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Linking Business to Biodiversity, Bringing People Together

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Convincing business people about the importance of nature conservation in their strategic decisions and everyday activities is a significant task. Understanding this, CEEweb for Biodiversity organized a conference on 29 February 2008 in Budapest.

Changing some of the EU legislation and the current national approach of EU funding could also contribute to the boom of pro-biodiversity business. This is one of the conclusions of the conference, which convened fifty participants from the governmental, NGO and financial sectors, as well as from small- and medium sized enterprises. This abovementioned particular problem is related to the current practice: the usual EU funding schemes rather favour the larger enterprises, although many small and medium ones could have a big share in the upswing of pro-biodiversity business. With the involvement of gestor organisations, which could further distribute the EU support to smaller ones, these companies could gain the opportunity to receive funding for their activities. At the same time they would contribute to the public goods through conserving biodiversity and making business at the same time.

National governments could also have a special role in this: state guarantee and interest subsidies could be crucial incentives for many companies, when they apply for bank loans for pro-biodiversity business investments. The conference participants identified many other proposals, which target banks, governments, enterprises and NGOs alike. They could also share their experiences which inspire others in their everyday activities.

Of course even when speaking about the pro-biodiversity business, the central issue remains the same: how the economy can transform so that it becomes interested in the sustainable use of natural resources, as well as biodiversity. Possibly economic growth will be not the way in achieving this. We need to set a regulatory framework which ensures that this will happen indeed, and in the meantime we need to clearly define criteria so that pro-biodiversity business is not a greenwashing campaign for companies.

For further information about the conference please contact Veronika Kiss at kiss@ceeweb.org and visit the conference website at www.ceeweb.org.