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Press Release

2010, December 9

We look at the same direction but do we see the same? – conference in the name of common solution for the social and environmental problems

Budapest, HUNGARY– 2010 the international year of biological diversity and the European year for combating poverty and social exclusion, whilst in the first part of 2011 Hungary will host the European Presidency. In this light, the CEEweb for Biodiversity international umbrella organization initiated a common coalition with social organizations to fight social and environmental problems. The project finalizing conference, 'We look at the same direction but do we see the same?' took place yesterday to depict the results of the project and other eco-social initiatives, and to look for further cooperation opportunities both among the NGO and the decision-makers sectors.

2010 – environmental and social problems in the spotlight, 2011 – all eyes on Hungary

Why 2010 is important for us? The UN's International Year of Biodiversity attempts to achieve that the biological diversity would receive more attention than ever. With this year, the international organization would like to emphasise that the conservation of our nature is for our own sake since the natural resources and the services of the ecosystem provide us for instance, with clean air and water, stable climate and pollination, which are the bases for our social well-being and our economy. Therefore, it is the today's generation task to conserve biodiversity for the future's generation, who can thus use them as well as we do – or even better.

2010 is also the European year to combat poverty and social exclusion. To reach these targets various subprograms exist to aid political decisions, social awareness and opinion forming as well as the active participation of people living in poverty.

Above this, in 2010 the Lisbon Strategy's successor, the EU2020 Strategy was born, which however does not seem to learn from the mistakes of the previous one: it majorly focuses on the economy, economical growth and the recovery from the financial crisis. As a result of it, the strategy does not dedicate sufficient attention to the conservation of biodiversity and natural resources and the reduction of social inequalities. **How can a 10-year-strategy, which determines the main stream of the EU, can be fulfilled without taking into serious consideration the inequality in natural resource use and the management of environmental problems?**

In the first part of 2011, Hungary will host the EU presidency. Due to this, the Hungarian NGO sector can lobby for the more emphasised consideration of the ecosocial problems, which may lead to the solution of the above mentioned problem.

Poverty and environmental problems – Common causes, common solutions?

CEEweb for Biodiversity, using the potential of 2010, initiated a unique, common project with social organizations, which aims for the creation of a common strategy to solve both environmental and social problems. CEEweb and its partners would like to influence decision-makers to put more attention on these problems and interrelations.

A CEEweb a Biológiai Sokféleségért a régióban tevékenykedő természetvédő civil szervezetek nemzetközi hálózata. Küldetésünk a biológiai sokféleség megőrzése a fenntartható fejlődés elősegítésén keresztül.



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The ecological (climate change, pollution, loss of biodiversity) and the social problems (unemployment, economic crisis, poverty, depopulation of the countryside) mean gradually enhancing difficulties for the decision-makers and for the whole society. In order to truly tackle them and find their real solutions, not only the cure for the symptoms, a complex and holistic approach should be applied. Consequently, it is important to reveal the various, only seemingly certain sector concerned systems of the multiple problems and their drivers, and to jointly work out solutions. To aid this process, the structure of the finalizing conference of the project Common Causes, Common Solutions was created in such ways to draw attention on the already achieved outcomes, to put highlight on the importance of common work among green and social NGOs and to demonstrate the already existing and successful projects.

The actual final product of the project, the 'We look at the same direction but do we see the same?' eco-social brochure was presented in the conference. The study analyses the so-called 'holy cows', (e.g. the limits without growth, jobs vs. environment, restrictions of accessing natural resources that prevent any kind of alterations in the system), and emphasises the importance of a paradigm change and real solutions instead of the end of pipe ones.

This was followed by a panel discussion of decision-makers from various backgrounds, which only further strengthened the importance of eco-social initiatives. 'There is indeed a crisis, which affects both the social and the environmental sector' said Dr. Erzsebet Gergely, the Head of the Strategic Department in the Ministry of Rural Development. 'The solution can only be realized if both sides take steps and we work out a new value system. The wasting and bad management of our resources not only can effect the financial world – in 2010, we already lived up our fair share of natural resources by August, thus, for 4 months we basically ask for a loan from the next generation'.

The afternoon session was based on the Hungarian Climate Bill (that has been promised to be revised by the parliament in the second part of 2011) and its social aspect, whilst the following 8 examples were about successful (or less successful) eco-social examples. The projects demonstrated the importance of local trade, sustainable energy use and self-supplying systems. Besides the successes, many presenters emphasised that current legislation and the recent value system are the main obstacles on the way.

The conference was closed in such hope that the green and social NGOs can continue their cooperation, which further supports and disseminates eco-social initiatives on a Hungarian, and also, on international platforms (www.okoszocforum.hu; www.ceeweb.org).

The ultimate aim of CEEweb is that the final outcomes of the project and the emphasised cooperation should get more attention during the Hungarian Presidency, which can aid the creation of such strategies that address the drivers behind the complex problem matrix.

About CEEweb for Biodiversity

CEEweb for Biodiversity is an umbrella organization of nature conservation NGOs from the Central and Eastern European region. Our mission is the conservation of biodiversity through the promotion of sustainable development.

Further information:

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