Efficient Managers For Efficient Natura 2000 Network

ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNICATION CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF NATURA 2000 SITE PERSONNEL IN ROMANIA

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with

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SUMMARY

This report provides the results and recommendations arising from completion of a self-assessment questionnaire on communication skills by 121 respondents working in 72 Natura 2000 sites in April and May 2013 in Romania. The questionnaires (completed anonymously) had two parts.

1. A set of general questions about the individual respondent. These related to age, gender, educational level, years of experience and previous training received.

2. A self-assessment of individual competence at a list of 19 key communication skills.

The results of the questionnaire survey are presented and analysed, and a set of conclusions are drawn. In summary, it was found that the Natura 2000 workforce in Romania is quite inexperienced, has had little previous training and is confident in just over half of the communication skills required. Although the respondents would benefit from capacity development in any of the skills assessed, the skills where there appears to be the greatest need relate to communicating information and messages to third parties (stakeholders, management partners etc.), rather than the specific personal skills required to be a good communicator.

The report includes nine main recommendations:

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Improve overall access to training for Natura 2000 personnel
   - Establish a system to help Natura 2000 personnel be aware of opportunities for training and for securing funding for training. This could be in the form of a website managed by Pro-Park.
   - Ensure that all management plans for Natura 2000 sites include detailed programmes of training and capacity development. For personnel and stakeholders.
   - Ensure that all business plans and budgets for Natura 2000 sites include provisions for training and capacity development, amounting to at least five days annual training per staff member.
   - Continue to seek support for projects that are aimed at increasing capacity.
   - Ensure that Natura 2000 personnel are not overlooked in capacity development programmes for protected area staff in Romania. When capacity development is provided for national parks and nature parks, relevant personnel from nearby Natura 2000 sites should also be invited.

2. Build technical competences of Natura 2000 personnel in all aspects of Protected Area management
   
   Based on the results of the wider assessment the following technical skills should be given the highest priority.
• Level 4: Awareness Education and Public Relations, Recreation and Tourism, Sustainable Development and Communities, Protected Area Planning and Management
• Level 3: Sustainable Development and Communities, Conservation Assessment, Planning and Management, Human Resource Management (Supervisory skills)
• Level 2: Working with Communities, Basic Fieldwork and Conservation skills, Supervisory Skills.

3. Adopt a wide range of approaches for capacity development
   • Provide access to computers, Internet books and other learning resources, and allow time for self-directed research and learning.
   • Encourage personnel to learn from each other and exchange skills and knowledge in the workplace.

4. Develop management strategies and plans for Natura 2000 sites as a framework for communication

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPING INDIVIDUAL AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

5. Provide basic training modules in personal communication skills
   • A 2-day module for middle management and senior staff (Levels 3 and 4)
   • A 1-day module for all staff (Levels 2, 3 and 4)

6. Provide media training
   Two types of media training should, ideally, be made available
   • Working with mass media
   • Internet-based communication

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUILDING NATURA 2000-SPECIFIC SKILLS

7. Prepare and disseminate a Natura 2000 information package to improve internal understanding within managing entities.
   To include.
   • Examples of materials for established sites
   • An automatic PowerPoint slide show
   • References to online materials
   • Copies of official documents related to Natura 2000

8. Provide training for senior and Natura 2000 middle management staff in development of information, communication and awareness strategies
   The following course is suggested:
   • A 2-day module for middle management and senior staff (Levels 3 and 4) on development of communication strategies

9. Provide training in participatory management of protected areas with communication skills as an integral part of the curriculum
   The following course is suggested:
   • A 2-day module for middle management and senior staff (Levels 3 and 4) on participatory techniques and multi stakeholder protected area governance.
1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This survey and report is a contribution to the project ‘Efficient Managers for Efficient Natura 2000 Network’, which is being undertaken as a partnership between the ProPark Foundation for Protected Areas, the Europarc Federation, the Romanian Ministry of Environment and Forests and the Metropolitan Agency for Sustainable Development in Brasov. The project aims to contribute to the following overall goal: ‘Natura 2000 sites in Romania are well managed by skilled professionals and their objectives for biodiversity conservation reflected in the regional territorial plans and in the activity of key economic sectors’. The project is mainly financed by the European Union DG Environment’s LIFE+ Communication programme. See http://www.europarc.org/what-we-do/efficient-n2000-netw

The purpose of this study is to conduct training needs assessments to determine priority communication skills needs for Natura 2000 managers, targeting Natura 2000 staff as well as employees of institutions that have direct responsibilities for Natura 2000 management coordination in Romania.

2. METHOD

2.1 THE SELF ASSESSMENT APPROACH

This report is based on the results of a self-assessment questionnaire for Natura 2000 communication skills completed in April /May 2013 by 121 personnel from 72 Natura 2000 site managing entities in Romania. The questionnaires (completed anonymously) had two parts.

1. A set of general questions about the individual respondent. These related to age, gender, educational level, years of experience and previous training received.

2. A self-assessment of individual competence at a list of 19 key communication skills at three levels (24 individuals were assessed from level 2, 81 from Level 3 and 17 from Level 4)

The levels used are shown in Table 1. The skills for which respondents completed self-assessments are shown in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level and general responsibilities</th>
<th>Typical Protected Area Job at this Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 4</strong></td>
<td>Head of a protected area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Management, Higher Technician</td>
<td>Deputy head or section head of a large, complex and/or high profile protected area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project, departmental management and/or high level technical responsibilities</td>
<td>Leader of technical section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 3</strong></td>
<td>Head of a protected area subunit or section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor/Technician</td>
<td>Head of nature reserve/sanctuary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisory/mid-level technical responsibilities</td>
<td>Senior/supervising member of sections or work teams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 2</strong></td>
<td>Park Ranger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft, skilled worker</td>
<td>Established and experienced worker/team leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical task based responsibilities with some team leadership</td>
<td>Experienced local community member.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 1</strong></td>
<td>Not used in this study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled worker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K</td>
<td>Communication Skills For Natura 2000 Sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K</td>
<td>LEVEL 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 2.1</td>
<td>Make basic oral presentations to colleagues, local people and visitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 2.2</td>
<td>Prepare written reports of work activities using standard formats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 2.3</td>
<td>Communicate in other languages and/or dialects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 2.4</td>
<td>Offer and request for feed-back or feed-forward, constructively and effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 2.5</td>
<td>Demonstrate an assertive attitude and listen actively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 2.6</td>
<td>Write formal or informal e-mail, fax, letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 2.7</td>
<td>Write formal or informal e-mail, fax, letter in other languages (at least English)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 2.8</td>
<td>Demonstrate a good knowledge of the importance of the Natura 2000 site and its benefits for local communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 2.9</td>
<td>Explain in a simple way the benefits of the Natura 2000 site and its benefits for local communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 2.10</td>
<td>Explain in a simple way the management measures needed for the efficient management of the Natura 2000 site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 2.11</td>
<td>Explain in a simple way why specific regulations are needed for the management of land and natural resources in the Natura 2000 sites using support materials prepared by the site staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 2.12</td>
<td>Prepare and deliver simple presentations about the Natura 2000 site for educational purposes for schools, initiates interactive and attractive educational programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K</td>
<td>LEVEL 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 3.1</td>
<td>Organize and chair formal meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 3.2</td>
<td>Give technical presentations and write technical reports/papers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 3.4</td>
<td>Provide site specific technical/conservation information to the communication department, head of the PA and rangers in a way that helps them use the information when communicating with locals, children and other stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 3.5</td>
<td>Prepare information on specific regulations needed for the management of land and natural resources in the Natura 2000 sites and how these help sustainable development in the region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 3.6</td>
<td>Prepare information on the benefits of the Natura 2000 sites to locals and other stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 3.7</td>
<td>Prepare materials / information for presentations about the Natura 2000 site for educational purposes for schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 3.8</td>
<td>Work with mass media, on line and social media (press release, press conferences, press trips, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 3.9</td>
<td>Manage website, Facebook account, newsletters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 3.10</td>
<td>Develop the Natura 2000 communication plan involving the management team, plans and coordinates the communication activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 3.11</td>
<td>Collect/prepare and present to colleagues examples of benefits in Natura 2000 sites to colleagues, locals and other stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 3.12</td>
<td>Prepare and deliver brief internal training events on how to prepare presentations about the Natura 2000 sites and prepare and distribute to the team standard presentations as needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K</td>
<td>LEVEL 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 4.1</td>
<td>Negotiate agreements and resolve disputes and conflicts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 4.2</td>
<td>Institute mechanisms for public consultations, communication and participation over decisions, policies &amp; plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K 4.3</td>
<td>Coordinate and/or conduct communication activities with key stakeholders and high-level decision makers and entities, solving conflicts and seeking support.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessments were supervised by trained specialists from ProPark, who prepared individual questionnaires for each respondent, depending on their job Level (2, 3 or 4). Each questionnaire included the following:

1. A cover page, requesting general details about the respondent and including information about the time and location of the assessments.
2. A list of competences identified as being relevant to the work of the respondent group.

The questionnaires were individually completed by respondents in the presence of the ProPark specialist who was able to answer questions and provide explanations as required. Each respondent was asked to complete the relevant information on the cover sheet and then to provide a numerical self-assessment for each competence listed as follows:

1 = I have little or no competence in this skill: I require extensive training and development
2 = I have some competence in this job. I require advanced training and development
3 = I have good competence in this job and only require periodic updating.
4 = I have high competence in this job and could train others to do it.

Respondents were then asked to select up to 5 of the list competences in which they, as individuals, would particularly like to improve their skills.

All questionnaires were collected and the results entered into a pre-prepared Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and forwarded to the author for analysis.

2.2 LIMITATIONS TO THE APPROACH

The lead author has used this self-assessment method in several other surveys, and found it to be the most simple, readily understandable and objective way of conducting competence assessments. The advantage of using the numerical scale is that results can be standardised and processing is not dependent upon translation of findings from different languages.

This approach does have some limitations, which should be taken into account when reviewing the results.

- Respondents can only assess their competence accurately if they understand the skills, which therefore have to be defined in clear and unambiguous terms. Even when this is done, respondents may understand them in slightly different ways, affecting their responses. This problem is best solved by having a trained facilitator on hand to help respondents understand what the skills statements mean.

- There is a tendency for some respondents to over assess their competence. This happens more often among more senior staff, some of whom who do not wish to admit their professional weaknesses. This issue is best overcome by ensuring that the assessment is anonymous and by stressing the fact that overestimating competence is likely to lead to a conclusion that further training is not required.

Despite these shortcomings it is been found that this approach provides a reliable assessment of individual competence.
3. RESULTS

3.1 GENERAL PROFILES OF PROTECTED AREA PERSONNEL

Each questionnaire in the assessment included some basic questions about the individual respondent, although all questionnaires were completed anonymously. The results are shown in Figure 1.

![Figure 1: Summary of respondent personal information](image)

- **Age**: 3% <30, 15% 31-45, 60% 46-60, 22% >60
- **Gender**: 26% M, 74% F
- **Education**: 7% Elem., 2% HS, 9% BSc, 48% MSc, 34% PhD
- **Experience**: 7% 0-5 yrs, 2% 6-10 yrs, 41% 11-15 yrs, 50% >15 yrs
- **Staff Levels Assessed**: 14% Level 2, 20% Level 3, 66% Level 4

**Average training days per year in past 3 years**

- Level 2: 0.40
- Level 3: 0.40
- Level 4/5: 0.60
- All: 0.60
3.2 COMPETENCE SELF ASSESSMENTS

INDIVIDUAL COMPETENCE IN THE LISTED SKILLS

Figure 2 shows the proportions of assessments for each skills category at all levels, according to the numerical self-assessment scale described in the previous section. Table 2 should be consulted for the skills associated with each code (N2K2.1 etc.). Colour coding is used to aid understanding of the results. These graphics exclude assessments of ‘0’ (not relevant), and therefore only represent the proportion of respondents who considered the skills category to be relevant. A rapid visual assessment of competence can be made by considering the ‘yellow-green’ boundary between the two weakest categories (indicated in red and yellow) and the two strongest categories (green and blue).

![Figure 2 Self-assessment results by skill](image-url)

**Results of self assessments of N2K competences. (In order of increasing competence)**

- N2K2.12
- N2K2.11
- N2K2.10
- N2K2.9
- N2K2.8
- N2K2.7
- N2K2.6
- N2K2.5
- N2K2.4
- N2K2.3
- N2K2.2
- N2K3.10
- N2K3.9
- N2K3.8
- N2K3.7
- N2K3.6
- N2K3.5
- N2K3.4
- N2K3.3
- N2K3.2
- N2K3.1
- N2K4.3
- N2K4.2

Legend:
- 1 (Weak)
- 2 (Moderate)
- 3 (Good)
- 4 (Excellent)
OVERALL COMPETENCE BY LEVEL

Figure 3 uses the same approach to show the aggregated results for all the skills from levels 2, 3 and 4. This gives a general view of the overall competence of each level.

AVERAGE COMPETENCE SCORES PER SKILL

Figure 4 shows the averages of the self-assessment scores for each skill. The higher the average, the higher the level of existing competence among respondents.
CAPACITY NEEDS INDEX

Figure 5 shows Capacity Needs Index (CNI), which is intended to provide a standardised indication of the need for capacity development in the different categories. The CNI is calculated as follows:

\[ \text{Capacity Needs Index (CNI)} = \left\{ \text{Proportion of responses that assess the skills category as relevant} \right\} \times \left\{ \text{Proportion of responses that assess competence in the skills category as either 1 (Little or no competence) or 2 (some competence)} \right\}. \]

This formula takes into account not only the level of competence, but also its relevance to respondents. The higher CNI therefore, the greater the need for capacity development in that category.

Figure 5 Capacity Needs Indices by skills

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

Figure 6 shows the proportions of respondents identifying each of the skills as a personal development priority.

Figure 6 Individual capacity development preferences
This process compares ranked lists of the skills identified as being the most required using the competence needs index with those identified as individual priorities. In Table 2, the competences are listed side-by-side ranked according to the objective assessment and the personal preferences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranked according to capacity needs index</th>
<th>Ranked according to personal preference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N2K4.1 Negotiate agreements and resolve disputes and conflicts.</td>
<td>N2K3.1 Organize and chair formal meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K4.2 Institute mechanisms for public consultations, communication and participation over decisions, policies &amp; plans.</td>
<td>N2K3.9 Develop the Natura 2000 communication plan involving the management team, plans and coordinates the communication activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K3.11 Prepare and deliver brief internal training events on how to prepare presentations about the Natura 2000 sites and Prepare and distributes to the team standard presentations as needed</td>
<td>N2K3.10 Collect/prepare and present to colleagues examples of benefits in Natura 2000 sites to colleagues, locals and other stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K3.9 Develop the Natura 2000 communication plan involving the management team, plans and coordinates the communication activities</td>
<td>N2K3.5 Prepare information on the benefits of the Natura 2000 sites to locals and other stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K3.10 Collect/prepare and present to colleagues examples of benefits in Natura 2000 sites to colleagues, locals and other stakeholders</td>
<td>N2K3.11 Explain in a simple way why specific regulations are needed for the management of land and natural resources in the Natura 2000 sites using support materials prepared by the site staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K2.10 Explain in a simple way the management measures needed for the efficient management of the Natura 2000 site</td>
<td>N2K2.12 Prepare and delivers simple presentations about the Natura 2000 site for educational purposes for schools, initiates interactive and attractive educational programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K2.9 Explain in a simple way the benefits of the Natura 2000 sites to locals and other stakeholders</td>
<td>N2K2.7 Write formal or informal e-mail, fax, letter in other languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K3.4 Prepare information on specific regulations needed for the management of land and natural resources in the Natura 2000 sites and how these help sustainable</td>
<td>N2K3.9 Develop the Natura 2000 communication plan involving the management team, plans and coordinates the communication activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Task Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K2.11</td>
<td>Development in the region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K2.7</td>
<td>Prepare information on the benefits of the Natura 2000 sites to locals and other stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K4.2</td>
<td>Institute mechanisms for public consultations, communication and participation over decisions, policies &amp; plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K3.6</td>
<td>Prepare materials / information for presentations about the Natura 2000 site for educational purposes for schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K3.8</td>
<td>Manage website, Facebook account, newsletters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assessment of Communication Capacity Development Needs of Natura 2000 Site Personnel In Romania.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N2K2.1</th>
<th>Make basic oral presentations to colleagues, local people and visitors</th>
<th>N2K2.5</th>
<th>Demonstrate an assertive attitude and listen actively</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N2K3.3</td>
<td>Provide site specific technical/conservation information to the communication department, head of the PA and rangers in a way that helps them use the information when communicating with locals, children and other stakeholders</td>
<td>N2K2.1</td>
<td>Make basic oral presentations to colleagues, local people and visitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K3.2</td>
<td>Give technical presentations and write technical reports/papers.</td>
<td>N2K2.2</td>
<td>Prepare written reports of work activities using standard formats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K2.5</td>
<td>Demonstrate an assertive attitude and listen actively</td>
<td>N2K4.1</td>
<td>Negotiate agreements and resolve disputes and conflicts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K2.6</td>
<td>Write formal or informal e-mail, fax, letter</td>
<td>N2K3.1</td>
<td>Organize and chair formal meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2K3.2</td>
<td>Prepare written reports of work activities using standard formats</td>
<td>N2K3.2</td>
<td>Give technical presentations and write technical reports/papers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 RESPONDENT PROFILES

The results indicate that the personnel of Romanian Natura 2000 sites are predominantly male, well educated, fairly young and relatively inexperienced. 66% of the self-assessments were completed by middle management and technical staff, 20% by field staff, and the remainder by senior managers.

The gender balance is typical of protected areas in other countries in the region; clearly there is a need to involve more women in management of protected areas and Natura 2000 sites.

The lack of Natura 2000 personnel with lengthy experience is likely explained by the fact that Natura 2000 sites are quite new, and have been placed under the responsibility of organisations and individuals with little previous experience of protected area management. This issue needs to be addressed when designing future capacity development programmes; one of the most effective ways to build capacity is through mentoring and learning from peers, but if there is no critical mass of people with long and extensive experience, this approach to capacity development becomes less useful.

The survey shows quite clearly that Natura 2000 site personnel in Romania are inadequately trained; most benefit from less than 0.5 days’ training per year, around a quarter of the regional average for PA staff of 2.05 days (which is in itself very low). In these circumstances almost any training would be beneficial to these personnel.

4.2 SELF ASSESSMENTS

The overall conclusion from the self-assessments is that competence in communication skills is quite low, with 43% of all self-assessments being in the two weakest categories (see Figure 3). Overall competence is markedly weakest at level 4, while the most competent group seem to be level 2 personnel. These results suggest that almost half of all Natura 2000 personnel would benefit from training in any of the skills in the list.

When looking at the specific skills, there are quite marked differences in competence. The skills where there appears to be the greatest need relate to communicating information and messages to third parties (stakeholders, management partners etc.), rather than the specific personal skills required to be a good communicator. In general, personnel appeared to be more confident in their ability to understand the Natura 2000 concept themselves, to prepare basic materials explaining the concepts to others and to present information in more formal, mainly one directional ways. However they are, in general, much less confident in their skills for more interactive, participatory forms of communication, interacting with stakeholders to build consensus for managing sites, to resolve conflicts and negotiate agreements.

It is noteworthy too that the skill N2K 2.10 (Explain in a simple way the management measures needed for the efficient management of the Natura 2000 site)’ ranks quite highly as a need. It is important to remember that N2K personnel will not be able explain the management measures unless they themselves understand what management measures are required. Similarly, the skill N2K 3.4, which concerns preparing regulations, may rank highly, not because of a lack of skill in drafting, but because of a lack of specific knowledge about the range of regulations that might be applicable. In both these cases, the response and high ranking may therefore be more about the need for technical knowledge than about the competence to communicate that knowledge. The important lesson here is that good communication with stakeholders requires that
personnel themselves are confident in their own technical knowledge and understanding. Improving communication skills therefore, also requires improving technical skills about managing Natura 2000 sites.

Skills relating to internal communication and capacity development also rank highly as competence needs (N2K 3.11, N2K3 .9, into N2K3 .10). Personnel appear to recognise the importance of improving institutional understanding and skills as an essential foundation for communicating with stakeholders. The conclusion here is that any future training programme should be designed to help managers to develop communication strategies and to ensure that their staff understand these well.

4.3 PERSONAL PREFERENCES

Table 3 clearly shows that competence needs as identified by self-assessment differ markedly from those identified by individuals as personal preferences. This difference is not unique to this study, the lead author is finding similar results in all needs analysis across the region. It is evident that the answer to the question ‘what are the training needs?’ depends significantly on the way in which that question is asked. The self-assessment approach probably provides a more accurate assessment of needs from the point of view of the institution and its requirements; the personal preferences are a reflection of what motivates and interests individuals within the institution, but should not be disregarded. Personal interest and motivation are important elements of efficient and effective teamwork, and training provision should take these into account. Individuals appear to rank more highly the need to communicate in other languages for example, while these skills rank much less highly in the self-assessments. The conclusion here is that while institutions may not need formally to provide their personnel with language training, they should at least make opportunities available to personnel to improve their language skills. There are many low-cost online language training websites, and personnel may only need to be given computer access and some time in order to learn other languages. It is also noteworthy that Level 2 skills feature much more highly in the personal preferences, suggesting that although respondents may feel that they have a reasonable level of competence in the skills, many of them also feel that there is significant room for improvement.
5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this survey and analysis. The following specific recommendations are made.

5.1 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR NATURA 2000 PERSONNEL

1. IMPROVE OVERALL ACCESS TO TRAINING FOR NATURA 2000 PERSONNEL

Based on the overall low level of existing competence and the completely inadequate amount of training received in the last three years, most personnel from Natura 2000 sites would benefit from any relevant training. The following actions suggested:

i. Establish a system to help Natura 2000 personnel be aware of opportunities for training and for securing funding for training. This could be in the form of a website managed by Pro-Park.

ii. Ensure that all management plans for Natura 2000 sites include detailed programmes of training and capacity development. For personnel and stakeholders.

iii. Ensure that all business plans and budgets for Natura 2000 sites include provisions for training and capacity development, amounting to at least five days annual training per staff member.

iv. Continue to seek support for projects that are aimed at increasing capacity.

v. Ensure that Natura 2000 personnel are not overlooked in capacity development programmes for protected area staff in Romania. When capacity development is provided for national parks and nature parks, relevant personnel from nearby Natura 2000 sites should also be invited.

2. BUILD TECHNICAL COMPETENCES OF NATURA 2000 PERSONNEL IN ALL ASPECTS OF PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT

Communication skills will only be useful if personnel have the technical knowledge that will enable them to communicate confidently and authoritatively with stakeholders, in other words ‘to know what they are talking about’. A separate and much wider survey of competence among protected area personnel in Romania has been conducted by ProPark using a similar methodology, and has indicated a widespread need for improved technical competence at all levels. Alongside any initiative for improving communication skills therefore, Natura 2000 personnel require access to training and other forms of capacity development across a wide range of skills required for effective and efficient management of their sites. Based on the results of the wider assessment the following technical skills should be given the highest priority:

- Level 4: Awareness Education and Public Relations, Recreation and Tourism, Sustainable Development and Communities, Protected Area Planning and Management

- Level 3: Sustainable Development and Communities, Conservation Assessment, Planning and Management, Human Resource Management (Supervisory skills)

- Level 2: Working with Communities, Basic Fieldwork and Conservation skills, Supervisory Skills.
3. **NATURA 2000 MANAGERS SHOULD USE A WIDE RANGE OF APPROACHES FOR CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT**

Capacity development is not just about training; people learn and improve their capacity in a wide range of ways, many of which are equally as effective as training and much cheaper and easier to enable. Managers of the Natura 2000 sites should ensure that personnel have access to a range of opportunities for improving their skills, for example they should:

i. Provide access to computers, internet, books and other learning resources, and allow time for self-directed research and learning.

ii. Encourage personnel to learn from each other and exchange skills and knowledge in the workplace. For example:

   - If several staff want to learn English, time can be allocated for them to have group sessions in order to practice and learn together. This is a very effective way of complementing more formal training.
   
   - When one staff member goes away for a training course, he or she can be required to provide a feedback session to all other staff in order to share what he or she has learned.
   
   - Mentoring systems can be established whereby less experienced staff are able to work with more experienced individuals and learn from them.
   
   - Stakeholders with particular forms of expertise can be invited to share their knowledge with staff.
   
   - Exchanges can be organised with other Natura 2000 sites.

4. **DEVELOP MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND PLANS FOR NATURA 2000 SITES AS A FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNICATION**

Communication by managers and staff of the Natura 2000 sites requires a clear and commonly understood framework for management in terms of a long-term strategy and short-term objectives and tasks. Communication skills are important in ensuring that planning takes place in a participatory way, and any communication and awareness strategy should be based on the resultant plan.
5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPING INDIVIDUAL AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

5. PROVIDE BASIC TRAINING MODULES IN PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS

Natura 2000 personnel also need to develop their individual capacities for communication. A training provider specialising in communication should develop a set of modules which could be included in other capacity development programmes, or which could be elements of a specialised communication course. The following outline is suggested:

**A 1-day module for all staff (Levels 2, 3 and 4)**

i. Basic (generic) interpersonal and communication skills for protected area staff.
ii. Working and communicating with local stakeholders.
iii. Working and communicating with visitors.
iv. Better communication within the organisation (between staff at all levels, informally and formally).

**A 2-day module for middle management and senior staff (Levels 3 and 4)**

i. Negotiation, partnership building and conflict resolution skills.
ii. Supervisory skills.

6. PROVIDE MEDIA TRAINING

Mass media and electronic media are essential communication tools, especially for sites with multiple stakeholders. Two types of media training should be made available:

**Working with mass media**

i. Identifying news stories and preparing news releases.
ii. Working with print media.
iii. Working with broadcast media (TV and radio)

**Internet-based communication.**

i. Developing and administrating websites
ii. Use of social media

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUILDING NATURA 2000-SPECIFIC SKILLS

7. PREPARE AND DISSEMINATE A NATURA 2000 INFORMATION PACKAGE TO IMPROVE INTERNAL UNDERSTANDING WITHIN MANAGING ENTITIES.

Natura 2000 personnel need to have a sound understanding of Natura 2000 principles and practices. This may not require the delivery of special courses. It may be more effective and efficient to develop a user-friendly Natura 2000 package that includes:

i. Examples of materials for established sites.
ii. An automatic PowerPoint slide show.

iii. References to online materials.


8. PROVIDE TRAINING FOR NATURE 2000 SENIOR AND MIDDLE MANAGEMENT STAFF IN DEVELOPMENT OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS STRATEGIES.

The following is suggested

A 2-day module for middle management and senior staff (Levels 3 and 4) on development of communication strategies

This module should provide the chance for managers to start to develop the strategies for their sites and should include follow-up mentoring to allow managers to complete their strategies with remote support.

The results of the assessment suggest that respondents recognise that they first need to develop institutional strategies for information, communication and awareness. Within the management planning cycle such strategies need to be developed at two main stages.

1. Before a management plan is prepared the planning team should identify the key stakeholders for the area identify how to ensure the participation of the various stakeholder groups in the management planning process. This is especially important for Natura 2000 sites, where many of the stakeholders may be completely unfamiliar with the concept, and where required management actions are likely to affect directly a wide range of landowners and other rights holders.

2. Once a management strategy and plan has been developed for a site with multiple stakeholders, on-going communication will be essential for achieving management objectives, resolving problems and conflicts and identifying in capitalising on opportunities.

9. PROVIDE TRAINING IN PARTICIPATORY MANAGEMENT OF PROTECTED AREAS, WITH COMMUNICATION SKILLS AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE CURRICULUM

Communication is not just a one directional process of transferring information from the sender (the protected area) to the receiver (community member or visitor). The establishment of the network of Natura 2000 sites in Romania has generated a requirement for the introduction of a range of collaborative management approaches that are quite new for the country’s protected areas. Management of many of these sites depends on effective collaboration and communication with a wide range of stakeholders including local government units, central government agencies, local NGOs, landowners and users and the general public.

It is recommended that the following capacity development module is developed for senior managers and relevant middle managers:

A 2-day module for middle management and senior staff (Levels 3 and 4) on participatory techniques and multi-stakeholder protected area governance.

This module should not only cover the theory of participatory management and decision-making, it should also provide a range of specific examples of co-management and other participatory forms of governance in protected areas comparable to those in Romania.
The raw data from which the results are derived takes the form of an Excel workbook, which is available on request from the author or from

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