

# Arguing for implementation of Natura 2000 in Hungary



Györgyi Bela, Veronika Fabók, Bálint Balázs, Eszter Kovács, György Pataki, Eszter Kelemen

[Bela.Gyorgyi@essrg.hu](mailto:Bela.Gyorgyi@essrg.hu), Environmental Social Science Research Group, [www.essrg.hu](http://www.essrg.hu)

## Context

This study examines the arguments used for and against Natura 2000 by different stakeholder groups in policy formulation and implementation phases and different policy levels (national and local). The main focus of the case study was to understand the institutional context of argumentation in Hungary.

A large number and diversity of arguments in relation to Natura 2000 was evaluated according to their effectiveness and context of argumentation. Results show that the arguments are framed and conditioned by habits, law and other institutions and reveal the argumentative strategies that were applied.



## Arguments

The designation stage of Natura 2000 policy



The argument that referred to our responsibility towards protecting nature in Europe was often mentioned since “we offer an important contribution of natural heritage to the community”. It was also highlighted that “Natura 2000 is a compulsory European legal obligation that have been accepted with the EU accession and have to be fulfilled.”

The implementation phase of Natura 2000 policy



Mostly at local level discourses included a wide variety of arguments. The most important arguments and argument lines at local levels were about the economic advantages and the livelihood supports that can be provided by the implementation of Natura 2000 network. They mostly focused on the subsidies and compensation schemes, and less on the other economic advantage.

## Framing

Natura 2000 implementation was framed in a different way at national and local level. At national level, the persuasive framing strategy involved the appeal to a sense of responsibility for nature. Self-interest was usually used in framing at local level. When planners and public administrators justified the implementation they referred to compensation schemes, and individual self-interests were also highlighted.

Referring to ecosystem services was rarely, if ever used in framing. It seemed difficult to formulate evidence-based explanations and develop science arguments for ecosystem services, whether at local or national levels.



Photo: N2000 forums in Hungary, <http://natura.2000.hu/hu/csoportok>

## Lessons learned

Argumentation is context dependent. The institutional dimension is a very important aspect to describe an argumentation context.

Arguments are considered to be more legitimate when: they are the result of a democratic process; they are science and evidence-based; they are based on shared values.

Scientific expertise can be a substantial source of legitimacy but other sources can also be important. Appealing exclusively to scientific knowledge is less effective than several sources of legitimacy together.

Using more arguments is better. It is demonstrated that the large number and diversity of arguments is important as it shows that the Natura 2000 system could be beneficial for the whole society.

Arguments should address all or most actors involved in implementation of Natura 2000 as this shows a better understanding of the consequences of these actions.

Analysis of policy argumentation, including argumentation in biodiversity governance require a contextual, problem-oriented, multidisciplinary and case study based approach.

