

REPORT ON THE ANNUAL MEETING OF CEEWEB

14 - 15 NOVEMBER 2005
BANJA VRUJCI, SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

The 2005 AM is realised with the most valuable help of Young Researchers of Serbia, a CEEWEB member in the country in a small town 100 km South of Belgrade.

The AM is opened by Michael Meyer Vice-President. After the short introduction, an introductory round is made for those who were new in the network. András Krolopp, the General Secretary of CEEWEB also greets the AM and welcomes the new faces.

The number of member organisations participating at the Annual Meeting is 22, represented by 48 persons. The present members of the CEEWEB Network elect the officers (minute taker and certifiers, credential committee). András Krolopp, General Secretary goes through the agenda and explains the items, then the members adopt the agenda.

The potential new members present their organisations:

- 1., AGORA: László Ambrus
- 2., ORCA: Martin Raspor
- 3., Naturalists Club Poland: Pawel Pawlaczyk

András Krolopp gives a presentation on the Annual Report of CEEWEB. The Annual Report is adopted.

Amendments in the Articles of Associations:

András Krolopp, General Secretary remarks that there is a need for some amendments in the Articles of Associations. He presents the details of the amendments as follows:

New headquarters and subsidiary office:

The headquarters of CEEWEB moves from Miskolc to Budapest.
New headquarters: 1021, Budapest, Kuruclesi út 11/A, Hungary
New subsidiary office: 3525, Miskolc, Kossuth utca 13. Hungary

The competence of the Annual Meeting

The AM elects the President, Vice President, the additional two general Board members and the members of the Scrutiny Committee for a two-year term. The first Annual Meeting after the second calendar years is an electorate AM, thus the election of the Board and Scrutiny Committee members has to be on its agenda.

Rights and duties of the General Secretary (GS) are supplemented according to the following:

The GS is responsible for administrative duties related to the functioning of the organisation. He/she has full right to represent the organisation, can act in front of taxation and other authorities.

The GS has full right to represent and act on behalf of the organisation when preparing and submitting project proposals or applications, and he/she is officially allowed to sign them without the authorization of the President.

The GS has the right to sign contracts in legal transactions till 25 000 000 HUF of cash flow.

Management:

CEEWEB manages its financial resources on bank account. – This regulation is still in force.

The General Secretary and the accountant of the organisation together have authority over the bank account. – This regulation of the Articles of Association is repealed and a new regulation is introduced:

Two persons together from the following list have authority over the bank account:

- General Secretary
- President
- Programme director
- Office manager of the headquarters

The members fully understand the details of the amendments of the Articles of Association and approve the above-mentioned amendments.

Elections:

Vice-President:

Andras Krolopp remarks that the mandate of the Vice-President, the regular members of the Board and the members of the Scrutiny Committee expired, so the AM needs to elect them.

The present Vice-President, Michael Meyer is nominated for the position of Vice-President, who accepts the nomination. The members elect unanimously Michael Meyer for Vice-President.

Regular members in the Board:

The members nominate Inga Racinska, Dragi Pop-Stojanov, Edita Stojic-Karanovic, Jelena Beronja for two positions as regular members in the Board. Edita Stojic-Karanovic withdraws her nomination, the others accept their nomination.

According to the results, Jelena Beronja and Inga Racinska are elected as regular members of the Board.

Scrutiny Committee:

The members nominate Kristina Vilimaite, Benedek Róbert Sallai, Jaromir Sibl for Scrutiny Committee membership. All nominations are accepted. Thereafter the members elect unanimously Kristina Vilimaite, Benedek Róbert Sallai, Jaromir Sibl for the Scrutiny Committee membership.

Presentation of the Financial Report of 2004:

Klára Hajdu (CEEWEB) presents the results and the financial report of the economic year 2004 to the AM. The financial report is approved.

The Office presents the current activities:

András Krolopp presents the activities of CEEWEB as the NGO Focal Point for Central and East Europe to the Global Environment Facility, as well as he gives an update about the work under the Carpathian Convention that is to come into force in a few months.

Klára Hajdu (CEEWEB) gives an overview on current CBD project that is implemented by four member organisations of the network. The project focuses on NGO lobby activities, awareness raising and capacity building.

Ildikó Arany (CEEWEB) summarises current activities in connection with Natura 2000. On behalf of the European Habitats Forum (EHF), CEEWEB carries the mandate to organize the NGO input from the new member states to the biogeographic seminars. In 2005, several preparatory workshops were organised for the Alpine, Pannonian and Boreal biogeographic seminars. CEEWEB is also involved in the biodiversity working group of the EEB, taking part in their ongoing lobby work (LIFE+, SF/Community Strategic Guidelines, reporting on FCS). CEEWEB took part in the activity of the Hungarian Natura 2000 Working Group, lobbying for financing, management and monitoring of Natura 2000 and better transposition of the Habitats Directive into the national law; as well as raising public awareness by means of several publications and forums.

Rita Francia (CEEWEB) presents the activities of CEEWEB on agri-environment and rural development issues. She highlights that CEEWEB is implementing a sustainable regional development model project in the Carpathian Mountains in partnership with Milvus Group. CEEWEB is involved in the agriculture working group of the EEB that is lobbying for the all-important 2nd pillar of the CAP. CEEWEB also has a seat in the Advisory Committee of the European Council on Agriculture and Environment.

Kristina Vilimaite (CEEWEB) presents CEEWEB's communication strategy and the work that has been done so far. First of all CEEWEB has a renewed webpage, which is constantly updated and further developed. She also notes that the CEEWEB newsletter, 'Diversity' has been recently redesigned and now has a more modern, professional look.

Reports of the WG Chairs:

Ildikó Arany (CEEWEB) reports about the activities within the Natura 2000 WG, Rita Francia (CEEWEB) about Agri-environment WG, Marton A. Kelemen (Milvus Group) about CITES WG and last but not least Michael Meyer (ETE) about Sustainable Tourism WG activities.

Presentation of the 2004 annual report and the Work Programme for 2006:

András Krolopp presents the 2004 annual report, which is adopted. He also presents the provisional Work Programme for the economic year 2006 and its potential financial consequences. The Work Programme for 2006 and its potential financial consequences are approved.

Voting on new members:

Seven applications were sent to the Office, of which four were full applications.

Results of the voting:

AGORA: 19 yes

ORCA: 17 yes, 2 no

Naturalist Club Poland: 19 yes

Ecolibri: 11 yes, 8 undecided

Presentations and working group discussions on six topics:

The CEEWEB Policy Office staff presents six issues for future activities, which are subsequently discussed by the participants in smaller working groups. The main points of the presentations and the outcomes of the discussions are summarised below.

1., CEEWEB Academy

Responding to the growing challenges of today the CEEWEB Annual Meeting in November 2004 decided to launch a seminar series called CEEWEB Academy targeting member organisations. The Academy aims to develop common understanding and build up the

knowledge on sustainability and specific topics among the CEEWEB members, who can thus work together in a more effective and harmonised way in a more coherent network. In order to tailor the Academy for the needs of the members as much as possible, the Annual Meeting also discusses the concept the CEEWEB Academy and provides some suggestions for the future.

The main points of the discussions at the AM:

- It is a problem is that there is no continuity between the Academy sessions
- Ideally one person per organisation should report back to her/his organisation about the info learned at the Academy
- There should be two types of sessions:
 - General knowledge (need for continuity) 1/year
 - Specific topics (no continuity needed) 2/year
- Handouts should always be delivered, but there is no need for other outcomes!
- The materials should be available on the CEEWEB web pages
- Suggested topics:
 - CITES
 - Natura 2000 shadow lists
 - Communication skills
 - Tourism development
 - Species protection
 - Rural development
- The CEEWEB Policy Office should be in charge for coordination and evaluation of the Academy.

2., CEEWEB Science

The 2004 AM decided to launch a new publication series of CEEWEB, which includes the scientific articles submitted by CEEWEB member organisations.

Aims:

- Demonstrating the scientific competence of the network, its creative, innovative approach
- Sharing scientific results with other NGOs and researchers
- Promotion of the member organisations (their competence, issues they work on, etc.), providing networking possibilities by that
- Facilitating NGO-scientific cooperation through showing the connections between these sectors in practice.

Target group:

- Members
- Other NGOs
- Donors
- Decision makers
- Researchers
- Students before choosing their thesis topic (for establishing contacts with NGOs and cooperate on scientific research).

Scientific standard:

Following the requirements for scientific articles (reproducible results, fixed structure, scientific review, etc.)

Topical focus:

Articles collected from various fields in the same issue: e.g. wetland reconstruction, reintroduction of ex situ reproduced lynx individuals into the wild, developing a bird indicator for biodiversity monitoring, etc.

Expected materials from members:

Scientific articles – up to 3000 words (plus graphs, illustrations, tables, references):

- Abstract (150 words)
- Problem definition
- Methodology
- Results
- Conclusions

Scientific review:

Articles sent to scientific experts within/outside the network

Timeframe for realisation:

- Announcement: 0. month
- Personal contacts, follow-up, etc.: 0-4. months
- Deadline for submitting articles: 4. month
- Scientific review: 5-6 months
- Editing, printing: 7-8 months
- Publication: 9. month

Annual publication could be targeted.

The look of the publication:

The design of the publication should be appealing to the target audience, e.g. with full-colour graphs, charts, pictures.

Dissemination:

Printed version (100/200 copies).

Mailed to members, research institutions, universities, other NGOs, nature conservation authorities(?)

Also published on the webpage of the CEEWEB in PDF format.

Budget:

100 copies, A4 – 50 pages, full colour (inside and cover), recycled paper

Gross amount for 100 copies is 500-600000 HUF

3., CEEWEB Watch

Gyulai Iván, President of CEEWEB proposed at the 2004 AM to start a new activity within the Network called CEEWEB Watch. It aims to evaluate the environmental performance of governments with regard to nature conservation and sustainability and communicate it to decision makers, the media and the public. Thus it will serve as both awareness raising and lobbying tool.

It is agreed at the 2005 AM that easily available and annually reproducible data should be used in the evaluation, which at the same time enable as much comparison among the countries as possible. The evaluation should also take into account both the status and trends.

In carrying out the evaluation, the interested organisations should first set criteria for the indicators and define topics (e.g. that reflect environmental quality, spatial structure and abundance of natural resources, holistic approach in policies, institutions, education, opportunities for public participation). The participating members should explore the available data in their countries which meet the set criteria and enable comparison as much as possible. Based on the available data, the final indicators should be decided upon and the results should be produced and publicised.

During the whole project extensive cooperation among member organisations and other institutions is desirable.

4., *Seven sins*

CEEWEB announced a call for case studies for the so called "Seven sins" publication on CEE projects running/implemented in 2004-2005 that have proved to have the worst impact on biodiversity in the country during that period. The "Seven sins" concept is presented by Klára Hajdu. The main points of the smaller working group discussion:

- Several bad examples exist in the various countries on investments that seriously harm the environment (e.g. ski resort development in Bulgaria, channel project in the Danube delta, gold mine project at Rosia Montana in Romania).
- Publicising the negative impacts of particular projects might help to achieve the mitigation of negative impacts even in the final stage of the investments or after the completion through some extra measures.
- There are some similarities between the projects, thus learning about them and from the mistakes might help stop other projects or mitigate their negative impacts.
- The case studies shall represent large-scale projects having great impacts on biodiversity.
- CEEWEB member organisations are encouraged to work in partnerships with other national NGOs in their country to present national case studies. Thus projects can be presented even if the CEEWEB member organisations are themselves not involved in the campaigning.

Some participants have expressed their possible interest to submit case studies in partnership with other organisations. The call for case studies with practical information on the content and format is available on the CEEWEB website: <http://www.ceeweb.org/7sins.htm>

5., *Diversity newsletter*

Kristina Vilimaite (CEEWEB) noted that the newsletter had to be restructured, in order to:

- make the Newsletter more useful for the members
- form positive image of CEEWEB
- increase the visibility of the network

Goals of the newsletter

- encourage communication and strengthen cooperation between the CEEWEB members and with the Policy Office (serve as a channel for members to be able to share project ideas, experiences and methodologies);
- contribute to the capacity building of individuals working in the member organisations, e.g. through the introduction of best practices and concepts;
- be a source of information about international and EU policies, agreements and achievements in the field of biodiversity and related areas, provide analytical information in order to enhance the common level of understanding;
- inform about the activities of the secretariat that are important for the network;
- present CEEWEB as active, creative, innovative and really useful organisation
- stimulate interest and curiosity and be entertaining.

Target audience

- Members of the CEEWEB network
- Visitors of the website
 - Should the newsletter be also sent to important stakeholders, potential members and partners:
 - CEEWEB board,
 - Donors,
 - Other networks, e.g. ANPED, IUCN,
 - Governmental institutions,
 - Non-member organizations?

Content

- "Best practices" - analysis of successful projects of members, written according to pre-defined, however flexible template. Focus should be on methods that worked and successful approaches, i.e. something that other members of the network can replicate.
- Leading story – article about the most resounded, most contradictory case or occurrence from the recent period of time, or the one that made the more people move, protest, talk about, etc. among the members or in the region. Photographs, graphs, maps could be used.
- Articles discussing specific and actual problems / policies /solutions in a country or region
- News from members – an opportunity for all to inform the audience about something which doesn't require a complete article, e.g. new projects started, new publications, etc.
- News from the secretariat - projects, publications, people, also reports of recent conferences (but in a shorter way than before and not as if there wouldn't be anything else to tell...), etc.
- Future events organised by secretariat, members or other relevant events
- "Biodiversity in art" - entertaining article picturing e.g. how elephants were pictured in medieval art; how butterflies looked like according to primitive pictographs, etc.
- "Biodiversity in philosophy and religion" – articles giving insight how biodiversity is related to society in the variety of ways, e.g. how societies practicing different religions perceive nature differently or development of specific projects that involve religious leaders.
- "Thoughts from the garden" – free "train of thoughts" without any binding or limitation but some philosophical wandering about how are we connected to nature in everyday life, e.g. personal astonishments, thought-provoking poetical questions, etc.
- "Tips and tricks" about how things work in practice, e.g. how nature interpretation works; how to lobby; how to develop a project budget; how public participation works, etc.
- Activities of the working groups able to wake up the interest of outsiders, e.g. stories about specific problems, successful cooperation of countries in developing cross-border examples, recent experiences, surprising results, interesting background operations, interview, etc.
- "From an expert's point of view" - Policy corner: thoughts and reaction of a politician, think-tank, expert, etc. called upon making his comments on a relevant topic, connected to news about /analysis of EU policies relevant to biodiversity, comments on the recent achievements or regulations.
- Interview – different, personal and interesting way of introduction of a person who is supposedly known by the majority of the membership, e.g. someone from the Policy Office who's been in contact with them for a long time.
- "From the local point of view" - The other side of the leading story, telling about the traditions, fairy-tales, anecdotes, traditional knowledge, receipts, jokes, etc. about the location / spot treated in the leading article "Let us know" - Qualitative question asked in the newsletter whenever there is a need to know the opinion of the members on policy issues, work of secretariat, etc.
- "Quotation of the month"

The participants note that the Newsletter should be printed in good quality and thus the option of producing it by a printing house should be investigated. Besides they propose that the Newsletter should be disseminated to a wider audience.

6., Internship

CEEWEB aims to strengthen the relation and cooperation with the members through launching an internship program. Within this framework the Policy Office plans to receive

and organise interns from and to CEEWEB member NGOs. They will gain insight into the internal work of other non-profit organization abroad, gather work experience in the work of the Network in areas relevant to their background and sending organisation (biodiversity, Natura 2000, sustainable tourism and agri-environment, campaigning, CITES, etc.). The programme also provides opportunities for multicultural learning and the perfection of foreign language skills. Besides the personal development of the interns, the internship programme also aims to build fundamentals for later cooperation between the Policy Office/ other hosting organisation and the sending organisation to which the intern returns after the completion of the internship programme.

The Policy Office coordinates the internship program within the network in cooperation with the sending and hosting organisation. The Policy Office strives to create a balanced relationship between the intern's needs and goals. The best match possible is achieved during the intern selection process involving the Policy Office, the hosting and sending organisation. Throughout the internship the hosting organisation provides coaching and regular evaluation sessions to the interns, with a view to being realistic about goals and expectations and sticking with tasks outlined in the position description. The sending organisation and the CEEWEB Policy Office will be also involved in the supervisory tasks. The hosting organisation provides information assistance for regarding accommodation, local transport, etc.

Interns are provided with pocket money, accommodation, daily sustenance costs depending on the possible funding. With regards to the provision of finances for the internship programme the cooperation between the Policy Office, the hosting and sending organisations will be extensively sought.

Presentation on the role of civil society in a changing socio-economic environment:

Jan-Gustav Strandenaes (ANPED – Northern Alliance for Sustainability) gives a presentation on the role of civil society in a changing socio-economic environment. He emphasised that the former divisions (such as North-South division) have disappeared, by now both poverty and environmental problems have expanded to global level. He outlined that while population, hunger, pollution and environmental disorder, inequalities grow, aids do not help solving the problems and NGOs have a huge responsibility. Thus NGOs should more work in networks and strengthen their cooperation.

Membership fee:

András Krolopp and Klára Hajdu present the membership fee concepts (activity based and budget based). The voting takes place next day on it, so everyone has time to "digest".

Andrzej Kepel (Salamandra, Poland) presents a third proposal for membership fee: in his concept there should be ONE fee (20 EUR) for every member organisation, but it is also possible to provide in kind contribution (such as articles for the newsletter).

The members decide for the third option with more than 50% of the votes. Michael Meyer notes that the Board will provide clear description of membership fee and the rules of payment.

Working Group meetings and presentations of WG chairs:

The AM votes on the budget and Work Plan of the WGs. All are accepted.

For not having any questions or comments, Andras Krolopp closes the Annual Meeting: hopefully the discussions will be translated into action!

Study trip:

On the last day a study trip was organised by the hosts. Unfortunately the original plan has to be changed because of weather conditions. Thus the participants has the opportunity to visit the town of Valievo, where the group has a wonderful walk around the historic centre and they are offered a traditional Serbian lunch in a local restaurant.

Summary:

The AM in general was experienced as a good opportunity to realize the problems NGOs are facing. Nevertheless it is more important now, what is being done between the AMs and concerning the tasks for the next AM. The Academy and the AM were a good chance to see new members and to introduce new CEEWEB staff as well.

The Central and East European Working Group for the Enhancement of Biodiversity (CEEWEB) is an international network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Central and Eastern European region. The mission of the network is the conservation of the biodiversity through the promotion of sustainable development.