of the Habitats Directive, the names were changed
- All species that were reported and are not listed in the Annexes of the Directive were not taken into account
- All the spatial data was generalised into national 10x10 km grids or similar (e.g.: 11.3 x 11.1 km) in order to obtain a quasi-homogenous European distribution for species and habitats and allow calculations based on spatial data on distribution and range; the surface of the grid cells was estimated in square kilometres
- For each MS and parameter the percentage of MS contribution (weight) was calculated using different data sources to allow experts using the most suitable one for the biogeographical assessments
  - The following codes were used:
    - 'X' data from XML file (non-spatial data)
    - 'G' data from GML file (spatial data)
    - 'R' data from Range
    - 'P' data from Population
    - 'H' data from habitat area of species
    - 'A' data from surface area of habitat
    - 'D' data from distribution area.
  - Coding of the weighting method (as shown in the website) is given below:
    - %XR - the percentage of range was computed from non-spatial data
    - %XP - the percentage of population was computed from non-spatial data
- %XH - the percentage of habitat area of the species computed from non-spatial data
- %XA - the percentage of the surface area of the habitat computed from non-spatial data
- %GR - the percentage of range computed from the gridded spatial data
- %GD - the percentage of the area of the distribution computed from the gridded spatial data

A series of quality control were performed on both the first and second deliveries from the MS. All the data that has some possible problems or is erroneous is shown in blue text in the website. Placing the mouse over that blue text pops-up a message explaining the possible problem.

Similarly, putting the mouse over the initials of the MS (if highlighted in blue) shows
- The species name as reported by the MS
- The complementary information provided by MS (and a machine translation if available)
- The status of the species/habitats: occasional, marginal, vagrant, etc.
### Annex 3 - Assessing conservation status of a Species

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Conservation Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Favourable ('green')</strong></td>
<td><strong>Unfavourable - Inadequate ('amber')</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unfavourable - Bad ('red')</strong></td>
<td><strong>Unknown (insufficient information to make an assessment)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Range</strong></td>
<td>Stable (loss and expansion in balance) or increasing AND not smaller than the 'favourable reference range' Any other combination Large decline: Equivalent to a loss of more than 1% per year within period specified by MS OR more than 10% below favourable reference range No or insufficient reliable information available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population</strong></td>
<td>Population(s) above 'favourable reference population' AND reproduction, mortality and age structure not deviating from normal (if data available) Any other combination Large decline: Equivalent to a loss of more than 1% per year (indicative value MS may deviate from if duly justified) within period specified by MS AND below 'favourable reference population' OR More than 25% below favourable reference population OR Reproduction, mortality and age structure strongly deviating from normal (if data available) No or insufficient reliable information available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Habitat for the species</strong></td>
<td>Area of habitat is sufficiently large (and stable or increasing) AND habitat quality is suitable for the long term survival of the species Any other combination Area of habitat is clearly not sufficiently large to ensure the long term survival of the species OR Habitat quality is bad, clearly not allowing long term survival of the species No or insufficient reliable information available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Future prospects</strong> (as regards to population, range and habitat availability)</td>
<td>Main pressures and threats to the species not significant; species will remain viable on the long-term Any other combination Severe influence of pressures and threats to the species; very bad prospects for its future, long-term viability at risk. No or insufficient reliable information available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall assessment of CS</strong></td>
<td>All 'green' OR three 'green' and one 'unknown' One or more 'amber' but no 'red' One or more 'red' Two or more 'unknown' combined with green or all &quot;unknown&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Annex 4 - Assessing conservation status of a Habitat type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Conservation Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parameter</strong></td>
<td><strong>Favourable (‘green’)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Range</strong></td>
<td>Stable (loss and expansion in balance) or increasing AND not smaller than the ‘favourable reference range’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Area covered by habitat type within range</strong></td>
<td>Stable (loss and expansion in balance) or increasing AND not smaller than the ‘favourable reference area’ AND without significant changes in distribution pattern within range (if data available)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specific structures and functions (including typical species)</strong></td>
<td>Structures and functions (including typical species) in good condition and no significant deteriorations / pressures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Future prospects (as regards range, area covered and specific structures and functions)</strong></td>
<td>The habitats prospects for its future are excellent / good, no significant impact from threats expected; long-term viability assured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall assessment of CS</strong></td>
<td>All ‘green’ OR three ‘green’ and one ‘unknown’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>