Minutes of the Agri-environmental Working Group Meeting

In the framework of CEEWEB Annual Meeting
Gornja Toplica-Banja Vrujci
Serbia and Montenegro
15th November 2005

1. Introductory round of participants
Saska Bogdanova – Eco-Mission, Macedonia
László Ambrus – Agora, Romania
Attila Nagy – Milvus Group, Romania
Enisa Imamovic – Danube-River of Cooperation, Serbia
Rita Francia – CEEWEB Office, Hungary

List of potential members:
Emilian Burdusel – UNESCO ProNatura
Sallai R. Benedek – Nimfea, Hungary
Young researchers, Serbia
Liliana Jura – BIOTICA, Moldova
Andrzej Kepel – Salamandra, Poland
Kruno Kartus – Osjeczki Zeleni, Croatia
Pawel Pawlaczyk – Conservationists Club, Poland

Selecting a minute taker: Attila Nagy

2. Information session:
- Introduction of the concept of CEEWEB scientific advisory group on SARD (R.F.) – HANDOUT (Annex 1). The member agreed on starting an advisory group in Hungary and if it works out well, we can build up a network.
- Participation in Commission Advisory Group Meetings. We agreed on maintaining our membership in the Commission Advisory Group on Agriculture and Environment, but we won’t apply for membership in other Advisory Groups.
- Information on EEB working groups, and EEB’s Work Plan for 2006, CEE position forming: input to EEB’s work and lobby on EU level (R. F.) HANDOUT (Annex 2). We agreed on maintaining our membership in the EEB Agriculture WG. But the whole network should be represented there, therefore we will try to organise our WG meeting before the EEB WG meeting to be able to discuss our position.

Discussions: To be or not to be?
- Is there a need for such a WG? YES!
- Rethinking the WG along a broader, multisectoral concept: Sustainable Rural Development Working Group: decision on WG meeting in February

Revision and confirmation of the proposed work programme of the WG for 2006. It is basically the task list under point 6.

4. Networking:
   a. Cooperation partners: Farming organisations, organic farming associations, other networks, CERI Working Group on SARD, EEB, Research Institutes and independent experts working on planning and implementation of NRDP (MoA), responsible persons in the MoE for Agriculture related issues
   We agreed on trying to cooperate with other NGO’s and GO’s. Agora will coordinate the establishment of a database for these potential organisations.
In every country we plan to have a national coordinator who is collecting the data and contacts the organisations.

b. Future co-operation between working groups
   i. Natura 2000, Sustainable Tourism and Agri-environmental
      It depends on our projects, if it is needed, the Office is responsible for this.

5. Requirements for the elected Chair – No election yet!
6. Time and place for next meeting: February 2006, Transylvania, Milvus Group will organise the meeting according to the followings:
   Draft agenda for next meeting:
   1. Renaming the Working Group
   2. Responsibilities and timeframe: finalizing the Work Programme
   3. Report about EEB and Advisory Committee meeting
   4. Preparation for events
   5. Selecting the persons for EEB representation
   6. Election of WG Chair
   7. Possible pilot projects

7. Task list and timeframe for implementing the tasks:

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<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
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<td>1st May</td>
<td>Rita</td>
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<td>Monitoring CAP reform</td>
<td>permanent</td>
<td>Rita</td>
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<td>WG meeting</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>Attila</td>
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<tr>
<td>EEB Agri WG</td>
<td>Nov, May</td>
<td>Rita, ?</td>
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<tr>
<td>EC Advisory Committee</td>
<td>Nov, May</td>
<td>Rita, ?</td>
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<td>Database on cooperation partners</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>Laci, national coord.</td>
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<td>Monitoring NRDP-s</td>
<td>permanent</td>
<td>Attila, national coord.</td>
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<td>Conference on best practices</td>
<td>July (Hungary)</td>
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<td>CERI (Working Group)</td>
<td>?</td>
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<td>Academy</td>
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<td>Publications</td>
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Annex 1.
CEEWEB Scientific Advisory Network on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD)

1. Objectives

1.1. Determining the problems of rural areas and searching for solutions
- Exploring and determining the characteristic and special problems of rural areas in 5-6 countries (where WG members are active).
- Working out development concepts with special regards to agricultural and natural habitats
- Establishing a strong theoretical basis for lobbying on specific European development funds

1.2. Establishment of CEEWEB Scientific Advisory Network on SARD
To reach the objectives detailed in point 1.1., CEEWEB establishes a Scientific Advisory Network on SARD that is coordinated by the headquarters of CEEWEB. This network would function with the participation of 5 or 6 countries in Central and East Europe.

2. Structure of the Advisory Network

2.1. General structural and functional model
The national Advisory Groups are autonomic units, but they are coordinated and managed by CEEWEB. These units work according to a system that is determined by CEEWEB. The coordinator organisation (CEEWB) provides relevant general information (EU criteria, proposals, relevant EU legislation) to the network and presents information on any relevant event as soon as possible.
If the network comes across any problem, CEEWEB should help. An annual assembly is organised where the national groups have to present their work and results that are summarized and published as well.

2.2. Structure of the Advisory Networks

2.2.1. Coordinator group
The coordinator group works in Budapest and is responsible for coordinating the work of the groups in the network beside working on Hungarian SARD issues.
This group is built up by at least 8 experts:
- Conservationist
- Pedologist
- Biologist (botanist)
- Biologist (zoo-ecologist)
- Agricultural engineer
- Rural development expert
- EU jurist
- Coordinator

This group uses the infrastructure and expertise of the CEEWEB Office. The members of this group are appointed by CEEWEB as project coordinator organisation.

2.2.2. Structure of Advisory Groups in Member Countries
The main task of the Advisory Groups in Member Countries is to discover and analyse the country-specific problems and figure out plans for solution.
This group is built up by at least 6 experts:

- Conservationist
- Pedologist
- Biologist (botanist)
- Biologist (animal science)
- Agricultural engineer
- Rural development expert

This group uses the infrastructure and expertise of the Office of the member organisation. The members of this group are appointed by member organisation.

2.2.3. Requirements met by the advisors

- Experience in the field of the certain science,
- language skills,
- proper and up-to-date knowledge in science and in EU
- computer literacy
- internet connection and phone
- other source of living beside advising

2.3. Requirements met by the participating organisation

- proper structure and functioning of the organisation
- recognition in NGO sector of the country
- activities in accordance with the objectives of the Advisory Network
- knowledge on EU development strategies
- good relations to research institutes
- basic infrastructure: computers, internet accession, office rooms
- capability to select suitable persons for advising
Annex 2.

EEB Work plan on agriculture

The latest round of reforms of the Common Agriculture Policy took place in 2002 and 2003. They were inspired by pressure from the World Trade Organisation, the consequences of the upcoming EU enlargement, as well as social, environmental and food safety concerns. As usual, the Commission was aiming for more bold steps than the Agriculture Ministers could agree on. Nevertheless, the concept of cross-compliance (environmental conditionality for financial support) was made compulsory and the general principle of decoupling (breaking the link of support with production) was introduced. Funding for rural development (agri-environment and organic farming) slightly increased at the time.

In 2004, one of the last important proposals presented by the outgoing Commission was for a post 2006 Rural Development Policy. One of the novelties in this proposal is that rural development funding is meant to pay a large chunk of the funding for Natura 2000. One of the major threats and major question marks in 2005 was/is the total size of the rural development budget for the period 2007 – 2013.

The EEB set up a working group on agriculture in 1998, and has since then, often in cooperation with WWF and BirdLife International, taken part in discussions on the Common Agriculture Policy.

Aims:

- to influence the development of national Rural Development strategies and plans for the period 2007 - 2013.
- ensure that rural development policy for the period 2007 - 2013 is strengthened, will deliver on EU environmental policy priorities, takes a more integrated approach, and is based on public participation.
- follow up progress in the implementation of the Malahide declaration on biodiversity, the Commission’s communication or 2010 Delivery Plan’, expected at the end of 2005, particularly with respect to the biodiversity action plan on agriculture.

Activities:

- co-ordinate and strengthen the EEB Working Group on Agriculture, with two meetings during the year.
- continue to co-ordinate the environmental NGO involvement in the official advisory committees on agriculture from the European Commission.
- exchange information about implementation of the reformed CAP in Member States.
- continue co-ordination with environment, animal welfare, development, health and consumers' and farmer organisations, resulting in co-ordinated activities at EU and national level, and possibly joint statements and lobby actions.
- Monitor the development and evaluation of national rural development plans and strategies.
- Participate in discussions on: co-financing under pillar 1 of the CAP, ‘insurance’ for farmers as well as prepare for the debate on further CAP reform.
- Promote potential new measures to implement the WFD.
- Monitor the consequences of the WTO Doha round.
Annex 3.

Agriculture and RD

Overall Objective

Our objective is to integrate the concept of sustainability into the agricultural and rural development policy in CEE countries with a view to maintain and enhance biodiversity in rural areas. We also promote the integration of conservation principles into agriculture, and improve the quality of life in the countryside.

Aims

- Influence policy makers at national and EU level for giving a higher priority to ecosocial dimensions of agriculture.
- Assess the special problems of rural areas in CEE countries and monitor the development of national rural development strategies and plans following the EU Strategic Guidelines for Rural Development in the CEE countries for the period 2007-2013.
- Monitor the implementation of the “partnership principle” in the development of national rural development strategies and plans in the CEE countries and ensure that rural development policy implementation for the period 2007-2013 is based on public participation, among others public involvement in monitoring committees.
- Ensure the knowledge and information exchange regarding rural development policy and its relevance to nature conservation within the CEE region to reach a common level of understanding to form and articulate common positions.
- Maintain the communication and information channel between the Commission and CEE NGOs
- Raise the profile and empower NGOs in CEE countries for playing an active role in consultation processes
- Disseminate best practices on sustainable rural development projects in selected CEE countries, also with a view to LEADER or LEADER-type programmes.
- Harmonize the Carpathian Convention and PEBLDS with CAP 2nd pillar objectives
- Further the sustainable regional development in a pilot project in the Carpathians.
- Build capacity of NGOs potentially dealing with agriculture and rural development in the CEE region.
- Advocate specific CEE concerns regarding agriculture and rural development in the work of the European Parliament and of various bodies of the Commission and the Council
- Deepen the cooperation with other NGOs (e.g. EEB, Bird Life) on agriculture and rural development issues
Activities

- Establish a CEEWEB Advisory Committees in selected CEE countries as a pilot activity to assess the special problems of rural areas in the region to formulate common principles and to form statements and proposals in order to influence EU agri-environmental and rural development policies.
- Monitor the CAP reform and develop well-founded proposals reflecting the positions of CEEWEB member NGOs.
- Co-ordinate and strengthen the CEEWEB Agri-environment WG through electronic communication and with at least one WG meeting.
- Participate in the EEB Agricultural WG twice a year.
- Continue the participation in the official advisory committee “Agriculture and Environment” of the European Commission.
- Participation in the official advisory committee “Rural development” of the European Commission.
- Ad hoc participation in relevant hearings and consultations of the EP and the EC in order to ensure the maximum representation of CEE views and concerns.
- Work together with environment, animal welfare, rural development and farmer organizations, resulting in coordinated activities at EU and national level, and possibly joint statements and lobby actions.
- Further cooperate with and establish partnership with international NGOs (e.g. Friends of the Earth, WWF, Bird Life, PREPARE network) and networks working on agriculture and rural development issues.
- Monitor and provide information to CEE NGOs about the implementation of the simplification of CAP.
- Monitor the development of national rural development plans and strategies.
- Organize a conference on regional development projects aiming sustainable development.
- Promote the integration of rural development issues in the activities of the Carpathian Ecoregion Initiative through maintaining the Board membership.
- Share knowledge with the Ecotourism and rural development WG of the CERI.