



Declaration 6th European Conference on Ecological Restoration

At the SER2008 conference in Ghent, Belgium (8-12/9/08), 500 experts in ecological restoration from all over Europe stress to the European Community that:

"INVESTING IN NATURE CONSERVATION AND ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION PAYS!"

The SER 2008 Congress strongly recommends greater investment in the science and practice of nature conservation AND ecological restoration, as well as in better communication of the enormous ecological and socioeconomic benefits to be gained.

In 2005, the conservative journal *The Economist* noted that numerous studies have shown that investing 1€ in nature conservation brings from 7.5 to as much as 200€ in returns. It is now emerging that investments in ecological restoration – the repair and recuperation of damaged, degraded or destroyed ecosystems – is also a very good investment with multiple payoffs. At the SER 2008 conference, many examples were provided to illustrate this. For example, implementing and maintaining the Natura 2000 network will cost approximately 6 billion € per year. With a population of almost 500 million in the European Union (27 member states) the investment represents slightly more than 10 € per person per year, and will provide economic benefits at least 3-4 times greater on a yearly basis.

What do we get for that money?

- 1) The **economic value** of maintained and restored ecosystem services within the Natura 2000 network, which are conservatively estimated to be at least 20 billion €/year from, for example, restored fisheries and forest-products, improved air and water quality, flood prevention, erosion control, and carbon storage, as well as enhanced cultural services such as recreation, eco-tourism, cultural heritage value and improved physical and mental health.
- 2) **Employment benefits** of at least 125.000 new jobs in activities directly related to nature conservation and restoration, plus positive impact on millions more related to enhanced ecosystem service use related to recreation, tourism, sustainable resource harvesting, etc.
- 3) **Biodiversity and ecological values** are safeguarded and restored, which is also essential to achieve European commitments under various conventions, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, and Kyoto Protocol, as well as the Millennium Development Goals.

Where do we get the money?



Direct payments by beneficiaries of maintained and restored ecosystems providing goods and services could generate a big portion of the funds needed (e.g. Vitell Perrier pays farmers 3.5 million €/year in Switzerland to protect its mineral water source). In addition, with proper communication and education, most Europeans would be more than willing to pay the 10 Euros per year needed, as shown by a study carried out in Scotland which showed that people would be willing to pay 315 million €/year for Natura 2000, that is 7 times the actual costs.

What does it cost to do nothing?

The current yearly cost of ecosystem degradation is estimated between 2 and 5 times GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in most countries globally. For the European Union, GDP in 2007 was 16 trillion €; 2% of that is 320 billion lost through ecosystem degradation each year. The money needed for Natura 2000 (6 billion €/year) is only 2% of that huge cost.