

Do public institutions on nature conservation and agriculture contribute to the conservation of species-rich hay meadows?

Comparative case study on implementing EU nature conservation policy in Germany and Romania

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, to the conservation of species-rich hay meadows throughout Europe has been given major attention. Old and new member states face difficulties on different levels when implementing EU nature conservation and common agriculture policies. The difficulties in implementing regulations include the lack of institutional and cultural history in formal conservation, institutional weakness and instability, as well as the absence of public participation, unwillingness of farmers to participate actively in conservation of species-rich hay-meadows.

ADDRESSED QUESTIONS:

1. How the Habitats Directive is implemented in the Southern Black Forest (DE) and the Central Apuseni Mountains (RO) in order to conserve species-rich hay meadows and what are the potential differences?
2. How does collaboration between agriculture and nature conservation institution guarantee the administrative framework of species-rich hay meadows in their socio-ecological context at different levels?
3. How information and knowledge transfer is integrated in the administrative framework, relevant for species-rich hay meadows' conservation?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

We applied the multiple comparative case study research design and methods. Two areas were compared: Southern Black Forest - Baden Württemberg (Germany) and Central Apuseni Mountains (Romania). Nine interview partners, as institutions/organizations (13 persons), were selected after a preliminary profile analysis and consultation process with experts. Considering that the study areas cover more administrative levels in each country, a wider analysis was carried out on the relevant administrative framework. Our data were processed and analysed using NVivo 10 software.

RESULTS

GERMANY

The institutional atmosphere was considered collaborative with clearly defined roles under the umbrella of the Ministry of Rural Development and Consumer Protection Baden-Württemberg (MLR). The policies are implemented by regional councils and lower conservation agencies in each district (fig.1). Directly subordinated research centres are collaborating with the ministry on specific subjects and responsibilities.

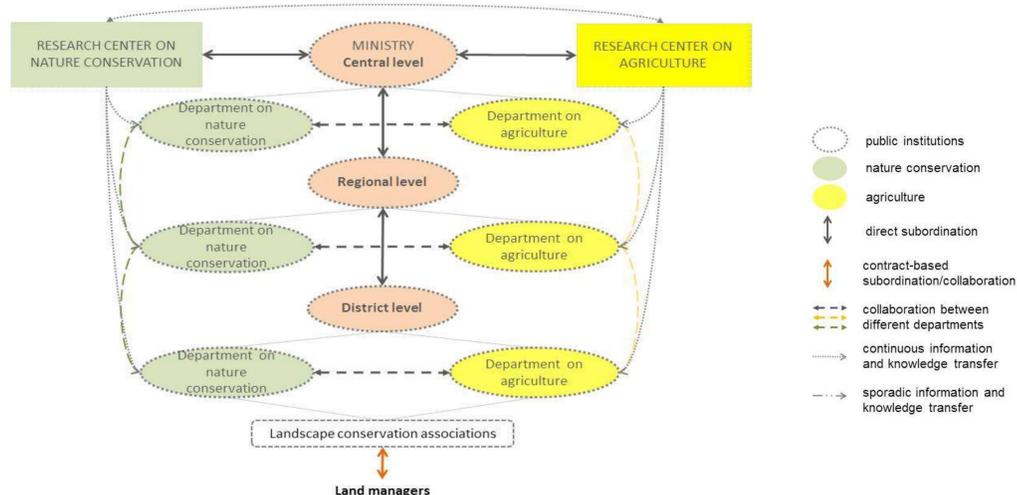


Fig. 1 Conceptual framework on the implementation of relevant policies for species-rich hay meadows in Baden-Württemberg (Germany)

The responsibility for the development of management plans and conservation measures comes within the scope of regional level public institutions (*Regierungspräsidium*). The lower level institutions (*Landratsamt*), together with external service bodies like landscape conservation associations (LEV) are in charge of implementing the measures.

The integration of available agricultural academic knowledge in conservation measures is still not on a satisfactory level from an agricultural point of view. *'Even if there is more than enough knowledge'* the integration of information also depends on the willingness of political actors in nature conservation to find out more about the subject (GE2 - interview partner). The system itself cannot guarantee a favourable conservation status of the species-rich hay meadows, without the participation of farmers.

Payment for conservation purposes are available for farmers in different forms, amounts of money, directly related to the conservation measures and site conditions (result-oriented).

ROMANIA

The institutional structure was characterized as unsatisfactory because of the current structure of the public administration. There are distinct ministerial institutions involved (fig. 2), namely the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR) and the Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests (MMAP).

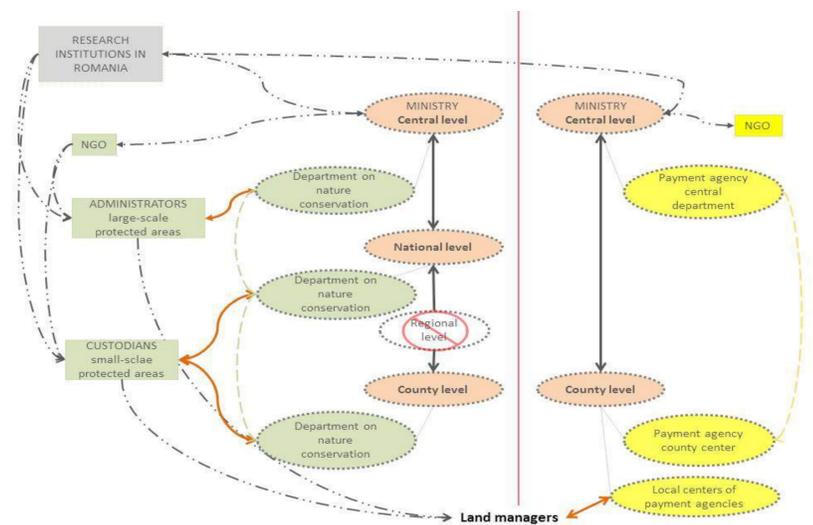


Fig. 2 Conceptual framework on the implementation of relevant policies for species-rich hay meadows in Romania

The management of protected areas, including Natura 2000 sites, is delegated by the MMAP to administrators/custodians, including development of management plans and conservation measures. Research support is not well represented. NGO's play an important role in central decision making.

The current conservation status of the grassland habitats is maintained in functional social-ecological systems in semi-subsistence, traditional conditions. The majority of interviewees from the nature conservation side consider the development of measures to be a kind of 'easy job' which could be defined within some meeting sessions with the land owners, describing the existing traditional practices.

Some conservation payments are available for farmers within the agri-environmental payment packages, which are mostly unsatisfactory from conservation point of view, being hard to correlate with site conditions in the lack of the management plans.

CONCLUSIONS

- In Germany the advantage is due to the public administration structure and history and the continuous knowledge transfer from research to public administration. This makes the public administration responds more adapted to the policy implementation. More focus has to be given for solutions to achieve the favourable conservation status of the species-rich hay meadows. Thus, the complexity of the situation requires an approach which opens ecological and social dimensions within a multiservice management framework facilitating local initiatives.
- In Romania it is highly questionable if the current institutional structure can guarantee proper support for the conservation of species-rich hay meadows, therefore much more strength has to be offered (scientific and structural) to the public administration in order to increase interactive institutional capacity and capability of problem solving. Organizational changes might be necessary to balance the disparities between the structure of ministries at central and regional levels. Continuous knowledge transfer and collaboration could also lead to bridge this gap in order to achieve a more successful implementation of the policies at local level.
- In both cases there are different amounts of available local traditional knowledge, which is an enormous source of inspiration (especially in Romania) for nature conservation and sustainable agriculture. Managers of protected areas or the public sector have to take into account these values without devaluating them by not having a deeper understanding of their relevance. The gaps between public administration, managers of protected areas and stakeholders have to be bridged within an integrated multilevel governance (e.g. nature conservation and agriculture) instead of domain oriented approach (e.g. nature conservation or agriculture).

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