



BiodivERsA clustering workshop:

Policy briefs: What, Why, How

Strengths and Weaknesses

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POLICY BRIEF

Natura 2000 and Europe's forests: understanding and tackling implementation challenges

Forests are key ecosystems for conserving Europe's biodiversity and an important focus of the protected area network Natura 2000 – the EU's cornerstone nature policy. They are also essential for delivering multiple ecosystem goods and services to human societies. Yet, forest biodiversity conservation under Natura 2000 faces several challenges which may trigger conflicts during the implementation of the network.

The Biodiversa-funded *BioForEU* project has investigated both ecological challenges related to the management of protected forests and governance challenges related to the implementation of Natura 2000. This Policy Brief describes these socio-ecological challenges, presents key research results, and outlines policy solution pathways towards improving the effectiveness of Natura 2000 with regards to the conservation and sustainable management of Europe's forests.

Main findings:

- Forests are essential for conserving Europe's biodiversity. 50% of Natura 2000 habitats are forests; around 23% of forests are located within Natura 2000 sites.
- Implementation of Natura 2000 in forests has led to core related to different interests and land use paradigms (e.g. balancing nature conservation and sustainable timber use and implementation procedures (e.g. science-based vs. participatory-inclusive). Resolving and managing conflicts remains an important challenge for EU biodiversity policy.
- Key policy recommendations:** Challenges can be addressed with appropriate policies and management strategies. In particular:
 - Making the 'favourable conservation status' concept more quantifiable, based on the best available ecological data across EU Member States/jurisdictions.
 - Facilitating continuous learning processes across EU Member States, e.g. through guidance documents on management.
 - Better integration of Natura 2000 objectives into public forest management planning and practices.
 - Reforming the funding schemes for Natura 2000 by creating incentives for delivering conservation and societal benefits involving local stakeholders and making Natura 2000 a project.



POLICY BRIEF

Conservation of Threatened Insects in Europe: Managing habitats for land use and climate change adaptation

Insects react rapidly to changes in land use and climate because of their generally short life cycles and, in many cases, their dependency on other species. For species which directly depend on one another, a change in one species can have a severe impact on the other. A recent report by the European Environment Agency has revealed dramatic declines in some grassland butterfly populations in Europe since 1990.

Based on research results of the Biodiversa-funded *CLIMT* project, conservation schemes could be improved to help halt the extinction of the threatened insects studied in the project. Specific conservation measures could help improve the status of these species by allowing them time to adapt to environmental changes, and to maintain or progress towards favourable conservation status. Such adaptive management measures can contribute significantly to reaching the targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and to fulfil the obligations in the EU Habitats Directive.

- Some highly-specialised insects, such as the *Large blue butterfly (Maculinea arion)*, are highly vulnerable to environmental changes.
- The use of appropriate adaptive management in particular integrating ecological knowledge, promoting habitat patches and heterogeneity, demonstrated to be beneficial to insect conservation.
- A spectacular increase in the *Large blue butterfly* population in the United Kingdom was possible through specific measures.
- Adequate monitoring and management of Natura 2000 sites and integration of ecological knowledge management practices are essential for species conservation.
- Creating and restoring grassland patches with conservation value, supported by the EU Biodiversity and recent policy on Green Infrastructure.
- National Rural Development Programmes under Agricultural Policy could better contribute to a grassland conservation.
- EU Member States should build on the advice of the European Commission Guidelines on Climate Change in their site management planning.



POLICY BRIEF

Nitrogen pollution and climate change reduce carbon storage and biodiversity of peatlands

Peatland ecosystems store exceptionally high amounts of carbon as peat. Globally, peatlands contain twice as much carbon as all forests combined, while only covering 3% of the Earth's land space. The average loss of only a centimetre of peat from the world's peatlands would release an amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) equal to about one third of the global annual fossil fuel combustion. Peatlands have been drained and mined for centuries to exploit their carbon-rich soil for agriculture, forestry, fuel and horticulture. This turns peatlands from a carbon 'sink' to a carbon 'source', and drained peatlands now account for almost 10% of the world's man-made CO₂ emissions every year. The EU is the world's second largest CO₂ emitter from drained peatlands after Indonesia.

Much of the focus on peatland protection in Europe has been on mitigating direct physical impacts. This policy brief focuses on the far less recognised indirect and 'unsown' threats to peatlands: air pollution and changes in precipitation, temperature and nutrients. It is based on the results of the Biodiversa PEATBOG project investigating the impacts of nitrogen pollution and climate change on the biodiversity and ecosystem functioning of peatlands across Europe.

Main findings:

- Elevated reactive nitrogen deposition can change the functioning and biodiversity of peatlands, and increase their sensitivity to climate change.
- Enhanced reactive nitrogen increases the growth of vascular plants at the expense of peat-forming mosses.
- Warming and drought of nitrogen-enriched peatlands threaten their long-term carbon storage capacity and release stored CO₂ into the atmosphere, contributing to climate change.

Key policy recommendations

- It is advised that a network of early warning systems be set up in peatlands across Europe to monitor changes in nitrogen saturation, biodiversity, and carbon sequestration.
- 'Nitrogen pollution protected areas', analogous to marine protected areas, should be established in the most vulnerable peatland areas in Europe.
- It would be beneficial to include the protection of peatlands in the aims of the EU Water Directive.
- Peatland restoration could be incorporated into carbon accounting rules under the EU Climate Package and national accounting.
- Member States should be encouraged to designate all potential carbon storage 'hot-spots', including peatlands, as sensitive areas under the reformed Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).
- Cross-compliance standards set by the CAP, particularly the EU Nitrates Directive and its enforcement by Member States, could help limit nitrogen release via leaching or volatilisation from agriculture in sensitive peatland areas.



WHAT: Policy Brief...many definitions...

*“A policy brief is **a concise standalone** document that prioritises a **specific policy issue** and presents the **evidence in non-technical and jargon-free language**. In general, the purpose of a policy brief is to **distil or to synthesise evidence** with the intention of **influencing the thinking and actions of policy actors** as they take decisions in complex policy processes. That is, to achieve the elusive outcome of evidence-informed policymaking.” (Beynon et al 2012).*

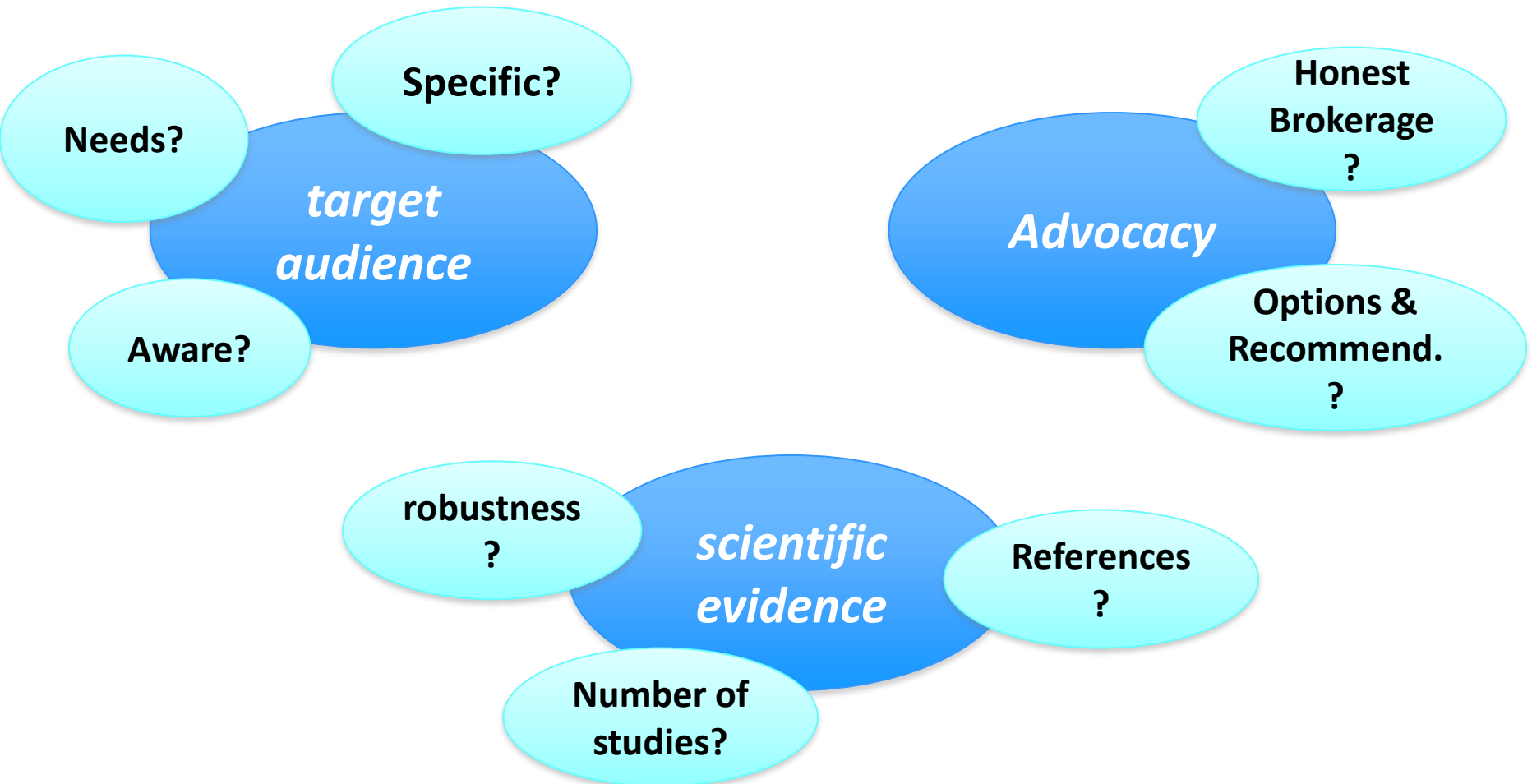
WHAT: information on Policy Briefs

- **Guidance notes and scientific papers analysing policy briefs strengths and weaknesses: mainly on other sectors: Health, Development, climate change**
- **Existing PB related to Biodiversity:**
 - **lessons learned from BiodivERsA survey**
 - **Search on “Google” to extract the most visible PB related to biodiversity and analyse them**
 - **SPIRAL-DG RTD Workshop in 2013**



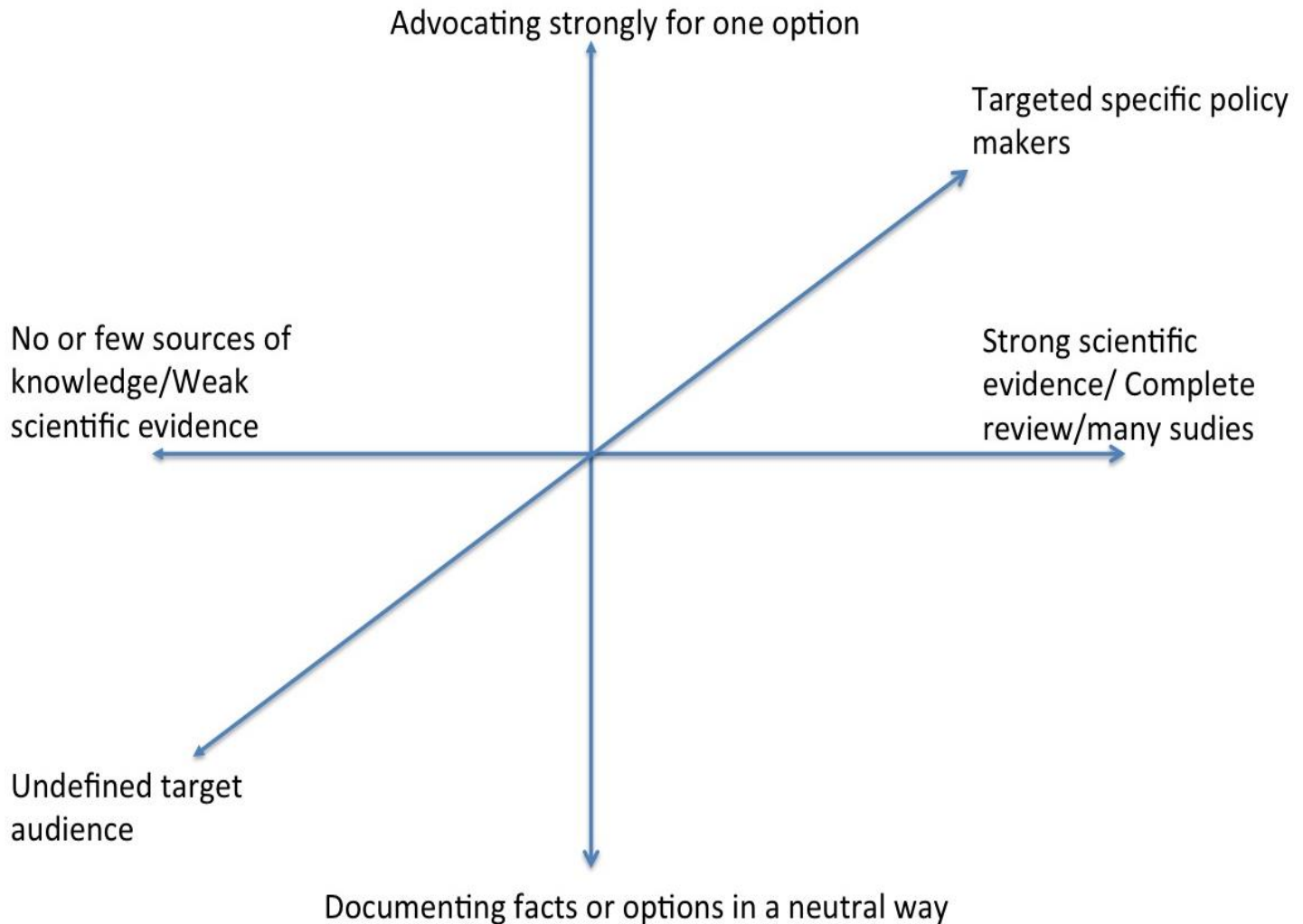
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WHY: questions you should ask yourself before starting...





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HOW: some recommendations...

Embed policy briefs
in a **strategy of
engagement** from
the beginning of the
research

KNOW YOUR
TARGET
AUDIENCE

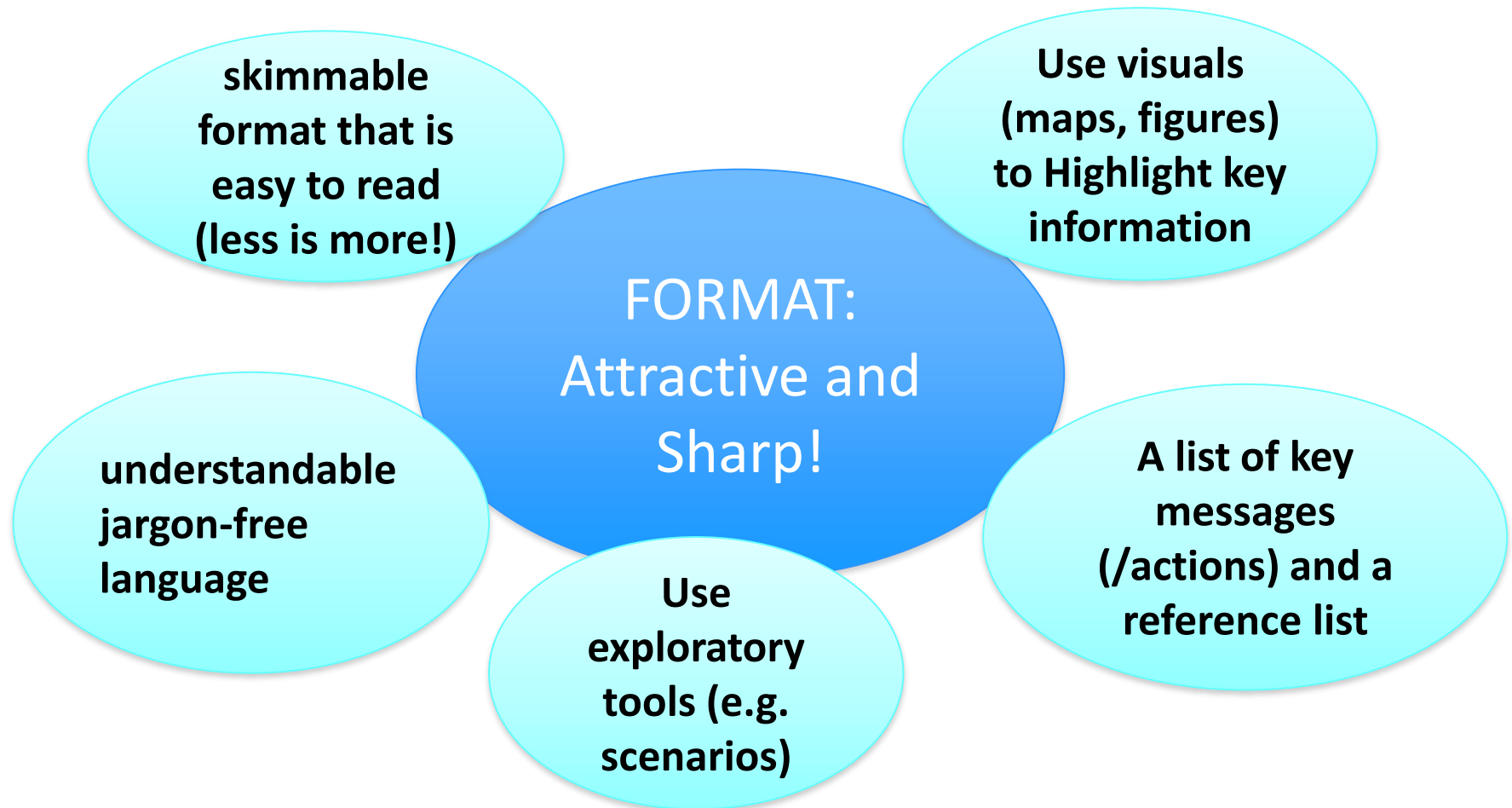
Get to know the
**current policy
questions** and even
the overall policy
cycle (timing!)

**Collaborate with
other projects** on
policy relevant
questions:
strengthen the
evidence



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HOW: some recommendations...



HOW: some recommendations...

**address and
communicate
uncertainty (CRELE,
transparency)**

**CONTENT
PB related to
BIODIVERSITY**

**Use visuals
(maps, figures)
to Highlight key
information**

**case studies
and real
examples from
practice**

**Make clear the
causality between
policy brief
recommendations
and policy issue**

**list of accessible
references and
hyperlinks**



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HOW: some recommendations...

**policy briefs
transmitted by peers
or known experts
have more chances
to be read**

**Co-build
engagement and
communication
strategies**

**DISSEMINATION
active rather
than passive**

**Complementary
of other SPI
activities (e.g.
meetings)**

**Attend policy
events (e.g.
Green week)**

Limitations of Policy briefs...

- Not enough or Too much
- Difficult to identify the target, it might be necessary to target several different types of policy makers (local, regional, nat., EU)
- Understanding the policy makers needs is challenging and their timing does not match research pace
- Difficult to know the real impact of policy briefs:
 - Monitoring strategy
 - Could policy documents refer to policy briefs they used: citation index?
- Time consuming for researchers to do research, develop communication, engage stakeholders, get to know them....



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Thank you...

