



Dynamic Landscapes

nature conservation and military areas



Why are military areas significant?

At first sight military practice and conservation have little in common. Military activities are often destructive to nature and harmful to the environment – even in times of peace. Many military areas are contaminated with ammunition and high-risk waste. On the other hand, many of these areas (whether still in use or decommissioned) are key building blocks for European nature conservation. They are spacious, lack public access and benefit from a rather low impact of agriculture and forestry.

What are their conservation values?

Military areas display a natural dynamic that can only rarely be found on cultivated land. Hence they develop naturally, providing important habitats for species sensitive to disturbance and which are thus generally rare. The continuing military activities (e.g. tank movements/local fires) ensure the permanent creation of significant open habitats. Due to their large size and connectivity, military areas are important elements for the pan-European biotope network.

What changes threaten the military areas?

The end of the Cold War and the expansion of NATO led to substantial changes in the military sphere since 1990. Military forces have been restructured and reorganised. Because of this, even large sites were taken out of use. In addition, in those countries which have acceded to the European Union, many military training areas qualified for inclusion in the EU-wide ecological network called Natura 2000.

Thus, nature conservation implies new challenges to military authorities in the Central and East European countries (CEE). In addition, questions arise regarding how to deal with military areas that are no longer in use, such as: Who owns these sites? What kind of conflicts can be anticipated during the future use or management?

So far, military areas in the CEE countries have rarely been seriously or systematically targeted by relevant strategies and individual actions to safeguard their conservation values.





What are we doing?

In 2006 CEEWEB (Hungary) and Naturstiftung David (Germany) started an international project to preserve outstanding natural values in former and current military areas in the CEE countries. This project is based on a previous successful project on this issue in Germany, where a partnership between Ministry of Defence (MoD), Ministry of Environment (MoE) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) has yielded various openings towards a solution for the nature conservation issues.

At present we are collecting information relevant to conservation about former and present military training areas in the CEE countries, e.g. flora and fauna, protection status, type of military use, current conservation activities, cooperation between military and other institutions, foreseeable future use etc.

Our Aims

In the long run, the information gathered should enable us to work out solutions in the following areas:

- Ensuring the long term protection of conservation values in those areas already taken out of military use or those to be decommissioned soon.
- Working out solutions for military activity in line with conservation objectives in areas still in use, especially those included in the Natura 2000 network.
- Enhancing the awareness and capacity of military institutions concerning conservation issues.
- Strengthening cooperation between stakeholders and establishing a regional network dealing with the issue.



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