



European Union Network for the Implementation
and Enforcement of Environmental Law

IMPEL PROJECT ABSTRACT

Development of a planning tool concerning inspection of Natura 2000 sites – NIRAM



Background

Planning is one of the key factors in making inspections more transparent, systematic and effective. Criteria for how often Natura 2000 sites should be inspected to ensure sufficient contribution to the maintenance of favorable status of the site are various and differ from country to country.

During its work in 2017 on the item, IMPEL identified the need for a planning tool for inspections. IMPEL project 2018/14 worked on the development of a tool and defined criteria which would manage the frequency of inspection at protected sites (with focus on Natura 2000 sites). If possible, the tool should also store data collated through inspections over the long term in order to be used by inspection authorities for the purposes of evidence and long term trends in nature protected sites change and setting policy.

The option of using the IMPEL IRAM-Tool was considered, and shown as able to be further developed for the purpose. The tool is called IRAM for Nature (NIRAM). It is very flexible and can be adjusted to the needs of different countries.

Planning is about defining and explaining as accurately as possible beforehand the work to be done so that the work can be performed in an effective, efficient, transparent and accountable way. One important element in the planning procedure is the identification of the adequate inspection frequency. Different planning systems



Target Group

- Inspectors of nature protected sites
- Competent authorities
- Inspection authorities



EU Legislation

- Habitats Directive
- RMCEI
(‘Recommendation providing for minimum criteria for environmental inspections (adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in 2001)



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work with a risk based approach. This allows for dedicating most efforts to the objects of highest risk.

The IMPEL project on Implementation of Art. 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (IMPEL project 2017/19) – Roadmap for Planning Tool for inspection of Natura 2000 sites found out that a considerable number of IMPEL member states confirms the need for developing an IT tool for planning Natura 2000 site inspections. It confirmed that an IT tool as a part of the planning of inspections of nature protected sites will provide a systematic approach which would maximize resources into key areas of concern. But it has to be taken into account that the approach to the inspection of protected areas is fundamentally different from the inspection of industrial installations. The Roadmap for a planning tool for the Natura 2000 site inspections included in-depth discussions and decisions around the existing tools “IRAM”, identifications of IT developers and development of criteria and scoring system. Other areas for considerations included tool development, test phases, final format and manual agreement, user feedback and any necessary adjustments.

Conclusions on the development of NIRAM

Based on the knowledge from the previous projects, it was decided to use an existing approach, the IRAM tool developed under the IMPEL project 2011/5 “easyTools - Risk Assessment Guidance Book.”

Adjusting the IRAM tool that was developed for the risk based assessment of the inspection frequency of industrial installations to other inspection tasks allows the IRAM rules and principles to be used for nature inspection.

Experience from the assessment of different sites showed that inspectors had no complete information to assess all criteria. If for one or more criteria data are not available, inspectors should try to work at the beginning without it and collect necessary data continuously, so that increasing knowledge about the site will improve over time and then the next assessments can be carried out based on improved information. It is important to reiterate that not applying all of the criteria is allowed (for example, in cases where the data are not available), the final result is unaffected by the omissions and is still viable.

Agreement on criteria has been challenging due to differences between MS practices. The work in one authority/inspection body should be done with a set of fixed criteria, and it is recommended that all criteria are attempted in the first instance. However, the tool is flexible and can be adjusted to different needs. The previous NIRAM tool test phases for the assessment of Natura 2000 sites indicated that it is applicable for the purpose of establishing a multiannual inspection program for authorities.



Links

- [Doing the Right Things](#)
Methodology
- [IRAM](#)



Key Words

- Natura 2000 sites
- Planning inspections
- NIRAM