

**DELIVERING THE KYIV COMMITMENTS:
NGOS JOIN FORCES
IN THE PAN-EUROPEAN REGION**

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European ECO Forum
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The European ECO Forum is a broad, inclusive coalition of more than 200 ECOs (environmental citizens' organisations as well as NGOs with related interests) who wish to participate in the official Pan-European processes (Environment and Agriculture) with the final goal of promoting environmental protection and sustainable development in Europe and globally.

The goal of the coalition is to serve the ECO community and facilitate their participation in these processes, and to work together in order to be stronger and more influential, without detracting from individual organisations' ability to perform separately.

This publication has been prepared by the Central and East European Working Group for the Enhancement of Biodiversity.

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INTRODUCTION

Pan-Europe's biodiversity is under a high pressure. More than 40% of mammals and birds and 56% of Mediterranean freshwater fish are threatened, biodiversity decline in terms of genes, species and ecosystems is increasingly recognised as a major environmental problem and a threat to society. Despite the sub-regional social, economic and environmental differences, the whole Pan-European region observes this worsening trend and the drivers and pressures behind the state of environment become increasingly a common problem and a shared responsibility of the region. Thus joint Pan-European efforts are necessary to tackle the root causes behind environmental problems.

Since its launch in 1991, the 'Environment for Europe' process has been a unique platform for shaping international environmental policy for the 56 countries within the UNECE region. Besides adopting international commitments in various fields related to the environment, the Ministerial Conferences provide opportunities for various stakeholders to exchange views and initiate and strengthen cooperation aiming at improving the state of environment.

In the framework of this process, a unique system of interaction with NGOs has been developed, which can also set a positive precedent for other regions and processes. Non-governmental organisations united within European ECO Forum became real, officially recognised partners in the process, both in the preparation of the Ministerial Conferences and in the implementation of the decisions.

NGOs including ECNC, members of European ECO Forum and other partners have also played a crucial role in the development and implementation of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS), a major outcome of the process in biodiversity field. PEBLDS was adopted in 1995 at the Sofia Ministerial Conference and since then it has been serving as a framework for Pan-European cooperation and has been

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instrumental in the endorsement of the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity in 2003. The Resolution aims nothing less than to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010 in the Pan-European region and identifies nine sub-targets in the areas of forests; agriculture; protected areas and ecological networks; biodiversity monitoring and indicators; invasive alien species; financing; and communication, education and public awareness.

The 6th Ministerial Conference is the last conference before 2010, the deadline for halting biodiversity loss as committed by the Pan-European Ministers of Environment in Kyiv. Therefore the PEBLDS and European ECO Forum decided to jointly organize a roundtable on biodiversity on 10 October 2007 at Belgrade with the participation of Ministers of Environment, NGOs and other stakeholders.

The aim of the roundtable is to stimulate Pan-European multi-stakeholder cooperation in biodiversity management and conservation and raise the profile of biodiversity at the international level highlighting its crucial contribution to human well-being. Ongoing Pan-European efforts for the implementation of the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity will be reviewed and best practices in selected fields will be shared among the participants. The roundtable will also give an opportunity for a meaningful and frank exchange of views among the various stakeholders, who are all affected by biodiversity loss and could contribute to the achievement of the 2010 target. They will be invited to point out the opportunities and challenges in this cross-sectoral cooperation and share experiences and lessons learned.

The Biodiversity Stakeholders' Roundtable will also host the launch of a multi-stakeholder initiative beyond Belgrade called the "Pan-European Biodiversity Picnic". It will involve various actors of the society into a picnic in nature every year on International Biodiversity Day (22 May), with the aim to draw the attention of the public to the importance of biodiversity and its contribution to livelihoods and human well-being.

We strongly believe that biodiversity can be only conserved with the true involvement of the various stakeholders, and that NGOs can play, as they have played before, a special catalytic role in achieving the changes. In this

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present publication we aim to give an introduction to why biodiversity is not only a valuable asset, but also a precondition for human development. Through sharing the experiences of a few successful NGO activities aiming at the conservation of this natural asset, we would like to contribute to Pan-European level efforts. We are convinced that a lot needs to be done in all parts of the region for delivering the Kyiv commitments, and thus we need to transfer knowledge, experiences and motivation both from the East to West and the West to the East. Because we share not only the natural assets, but also the responsibility to achieve changes at the local, national and Pan-European levels in the whole region.

I. DELIVERING THE KYIV COMMITMENTS: JUST A VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT OR A MUST?

WHAT IS BIODIVERSITY?

In short, biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth. It comprises diversity of all life-forms from genes through species and ecosystems to landscapes on different levels. The different plants, animals and micro-organisms, their genes and the ecosystems what they are part of are all elements of biodiversity.

“Biological diversity” means the variability among living organisms from all sources including, *inter alia*, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are a part of; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.

Definition of biodiversity in the Convention on Biological Diversity (Article 2.)

Thus biodiversity exists at various compositional levels (from genes to ecosystems) and geographical scales (local, regional, continental or global), but it does not necessarily mean that general conclusions can be drawn from trends on a particular level, which will be true on other levels as well. For instance, through the introduction of alien species, the species diversity of the ecosystem can even increase (as more species inhabit it), but on larger scale this homogenization of ecosystems decreases biodiversity, i.e. the difference between the various ecosystems in this case.

It becomes even more complicated, if we consider not even the entities, but the diversity of interactions among these entities as the source of biologi-

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cal diversity. This so called ecological diversity can entail for instance, how many various food sources the species have in an ecosystem, i.e. how choosy they are. This ecological diversity better reflects the functional characteristics and the complexity of ecosystems, and is similarly more complicated to quantify. However, it clearly shows the impossibility of separating biological diversity from ecosystems, species interactions and ecosystem processes.

WHY BIODIVERSITY IS IMPORTANT AND ITS LOSS TO BE HALTED?

Biodiversity and ecosystems cannot be separated from each other, just as the different members of the society cannot be separated from the society. In general it can be said that (genetic, species and ecological) biodiversity enables ecosystem functions¹, which also support human life on Earth.

The numerous interactions among the living organisms and their non-living environment combined sustain ecosystems and ecosystem functions. The photosynthetic organisms (plants and some microorganisms) turn solar energy into chemical energy, which is stored in the biomass (organic matter) they produce. The heterotrophic animals, fungi, some microorganisms, as well as humans utilise this chemical energy for their life functions. Every organism is in more or less continuous exchange of energy, materials (in the form of food, nutrients and water) and information (e.g. smells, sounds, colours, or genetic information) with their environment.

In addition, interspecies relationships, including predation, parasitism, competition, mutualism, symbiosis, pollination, etc. also constitute the basis of ecosystem functions. Thus lower biological diversity may disable some ecological functions. For instance, when the primary pollinator of a certain species disappears or becomes scarce, that reduces or may even prevent the reproduction of the plant. While the clear-cut of a forested hill drastically reduces biodiversity, at the same time it greatly alters the water regime of

¹ Ecosystem function can be considered as the synonym of ecological processes or as the interactions with ecological processes. According to these definitions every entity of biodiversity has its function, as all are involved or interact with ecological processes.

the wider area, and increases the risk of flooding. Therefore it is that not the length of the species list, but the composition of native species co-adapted during long co-evolution is essential to make ecosystems stable and enable them to provide ecosystem functions.

The number and extent of these complex relationships cannot be measured, nor their importance underestimated. Humans, just like other species could not sustain themselves without these interactions within natural ecosystems, as they also ultimately depend on the functions of the ecosystem. As some of them have been recognized as beneficial to humans, they are called ecosystem services. They include supporting and regulating services, which maintain the favourable conditions for life on Earth, such as climate regulation, nutrient cycling, soil formation and disease control. In addition to food and drinking water we derive provisioning services such as fibre for clothing, wood for construction and heating, chemicals for industry and pharmaceuticals for medicine. Some species or ecosystems provide cultural services with spiritual, recreational, and religious benefits. All these direct or indirect uses of living nature can be attributed to genetic, species or ecological diversity.

There are many hypotheses to describe the relationship between biological diversity and ecosystem functions. This is, of course a hard nut to crack, considering the complexity of ecosystem functions and the lack of general agreement on the measuring of the multiscale concept of biodiversity. Thus the deficiencies of the measuring methods of the variables, namely biodiversity and ecosystem function should not be overlooked when looking at these hypotheses.

An early theory brought the variety of feeding resources into focus, asserting that more feeding options decrease the vulnerability of the populations. Fluctuations in the feeding resource provided by a certain species could be evened out by other alternative resources thus contributing to greater stability of the herbivore or the predator population. However, this hypothesis is challenged by the findings that the number of species in an ecosystem does not affect the number of feeding resources.

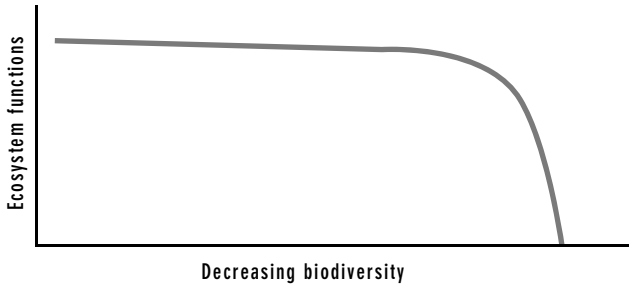


Figure 1.

The rivet hypothesis (Figure 1.) compares the ecosystem to an aircraft, where pulling out some rivets may not lead to a visible change in its functioning, but the removal of more rivets or of some of critical importance may have fatal consequences. Here, biodiversity is rather interpreted as the compositional diversity within an ecosystem, primarily as species diversity. It is observed that such relationship applies to interactions between species diversity and biogeochemical functions (e.g. the cycles of nutrients).

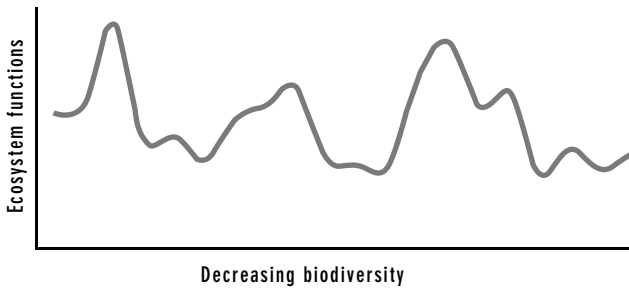


Figure 2.

Another hypothesis suggests that even though the ecosystem decreases with the decline of biodiversity, the response is unpredictable (Figure 2.), taking into account the various interactions between species and the complexity of ecosystem functions.

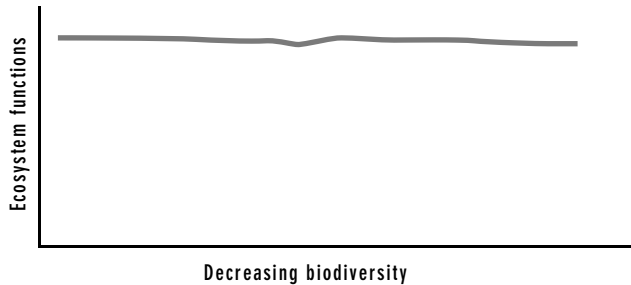


Figure 3.

The redundancy hypothesis assumes that the decrease or disappearance of some species does not affect the functioning of the ecosystem noticeably. However, the observable decline in both biodiversity and ecosystem functions suggest that this is not the case.

Even if the dependence of ecosystem services on biodiversity is very complicated to understand in details, we know a lot of cases when the decline of ecosystem services are directly related to biodiversity decrease. Thus keeping in mind the precautionary principle, it is enough to consider biodiversity to be crucial for ensuring ecosystem services.

There is also an anthropogenic reason, why maximum biodiversity is to be maintained. Namely the changing environmental conditions, which is largely intensified nowadays, when human activities intervene in nature in far too many ways and far too frequently, can give preferences to species that did not seem important before. This is also happening under climate change, when in some areas those plants gain adaptive advantage, which are more tolerant to drought or higher temperatures. Species diversity may also play a role in buffering ecosystems against the effects of human activity.

All in all, it would be a conceptual failure of biodiversity and ecological processes to deem a species redundant or needless in the ecosystem. While ecosystem integrity could be the overriding goal of ecosystem management, it could require that all its highly adapted elements (species) are conserved for fulfilling their present and potential future functions. It is especially

essential when the human pressure exerted on the natural environment is higher than at any time before, and this trend is still likely to worsen. This approach is taken in the concept of 'safe minimum standards' for conservation. Originally applied to endangered species, the expanded concept practically suggests that species and ecosystem services have intrinsic values because of their role in maintaining ecosystem integrity. Thus they should be maintained in any case, unless it entails unbearably high costs. How these unbearable costs are determined in the laws and regulations is left however to the society and determined by political priorities. Still the burden of proof is assigned to those planning to harm the ecosystem and puts nature conservation into a new position.

The above analyses focus on the relationship between biodiversity and ecosystem functions contributing to the integrity of the ecosystem². However, there are also other ecosystem services (i.e. ecosystem functions useful to humans) that are beneficial to us even without having great impact on the ecosystems in its integrity. Such services could be the presence of medicinal plants and sacred animals, or flowers used for traditional ornaments. Human communities could perceive their disappearance even without significant disturbance in ecosystem functions.

BIODIVERSITY TRENDS IN THE PAN-EUROPEAN REGION

The Pan-European region has a high biodiversity, endemic species being found in greatest numbers in the Mediterranean, the Caucasus, the mountains of Central Asia and the Irano-Anatolian region. However, as the Belgrade Assessment of the European Environmental Agency has clearly showed, biodiversity decline continues in the Pan-European region.

² Ecosystem integrity is the maintenance of the community structure and function characteristic of a particular locale or deemed satisfactory to society.

BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOTS AND MAIN PRESSURES IN THESE AREAS IN PAN-EUROPE

Biodiversity hotspots contain at least 1,500 endemic vascular plant species, which is more than 0.5 % of the world's total, and have lost at least 70 % of their original habitats. In the world 34 biodiversity hotspots are identified, and four of them are found in the Pan-European region.

THE MEDITERRANEAN – This region has more than four times more vascular plant species than the rest of Europe, and more than half of them are endemic. The critically endangered Iberian lynx also lives here.

Main threats are: Urbanisation and tourism especially on the coasts, forest fires, land abandonment, intensification of agriculture and forestry, water abstraction and pollution, and, increasingly, desertification.

THE CAUCASUS – Its deserts, savannas, arid woodlands and forests are home to more than 6,500 species of vascular plants, a quarter of them being endemic. The majority of remaining intact habitats is in the higher mountain regions.

Main threats are: Illegal logging, overgrazing, poaching, overfishing, infrastructure development, pollution of rivers and wetlands.

MOUNTAINS OF CENTRAL ASIA – Ecosystems range from glaciers to deserts, and contain ancestors of domestic fruit varieties. The region is also home to a rich variety of ungulates, including the threatened argali wild sheep.

Main threats are: expansion of settlements and infrastructure development, mining, overgrazing, poaching, water abstraction and drainage.

IRANO-ANATOLIAN REGION – This region is a centre of crop wild relatives for wheats, rye, oats, seed and forage legumes and fruits. The region boasts four endemic and threatened species of viper.

Main threats are: irrigation schemes for agriculture and associated infrastructure, overgrazing, overharvesting of woody plants for fuelwood and mining.

Source: Belgrade Assessment by the EEA, draft

More than 2000 European species of plant and animals are globally threatened, and almost half of all European mammals and birds have a negative conservation status. The overall status of birds is declining in Pan-Europe, species in EU-25 being more threatened than in other parts of the region. The Iberian Lynx and the Mediterranean Monk Seal are on the brink of extinction as a consequence of habitat destruction and fragmentation, distur-

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bance and pollution. Freshwater fish are even more endangered, 56% of the 252 endemic freshwater Mediterranean fish are threatened with extinction.

Genetic diversity of species of agricultural importance has also reduced, 22% of the 2 238 European breeds registered by FAO have approached a critical population size and 34% are endangered³ largely because of their perceived lack of economic competitiveness.

The main specific pressures on biodiversity include habitat loss and fragmentation through urbanisation and transport, over-exploitation, intensification of agriculture and (local) land abandonment, pollution, acidification, eutrophication, desertification, invasive alien species and human induced fires.

The two main trends in agriculture in Europe, intensification and land abandonment have caused a steep decline of common farmland birds in the 80's. This has levelled off since then on hand because of stabilising nutrient and pesticides use in Western Europe, and on the other hand because of drastically fallen inputs in the Eastern countries as a result of political and economic changes. However, renewed intensification in the new EU member states financed by the Common Agricultural Policy is like to worsen the trends, along with further land abandonment in the whole region.

Spontaneous re-growth and afforestation of abandoned agricultural land have increased forest cover, mainly in Southern European countries (Spain, Italy, France, Portugal, Greece and Bulgaria)⁴, where afforestation programmes are also used for combating land degradation⁵. At the same time forest fires are big problems especially in Eastern and Southern Europe and illegal logging primarily in the Balkan and Baltic countries, Russia, the Caucasus, Central Asia and in some parts of Central and Eastern Europe.

³ FAO, 2000. World Watch List for domestic animal diversity (3rd edition), Rome

⁴ UNECE/FAO, 2005 UNECE/FAO, 2005. Global Forest Resources Assessment 2005. Progress towards sustainable forest management, FAO Forestry Paper 147, UNECE/FAO, Rome

⁵ EEA, 2005. The European Environment. State and Outlook 2005. European Environment Agency

Urbanisation and transport pose the greatest threats in the densely populated lowland areas and coastal zones in North West Europe. The impact of urbanisation and infrastructure in South East Europe is biggest in Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey, grasslands and steppes being most severely affected. In Central Asia fragile sand desert ecosystems are lost or fragmented in Turkmenistan because of urbanisation, while gas and oil pipeline construction cause similar problems in the Caucasus, and road and dam construction threaten steppe ecosystems in Turkey.

Invasive alien species increasingly threaten native species and habitats, and new pathways are created by trade and transport, as well as tourism. Now 166 species are listed as 'worst invasives' in the Pan-European region, being mostly widespread in Germany, France and the United Kingdom.

Overexploitation poses a direct threat to biodiversity through illegal hunting and trade, mostly in the Southern and Eastern European region, as the available information shows. Acidification from air emissions of sulphur and nitrogen compounds is one of the biggest pressures on ecosystems in parts of Russia. Acidification as a result of use of fertilizers is a big problem in Bulgaria, where acid soils represent 56% of the national territory. Eutrophication of soils and water caused by fertilizers and wastewaters is a great threat, and has led to serious degradation of the wetlands in Romania, as well as the Prespa Lake and the Doyran Lake in Macedonia. Desertification connected to drainage, overgrazing and erosion is especially serious problem in the Caucasus and Central Asia, whereas in the mountainous regions it is mainly due to intensive use of natural resources. Even twenty years after the Chernobyl disaster radioactive contamination is a problem in Belarus, Ukraine and Russia.

Climate change is expected to be the main driver of biodiversity loss in the future, with adverse affects already observable in natural ecosystems. Northward and upward shift of species lead to the replacement of endemic species for instance in the arctic, where invading generalist species replace lichens

and mosses⁶. Some predict, that more than half of the European flora will become vulnerable or threatened in the period 2051-2088 as a direct result of climate change⁷. In some Mediterranean countries, as well as in Romania and Bulgaria 25% of the plant species may have disappeared by the end of this century, whereas more than 35% of plant species in Northern countries may be invasive. Climate change will also affect ecosystems through the aggravating forest fires, which affect ecosystem composition in favour of fast growing species.

NEED FOR ACTION TO HALT BIODIVERSITY DECLINE

The Belgrade Assessment has identified the main threats to biodiversity as habitat destruction, degradation and fragmentation, along with the introduction of invasive species, overexploitation and pollution. Climate change is more and more recognized as a serious threat, especially for endemic species with a limited range.

Investigating these direct causes behind biodiversity decline, several economic and societal drivers can be identified. Habitat destruction, degradation and fragmentation are driven among others by urban sprawl, transport infrastructure development, greenfield investments, intensification of agriculture or just the opposite, land abandonment. The accidental and intentional introduction of invasive alien species has trade, tourism and environmental management implications, like in the case of introducing species for fishing, hunting or even energy production purposes. Climate change is an issue for energy and transport, but agriculture and industrial production also have a share in greenhouse gas emissions.

⁶ Molau, U. & Alatalo, J. M., 1998, Responses of subarctic-alpine plant communities to simulated environmental change: biodiversity of bryophytes, lichens, and vascular plants. – *Ambio* 27: 322–329 and ACIA, 2004, Impacts of a warming Arctic, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK

⁷ Thuiller, W, S. Lavorel, M.B. Araújo, M.T. Sykes, I.C. Prentice, 2005, Climate change threats to plant diversity in Europe, *PNAS* 7/2005. National Academy of Sciences of the USA

All in all, the state of environment including biodiversity trends are determined by the intensity, structure and qualitative characteristics of economic and societal processes, i.e. by the production and consumption patterns, as well as the institutional structure. This latter is to organize and regulate these processes and it also determines the framework of implementation at the same time. Of course these patterns and structures are also determined by other underlying factors, which are at the same time more stable and difficult to change on the short term.

These causal relationships are shown by the iceberg model (Figure 4.), which demonstrates that while we are able to perceive the state of environment (the tip of the iceberg), the network of causal relationships remain invisible to us (the body of the iceberg under the water level). This is also the reason why we blindly set about tackling the consequences and apply end-of-pipe solutions, as we are unable to comprehend the complexity of causal relationships.

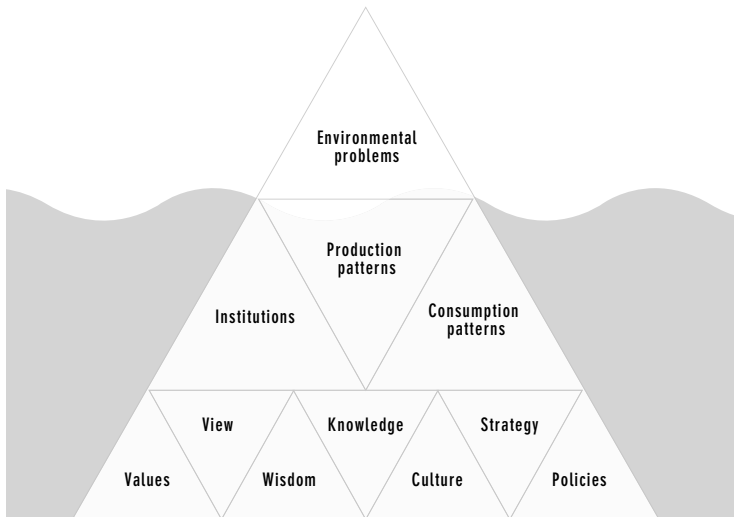


Figure 4. The iceberg of environmental problems⁸

⁸ Figure by Iván Gyulai

Though environmental problems are directly determined by the institutional framework (economic and legal regulation and the institutional structure) and production and consumption patterns, these are in turn also dependent upon the policies and strategy that the government pursues (sectoral and horizontal strategies, such as on sustainable development), the culture that prevails (like the level of cooperation, transparency, ways of decision making), the knowledge available to policy and decision-makers (e.g. the availability of technologies), the wisdom, (which determines how the knowledge is used in practice, for instance if it is based on the precautionary principle), the view of the society on the world (whether it is able to take a holistic approach) and ultimately the values (how people define well being, what the aims of development are). Certainly there are numerous interactions among these various drivers and factors, and the consequences provide feed-back to the root causes. For instance the characteristics of the institutional structure and the position we take in it provides us with a certain type of knowledge, and with a particular cultural environment. Environmental problems are not only determined ultimately by the values of the society, but they can also increase the awareness of the people and result in some changes in the values and the lifestyle, and thus in consumption patterns. Society and economy are thus influence and being influenced in various different ways. However, the iceberg of environmental problems clearly shows, that even though changes can be relatively easy to achieve on the tip of the iceberg, long term solutions can be only sought through also tackling the more deeply seated underlying causes. Because technological solutions can reduce some of the pressures on biodiversity, and we can also restore natural ecosystems to a smaller or larger extent (with the use of energy and natural resources), but the root causes will only generate further and maybe even bigger pressures if the sectoral fragmentation of institutions, unsustainable consumption and production patterns continue to prevail, and there is not any policy, cultural and knowledge change and values shift in the society to drive the necessary changes.

Of course the interactions between the economy and environment also determine the generation of environmental problems. Recognizing that humans, similarly to other species ultimately depend on ecosystem services, also mean that without any question humans are part of nature. But then

how is it possible that humans can substantially alter their environment and degrade ecosystem services, the basis of their own existence? Humans, unlike other species, have been able to mitigate many of the systemic negative feed-back processes that normally hold populations in check in nature. This is realised through technological developments and the worldwide distribution of resources – even if not in a fair manner. If resources become scarce for a population in nature, then the population size necessarily decrease as a response to these changes. Humans instead import these resources from other places, while generating transport. If climatic conditions change, that necessarily leads to the migration or disappearance of populations, which cannot tolerate the new environment. Humans instead install heating and cooling systems, mostly with the use of non-renewable resources. If the soil becomes depleted in some nutrients, that means the local disappearance of those plants, which can only grow on rich soils. Agriculture instead applies fertilisers. Thus humans mitigate these negative feedback mechanisms, but doing so, create (sometimes even bigger) problems elsewhere. The ecosphere will inevitably give the negative feedback to the human society, but having globalised environmental problems, it must be a global response as well (like climate change).

Thus classical biodiversity conservation needs to be supported and complemented with regional and global efforts that target changing the current unsustainable consumption and production patterns and the institutional structure, and communication and awareness raising activities that target changing the values and thinking of the society. Both structural changes in the society and economy and a paradigm shift in the minds are essential for biodiversity conservation and building up a sustainable society.

Some steps have been made in this direction both within global environmental and sustainability policy frameworks (e.g. the Rio and Johannesburg outcomes) and biodiversity related commitments (see more about the Kyiv Resolution below). However, a comprehensive strategic approach to achieve structural changes is still missing, obviously also due to the problems themselves, including the institutional barriers, lack of holistic approach, values of the voters and the decision makers.

THE KYIV COMMITMENTS: A BRIEF ASSESSMENT

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), adopted in 1992, marked the political recognition of biodiversity decline as a serious problem and the start of global action. While work has been initiated under the Convention in several thematic areas (e.g. agriculture, forests, marine and coastal areas) and on cross-cutting issues (e.g. ecosystem approach and incentives), the target to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010 was initiated by the EU and first adopted in the EU Strategy for Sustainable Development (2001) and later incorporated in the 6th Environmental Action Programme. Subsequently the CBD (2002) and the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development (2002) largely endorsed this target at the global level, agreeing on a 'significant reduction' of the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2010.

At the Pan-European level, the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity (2003) endorsed the 2010 target to halt biodiversity loss, and provides the framework for action. For the EECCA countries, the implementation of the Kyiv targets falls also within the scope of the EECCA Environment Strategy.

In order to halt biodiversity decline by 2010, the Kyiv Resolution adopts key targets in seven fields:

Forests and Biodiversity

Kyiv commitment

1. *By 2008, contribute to the implementation in the pan-European region of the Forest Biodiversity Expanded Programme of Work of the Convention on Biological Diversity through, inter alia:*
 - a) *Implementation of the objectives and activities of the Framework for Cooperation between the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe and the Environment for Europe/Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy;*

- b) *National Forest Programmes according to the MCPFE Approach to National Forest Programmes in Europe (adopted at the Vienna Conference in April 2003);*
- c) *Application of the ecosystem approach.*

Brief assessment of the implementation of the targets by Countdown 2010:

Most Pan-European countries have finalised or are in the process of preparing National Forest Programmes in accordance with the guidelines of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE).

A discussion document on the linkage between the ecosystem approach and sustainable forest management at Pan-European level was finalised in 2005. In order to ensure the application of the ecosystem approach in practice, implementation of the National Forest Programmes will need to be reinforced in the period up to 2010. The PEBLDS and the MCPFE jointly organised a workshop on combating illegal harvesting of forest products and related trade in Europe as preparation for the Europe and North Asia Ministerial Conference hosted by the Russian Federation in November 2005. Unfortunately, the MCPFE-PEBLDS joint draft guidelines on afforestation and reforestation have not been agreed and these may have helped in decreasing the risks of biofuel production on forest biodiversity.

Agriculture and Biodiversity

Kyiv commitments

2. *By 2006, the identification, using agreed common criteria, of all high nature-value areas in agricultural ecosystems in the pan-European region will be complete. By 2008, a substantial proportion of these areas will be under biodiversity-sensitive management by using appropriate mechanisms such as rural development instruments, agri-environmental programmes and organic agriculture, to inter alia support their economic and ecological viability.*
3. *By 2008, financial subsidy and incentive schemes for agriculture in the pan-European region will take the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in consideration.*

Brief assessment of the implementation of the targets by Countdown 2010:

The EEA, PEBLDS and the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission-Ispra have been working on the identification of high nature-value (HNV) farmland. The EEA has made progress in reaching an agreement on the definition of HNV farmland at the EU level and the JRC-Ispra has drafted maps of HNV farmland in the EU. In addition, PEBLDS, in collaboration with the European ECO-Forum and WWF, organised regional workshops for SEE and EECCA countries for capacity building, increasing awareness and improving data availability.

Thus the Kyiv target of identifying high nature-value farmland has probably been only partly met. As a consequence, the prospects for achieving that a substantial proportion of these areas will be under biodiversity-sensitive management by 2008 must also be doubted. Preliminary data for the EU-25 show that agri-environment support is not correlated with the aggregate area of HNV farmland per country. Only a small proportion of HNV farmland is designated as protected areas or subject to effective biodiversity management measures. For SEE and EECCA the lack of data prevents a quantitative assessment.

At the same time agricultural policies are to some extent being restructured. For example, through a series of reforms the EU Common Agricultural Policy has shifted away from production-related subsidies to put greater emphasis on supporting farmers and the agricultural environment, such as through payments that are also tied to the implementation of other EU policies, like the Habitats and Birds Directives. However, the effectiveness of this cross-compliance system in achieving the stated environmental objectives has yet to be assessed.

Agri-environment schemes are the most prominent policy tool for nature conservation on farmland. In the EU, the share of agricultural land under these schemes varies from less than 5% in the Netherlands and Greece to more than 80% in Austria, Sweden, Finland and Luxembourg. In Switzerland, parallel to environmental measures in field management, farmers are required to convert at least 7% of their land to ecological compensation areas, which covered 11% of agricultural land in 2003. Agri-environment

approaches in SEE and EECCA are very varied and usually geared towards general sustainability objectives.

The Pan-European Ecological Network

Kyiv commitments

4. *By 2006, the Pan-European Ecological Network (core areas, restoration areas, corridors and buffer zones, as appropriate) in all states of the pan-European region will be identified and reflected on coherent indicative European maps, as a European contribution towards a global ecological network.*
5. *By 2008, all core areas of the Pan-European Ecological Network will be adequately conserved and the Pan-European Ecological Network will give guidance to all major national, regional and international land-use and planning policies as well as to the operations of relevant economic and financial sectors.*

Brief assessment of the implementation of the targets by Countdown 2010:

For the implementation of the first target, a high-level cooperation has been established between the Council of Europe, the ECNC, the EEA's European Topic Centre/Biological Diversity and the Committee of Experts for the Pan-European Ecological Network in particular with regard to the preparation of indicative maps. These have been prepared for CEE and SEE, and a map for Western Europe is in preparation.

Ecological network programmes are being developed at a variety of levels and by a range of different governmental and non-governmental organisations. Currently about 20 countries have national-level ecological network programmes, although some of these are non-governmental initiatives.

Within the EU, Natura 2000 is the core of PEEN. In the EU Member States, designated Natura 2000 sites now number nearly 30,000 and their aggregate area covers more than 20% of the territory of the EU-25. The Emerald network, initiated under the Bern Convention, aims to extend to non-EU countries in Europe and northern Africa a common approach to

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the designation and management of protected areas – equivalent to the EU’s Natura 2000. Pilot projects were implemented in numerous countries⁹ to identify Areas of Special Conservation Interest containing the relevant species and habitats designated under the Bern Convention and the Birds and Habitats Directives, which can then be subject to protection measures. As a continuation of the initial pilot projects, important further work has been carried out in six SEE countries, resulting in more than 80% of the relevant areas being identified in each country.

With regard to the second target on conserving the core areas of PEEN, it is evident that substantial work still has to be completed before 2008. The October 2005 report on the implementation of PEEN showed marked variation in implementation between the countries.

Invasive Alien Species

Kyiv commitment

6. *By 2008, the Pan-European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species developed under the Bern Convention, fully compatible with the Guiding Principles of the Convention on Biological Diversity, will be implemented by at least half of the countries of the pan-European region through their respective Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans.*

Brief assessment of the implementation of the target by Countdown 2010:

Implementation of the Pan-European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species is very varied between the member countries. Specific policies and measures are generally focused on issues related to plant and animal health, with biodiversity conservation aspects pushed to the background. The majority of the countries have, however, paid explicit attention to invasive alien species in their biodiversity strategies as reported to CBD.

⁹ In 12 EU candidate countries and in Norway, Switzerland, Iceland, the Western Balkans, Turkey, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Burkina Faso and Senegal

Only a few parties to the Bern Convention have developed a specific strategy or action plan to manage invasive alien species, such as Austria, Germany, Hungary, Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom. Even fewer countries, such as the Netherlands, have taken action to control invasive alien species. Many European countries also lack specific legislation to deal with the issue, and the lack of centralised competencies and authorities is frequently cited as a problem.

The European Commission completed a gap assessment of the current legal and policy framework for invasive alien species in July 2006. A further gap assessment of the economic framework is to be launched this year. There are also ongoing discussions with the European Environment Agency to develop and host a European early warning system for such species and the European Commission is preparing a discussion document on an EU framework for action.

Policy responses in EECCA are lagging somewhat behind and may need to be supported through capacity building. However, the target on invasive alien species seems achievable.

Financing Biodiversity

Kyiv commitment

7. *By 2008, there will be substantially increased public and private financial investments in integrated biodiversity activities in Europe, via partnerships with the finance and business sectors, that have resulted in new investment opportunities and facilities as outlined by the European Biodiversity Resourcing Initiative, taking into account the special needs of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia.*

Brief assessment of the implementation of the target by Countdown 2010:

The European Biodiversity Resource Initiative (EBRI) was initiated in the PEBLDS framework following the request at the Fourth EfE Conference in 1998 for the financial sector to increase their involvement in sustain-

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able development issues. The second phase of the work programme between 2002 and 2004 aimed at making information, expertise and project-related experience available to potential entrepreneurs in EECCA. With a political mandate from the Environment for Europe process and PEBLDS, the European Task Force on Banking, Business and Biodiversity was established to guide this work, and a Biodiversity Financing Action Plan was developed. To promote investment related to biodiversity conservation, the parallel deployment of a Biodiversity Finance Facility and a Biodiversity Technical Assistance Facility has been proposed, and the scoping study for the design of these facilities has been undertaken. The third phase of the EBRI is now underway in order to complete the elaboration of the concept of a Pan-European initiative for financial resources targeted for biodiversity investment. Beyond the development of instruments for implementation, the work programme included an outreach to entrepreneurial investment strategies and also capacity building for the associated financial intermediaries working at the local level with international funding sources.

In the EU context, funding for biodiversity and nature conservation will be mainstreamed into the major EU funds as from 2007. Comprehensive opportunities to co-fund Natura 2000 costs have been provided in appropriate funding regulation for 2007–2013 and guidelines and training have been provided to assist Member States with application of funds. Concerns are, however, expressed about poor uptake of funding opportunities to biodiversity projects in different Member States, when they have to compete with economic development needs.

Biodiversity Monitoring and Indicators

Kyiv commitment

8. *By 2008, a coherent European programme on biodiversity monitoring and reporting, facilitated by the European Biodiversity Monitoring and Indicator Framework, will be operational in the pan-European region, in support of nature and biodiversity policies, including by 2006 an agreed core set of biodiversity indicators developed with the active participation of the relevant stakeholders.*

Brief assessment of the implementation of the target by Countdown 2010:

In early 2004, sets of headline biodiversity indicators were agreed at global (CBD), Pan-European and EU levels. From mid-2004 activities have been integrated into the joint Pan-European/EU initiative Streamlining European 2010 Biodiversity Indicators (SEBI 2010). SEBI 2010 integrates the previous activities under the European Biodiversity Monitoring and Indicator Framework as referred to in the Kyiv Resolution. This ongoing process has already highlighted areas with major data gaps (e.g. invasive alien species, genetic diversity, the impact of climate change on biodiversity and adaptation links, sustainable use, governance and communication).

The first phase of work in SEBI 2010 was concluded in mid-2007 with a proposed set of 26 indicators. SEBI 2010 now enters the second phase (2007–2008) where the focus will be on establishing dataflows, linkages between the indicators, climate change, communications and the production of an indicator-based assessment on Europe's progress towards 2010. While the aim of the SEBI 2010 process was to build on existing work and not start new monitoring schemes, SEBI 2010 noted the lack of investment in coherent Europe-wide biodiversity monitoring.

Public Participation and Awareness

Kyiv commitment

9. *By 2008, at least half of the countries in the pan-European region are implementing national Communication, Education and Public Awareness action plans, in line with the CBD's Global Initiative on Communication, Education and Public Awareness, in order to communicate biodiversity and landscape policies and to increase multi-stakeholder participation, particularly indigenous and local communities, in their implementation.*

Brief assessment of the implementation of the target by Countdown 2010:

The third national reports to the CBD that were due in 2005 provide insight into progress with implementing national action plans. Of the 52 pan-European countries covered by this analysis, nine have finalised public participa-

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tion and awareness action plans and nine other countries are preparing such plans (although most of these countries are located in Western and Central Europe). A lack of capacity and sufficient funding was identified as the biggest barrier to more public participation and awareness activities. However, despite these problems, the Kyiv target can probably be achieved in at least half of the countries by 2008, although efforts should be increased in countries in SEE and EECCA countries.

In addition many awareness raising and education activities initiated by both governmental and non-governmental organisations have been undertaken in the region. The Countdown 2010 initiative is currently supported by nearly 300 partners, which include the CBD, national ministries in 23 countries, 33 regional and local governments (including Paris, Barcelona and Amsterdam), 30 business and private sector organisations and a wide range of agencies, research institutes, museums and NGOs.

The European Commission is developing a Biodiversity Communication Campaign for the 2010 target and for overall long-term biodiversity conservation. The main messages for key target groups will be identified and a variety of tools will be taken into account. The Communication Campaign will be developed and carried out in 2008–2010.

II. LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

NGO VISION FOR PAN-EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN BIODIVERSITY FIELD

In order to halt biodiversity loss on Pan-European level, substantial changes are needed in the whole economy and society, with a paradigm shift and change of values. Biodiversity related regional platforms, like PEBLDS can largely facilitate the recognition of the need for such changes, and at the same time contribute to regional and national conservation efforts through sharing best practices and facilitating projects. European ECO Forum assessed the lessons from the and formulated its view on a new way of Pan-European cooperation under PEBLDS.

Biodiversity for Europe now! –

European ECO Forum's recommendations for Pan-European cooperation¹⁰

Introduction

I. The Environment for Europe process has been an important platform for policy development in the Pan-European region since its launch in 1991. With the endorsement of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) at the Third Ministerial Conference in 1995, biodiversity has become a major issue of the process, underpinning the importance of biodiversity and ecosystems in sustaining social and economic processes. The participating Pan-European states also committed to achieving nine targets for halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010, which are set out in the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity endorsed in 2003. This unique Pan-European cooperation and the strong commitments of the Kyiv

¹⁰ Category II. document at the Belgrade Conference

outcomes created a great momentum around the 2010 target to halt biodiversity loss.

2. However, three years before the 2010 deadline it is time to evaluate the past cooperation and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the process. This is also justified by the preliminary findings of the EEA report, which show that biodiversity in the Pan-European region is likely to decline further. Therefore, urgent additional actions are required and strengthening PEBLDS is a necessary means to achieve the 2010 target.

Pan-European cooperation in the past – what was it enough for?

3. Without any doubt there is a niche for Pan-European cooperation in the field of biodiversity. Even though the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) provides a platform for biodiversity policy forming on global level, it is not able to sufficiently accommodate the differing regional priorities, and it does not provide appropriate support for the implementation either. This very well justified the development of PEBLDS, which was meant to be the “regional arm of implementation to the CBD”. Since 1995 there is still no other forum existing on Pan-European level for policy development and implementation. PEBLDS continues to be a unique platform, and so as the whole Environment for Europe process, from which it derived.

4. It also has to be acknowledged that during the twelve years fairly strong commitments have been developed under PEBLDS, which have had the potential to unite and focus Pan-European efforts. After the first action plan and the following work programmes, the actions were further sharpened by the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity, which set out nine targets in seven fields.

5. Implementing the Kyiv Resolution and the other PEBLDS objectives requires sufficient political will both on the level of the relevant ministry and the government as a whole. While the insufficient political weight of ministries of environment within the government is a general impediment of this in all countries, the low profile of PEBLDS did not help building

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necessary political support in many countries, even in the ministries of environment either.

6. This is partly due to the fact that PEBLDS does not mean legally binding commitments opposite to the CBD or other conventions. Thus CBD receives political priority over PEBLDS in many cases and the limited capacities do not enable taking effective measures also in other fields. This is true, even if PEBLDS is intended to be the regional arm of CBD and all commitments are related (in)directly to the articles, programmes of work, the Strategic Plan of the CBD or other decisions of the Conference of the Parties (COPs).

7. The profile of PEBLDS is even lower in EU Member States, where the non-compliance with the legally binding EU obligations can not only damage the image of the country, but it can also have serious financial-legal consequences. Thus EU commitments receive most of the political attention and absorb huge capacities of implementation.

8. EU biodiversity policies, developed in line with the commitments of the European Community being a Party to the CBD, identified the EU's own strategic way for implementing the Convention on EU level. The Communication on the 2010 target published by the European Commission in May 2006 also identified national obligations for the MSs. As a consequence Pan-European level cooperation is overshadowed by EU policies and programmes, even if they do not amount to the implementation of the agreed priorities of the whole region, i.e. the PEBLDS and the Kyiv Resolution.

9. The lack of financial mechanism for PEBLDS is undoubtedly an important weakness of the process, which could be partly due to the low profile of PEBLDS as a policy forum and the lack of publicity of the ongoing activities in the countries. At the same time financing international activities under PEBLDS is only prioritised in a few donor countries.

10. In addition to the PEBLDS work programmes and the Environment for Europe conferences, PEBLDS has also developed a unique way of preparation for CBD COP meetings. The Biodiversity for Europe conferences are

organised a few weeks before COPs, which result in joint non-binding positions reflecting the regional peculiarities and priorities. Even though the EU has its own institutionalised preparation mechanism, for non-EU countries this is a very important opportunity for regional consultations. Acknowledging the need for such regional preparation, it should be also realised that this regional consultation mechanism has not substantially supported the follow up and implementation of the endorsed COP decisions on Pan-European level.

11. Considering the implementation of the Kyiv targets, there are still severe shortcomings in implementation on Pan-European level because of the above reasons. However, some clear successes can be also reported, when the commitment of some countries and organisations, as well as funds provided by committed donor countries have been crucial. These fields of Pan-European progress include the Pan-European Ecological Network, the identification of High Nature Value farmlands, the involvement of private sector into financing, communication and partnerships, and the development of biodiversity indicators.

12. The top-down approach has been a main characteristic of cooperation in the past, which however could not encourage appropriate involvement of sub-national and national level stakeholders in most cases. It can be asserted that most national and sub-national NGOs have been ignorant and not interested in the policy process of PEBLDS due to this top-down approach and its legally non-binding nature. Considering that NGOs are important drivers of progress in environmental field through their active involvement, their capacities offered and watchdog role of the processes, this staying away of NGOs from PEBLDS has also contributed to losing momentum in the last years.

13. The policy environment has also significantly changed since 1995. With the last rounds of enlargement the EU now covers almost half of the Pan-European countries, where EU biodiversity policies apply. At the same time vast amount of decisions have been formulated and unanimously endorsed at the CBD COPs. While biodiversity policies have been developing on global, Pan-European and EU level, they have not been able to adequately steer and

harmonise national efforts that have added value on regional level, and most important shortcomings still lie in turning decisions into actions. This has been recognised at last CBD COPs and the reform process of PEBLDS, where participating states have called for more emphasis on implementation.

14. Lessons from the past and the changing environment thus call for a different way of cooperation in the future, where NGOs could and should have an important role to play, and give impetus for effective implementation on the ground.

ECO Forum's recommendations for the future

15. If we expect Pan-European biodiversity policies to turn into national and sub-national implementation while providing the added value of regional cooperation, then both the current focus and operation of the process have to be adapted. Pan-European cooperation needs to focus on implementation of CBD within a Pan-European framework, in line with regional priorities and national needs. This would mean that PEBLDS finally becomes what it was originally meant to be: the regional arm of implementation of CBD. This direction was also agreed upon by the PEBLDS Council, on its last meeting on 29-30 March, 2007 in Geneva.

16. At the same time the role of PEBLDS to develop common Pan-European positions for CBD COPs can be maintained and streamlined in the future through Pan-European preparatory meetings right before COPs. Continuing this role could be particularly important for EECCA countries and the region would not lose its Pan-European identity at CBD meetings. It would also build their capacities for promoting Pan-European regional interests at COPs.

17. Developing a bottom-up process, however, should not be realised on the expense of a strategic approach, which must be able to harmonise the various initiatives under overarching targets and build synergies among the issues on regional level. A common understanding of the root causes of biodiversity

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loss and the necessary changes in economic and social process needs to be developed, which can provide solid basis for effective joint actions in accordance with sustainability requirements.

18. The Strategic Plan of the CBD and the harmonised targets of the rolling work programme of PEBLDS¹¹ could determine the strategic targets, whereas the Kyiv targets have largely identified the thematic areas. This, however, does not necessarily exclude other issues where CBD decisions are made at COP meetings, if those decisions support the strategic targets of PEBLDS.

19. At the same time regular needs assessments of the participating countries should guide the process and ensure that meeting global commitments and national needs can give an added Pan-European value.

20. Hence PEBLDS would filtrate global CBD decisions through the Pan-European priorities and support their implementation, while reflecting upon national needs and realities. These three aspects should determine the agenda of Biodiversity for Europe conferences organised after COP meetings, as well as the fields of PEBLDS activities between COPs. Therefore they should be also the clear criteria for organising regional and sub-regional conferences and workshops on prioritised issues, developing common projects, arranging expert exchanges and sharing available resources, like existing methodologies and policy documents. PEBLDS can also facilitate the gradual involvement of any Pan-European states into activities related to international agreements, to which they have not joined yet.

¹¹ Goal 1: The PEBLDS is fulfilling its role as facilitator for European biodiversity issues, in close collaboration with other strategic frameworks, in particular the European Commission biodiversity strategy, as well as facilitating CBD implementation in the pan-European region.

Goal 2: Participants in the PEBLDS process have improved financial, human, scientific, technical, and technological capacity to implement the PEBLDS and the CBD.

Goal 3: National biodiversity strategies and action plans and the integration of biodiversity and landscape concerns into relevant sectors serve as an effective framework for the implementation of the objectives of the PEBLDS and the CBD.

Goal 4: There is a better understanding of the importance of biodiversity, landscape, PEBLDS and of the CBD in the pan-European region, and this has led to broader engagement across society in implementation.

21. Sharing best practices and knowledge would be equally important from the East to the West and from the West to the East. Good solutions in the various different fields exist in the whole region, and PEBLDS can collect and share this expertise on regional level.

22. May the need arise, the PEBLDS Joint Secretariat might be requested to create an actively and continuously developing regional clearing house mechanism, which can serve the sharing of knowledge tailored to the Pan-European needs better than the CBD CHM. Such a regional mechanism should not only restrict to a passive internet based mechanism, but it should be actively used for supporting all activities within PEBLDS. The Joint Secretariat and PEBLDS members could use such a regional clearing house mechanism for gathering and feeding best practices and expertise into workshops, conferences and projects, as well as for collecting knowledge and experiences gained through PEBLDS activities and making available to other members through the mechanism.

23. By creating a platform for sharing best practices, knowledge and resources and for initiating joint activities, PEBLDS would help bringing together the demand and supply in terms of knowledge and funding. Namely an implementation oriented approach that reflects upon the needs of countries would also better support raising funds for joint activities. Bringing together donor and recipient countries at conferences and workshops, which can be the starting point for future projects and actions, could at the same time give opportunities for fundraising as well. The appropriate design of conferences and workshops in terms of agenda and working methods could also facilitate kicking off joint activities and raising funds for them. In addition to the fundraising opportunities of PEBLDS meetings, regular funding priorities of donor countries shall be also harmonised with the targets and ongoing activities of PEBLDS. However, in order to use international financial resources most effectively and transparently, coordination on Pan-European level is required. Besides international funding, each government shall also provide sufficient financial support for national activities under PEBLDS, which is absolutely crucial for implementation.

24. Such future cooperation in biodiversity would open up new possibilities for the involvement of NGOs and other stakeholders, which are generally much more interested in actions, not only in policy development. By this PEBLDS has the potential to become a multi-stakeholder platform which brings about changes on the ground for the conservation of the natural heritage of the Pan-European region and for sustaining ecosystem services for human livelihood.

III. CASE STUDIES IN NATURE CONSERVATION

MAINSTREAMING THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AND THE PAN-EUROPEAN BIOLOGICAL AND LANDSCAPE DIVERSITY STRATEGY INTO NATIONAL DECISIONS

There are valuable policy tools and frameworks available, which are developed on the international level and could be utilised in the efforts towards the 2010 target to halt biodiversity loss. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and its regional arm for implementation, the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) are among the most important ones in Pan-Europe. Their goals and objectives, as well as the supporting guidance, work programmes should be duly taken into account in responsible policy- and decision-making. Nevertheless, these international policy-making tools and the 2010 target are largely invisible in the governmental sector, among the NGOs and the public, and thus they are not utilised in their full potential. It is especially difficult to put these policy-making tools into practice due to their complexity, as well as the insufficient knowledge among decision-makers on them.

Thus four South East European NGOs (BIOTICA Ecological Society from Moldova, Green Action from Croatia, Makmontana from Macedonia and Young Researchers of Serbia) under the coordination of the Central and East European Working Group for the Enhancement of Biodiversity (CEE-WEB) launched a one-year project in 2005 for the incorporation of the CBD and PEBLDS into national policies and decisions and raising awareness on them. The project was realised with the financial support of the Swiss Agency for Environment, Forest and Landscape.

The project included communication and public participation activities in different aspects of the implementation of the CBD and PEBLDS (legislative procedures, protected area management, international cooperation,

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campaigns, etc.), as well as capacity-building for the participating NGOs in the beginning of the project.

The 4th Biodiversity in Europe Conference (21-25 February 2006, Croatia) provided the opportunity for sharing the lessons learned from the project with other NGOs from the CEE region. Some of the national level experiences are summarised below.

Measuring progress in nature conservation against
the CBD and PEBLDS – case study from Croatia

Green Action, Croatia

Actions within the project in Croatia

Green Action, with support of various other NGOs was lobbying for a better law on Genetically Modified Organisms, in particular public participation in decision-making process, more transparency and better access to information was asked.

The CBD, the Cartagena Protocol, and EU directives were taken into consideration during preparations of GMO law proposal. Importance of public participation is also stressed in Article 23 on Public awareness and participation of Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Green Action found these tools useful for comparison to see how much this new law proposal is in line with CBD and other international conventions and to lobby for some important issues found inadequate to be improved.

When a new draft law on nature protection was proposed in the Croatian parliament, Green Action prepared comments was advocating for better law-making with reference of national commitments under the CBD. Most of the comments have been incorporated in the second reading and the law was adopted in May 2005. Green Action found CBD as a tool useful for comparison to see how much it is in line with Convention and to lobby for the most important issues for improvement.

As part of campaign on river Drava against its destruction by gravel excavation and river regulation, Green Action together with WWF, Croatian NGO the Drava League, Euronatur and the Drava Federation from Hungary has been fighting against these activities which are in contradiction with Croatian Environmental Impact Study and Croatia's Biodiversity Strategy, as well as the CBD. These planned activities are also in conflict with EU environmental law and thus contradict Croatia's ambitious program for EU approximation. During this campaign Fact sheet about gravel extraction and river regulation as basic information material was disseminated in order to make a case. Nature protection authorities started to react on all Nature Protection Act violation, and the preservation of Mura and Drava as such, became also state objective.

Opportunities, obstacles and lessons learned from the project

CBD objectives and PEBLDS goals are well defined and clear and can be used in many general cases when these objectives (conservation, sustainability) are violated in order draw attention to this fact.

Strategic objectives of the CBD are ambitious and are well covering the issue of conservation of biodiversity from all angles. They are also good at anticipating potential problems – lack of capacities, financial and technological problem of developing and small countries, integration of biodiversity concerns in all relevant sectors. Problem is in their implementation on national level. As for usefulness – they can be (and are) used as reference point for development of strategies and action plans.

Ecosystem approach as a strategy for the integrated and sustainable management of land, water and living resources is very detailed and is one of the most applicable parts of the CBD in practice as it goes for the specific issues that are often met in practice (issues as participation of all stakeholders; decentralization of management; economic context; recognition of constant changes and fluctuation in ecosystems; ecosystems management; long-term visions, plans and goals; recognition of indigenous and local knowledge; involvement of all sectors of society and scientific disciplines) and gives good implementation guidelines on each of 12 Principles.

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Thus CBD and PEBLDS can be used as a reference guide when commenting new law proposals (as Green Action has done in case of Croatian Nature Protection Law, Law on GMOs, Law on Hunting) and lobbying with politicians (e.g. Parliamentarians) for changes so that important issues that are found inadequate would be bettered in line with these tools. Text of the CBD is good to be called at in cases of general violation of its principles (for almost every environmental issue there is a violation of CBD) but it is difficult to find Articles connected to specific cases (e.g. poaching, forest roads) that could be quoted. In our campaign against poaching it was not possible to find useful articles (so Green Action used CITES, which is linked to the poaching due to cross-border transport of poached animals).

There is a general problem of implementation of signed Conventions and treaties in Croatia. As there is strong political interest of the Government to join EU as soon as possible, the country is signing relevant Conventions and treaties, but there is little political will (and finances) for taking on the responsibilities and commitments that come out of these Conventions and treaties.

Problem with commenting law proposals by NGOs is that Croatia has not yet signed the Aarhus Convention. NGOs have no legal possibility to participate in the legislation process and can be part of a working group only if they are called to participate. Also there is no legal way for an NGO to see law proposals before they are put on the Government's web page – usually just a short time before the reading in the Parliament, so it is difficult to prepare good comments in short notice. In order to prepare comments in time it is necessary to receive text of the law proposal through the unofficial channels (we need to have “insiders” to give us draft versions) which is not always possible.

Recommendations for NGOs

- » CBD and PEBLDS are useful reference guides for preparation of the comments on law proposals, management and action plans to insure they are in line with principles of CBD/PEBLDS;

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- » CBD and PEBLDS are important tools that can be used for almost any environmental/nature conservation issue (as “this and this represents violation of Convention on Biological Diversity”). It is a bit more difficult to find particular articles connected to specific issues;
- » If it is possible for NGOs it would be useful to use all opportunities for training (via workshops, seminars) on CBD/PEBLDS as these are quite complex tools for usage (one of the reasons why they are rarely used);
- » Ecosystem approach as a strategy for the integrated and sustainable management of land, water and living resources is very detailed and is one of the most applicable parts of the CBD in practice and should be more often used;
- » Examples of uses of CBD and PEBLDS should be available (e. g. on the Internet) for other NGOs to use them in their campaigns, lobbying work, etc;
- » Networking is important to spread information about funding possibilities for trainings and building capacities for work on CBD;
- » CBD should be as much as possible present in the media so that authorities should be more aware of the need to implement goals of this convention in order to improve nature protection.

Recommendations for governments

- » CBD Committee should be formed and NGOs should be part of this Committee;
- » PEBLDS, CBD and other nature conservation conventions should be integrated in other laws besides Nature Protection Law and Law on GMOs;
- » Intersectoral cooperation between different Ministries and Departments on nature conservation/environment should be improved;
- » Exchange and availability of information and data on biodiversity between institutions, NGOs should be improved, a central database is needed. This work has already began in State Institute for Nature Protection, but they have much trouble with gathering of data: there is a paradox that a state institution has to pay for information gathered by another state institution with money from the state, this should be better regulated.

- » More commitment for 2010 goal. It would be good if government would also work on public awareness on 2010 goal and would have the importance of stopping current biodiversity loss more in mind. Conserving biodiversity should be priority when considering new possibly dangerous projects;
- » Web page about the progress of CBD related activities (and work of the CBD Committee when one is formed) should be made in order for the public to have access to these information;
- » Information materials about CBD, PEBLDS, etc. should be made by the responsible institutions and disseminated in order to make public more aware of existence and importance of this tools;
- » Capacity building training for NGOs on CBD and PEBLDS should be organized.

Measuring progress in nature conservation against
the CBD and PEBLDS – case study from Moldova

BIOTICA Ecological Society, Moldova

Actions within the project

BIOTICA Ecological Society is concentrating its activity on practical implementation of some provisions of Convention on Biological Diversity and of Kyiv Biodiversity Resolution, as well as the national strategies, as the Strategy and the Action Plan for the Conservation of Biological Diversity.

Mainstreaming of these policy tools was endeavoured within the framework of the project *Endangered Snakes Conservation and Steppe Habitat Restoration in the Ramsar Site “Lower Dniester”*, where the following documents were considered: *Decision of COP7 VII/3 on Agricultural biological diversity*, *Decision of COP7 VII/12 on Sustainable Use*, *CBD Article 8.b and 10.d*. BIOTICA studied many management plans of protected areas in order to elaborate management plan for the planned first national park in Moldova, also including a management plan for steppe ecosystems. During the elaboration of the management plan, the

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authors took into account the *Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for the Sustainable use of Biodiversity* (especially principles 5, 9, 11, 12) and the *IUCN Guidelines for compiling management plans for protected areas*. During these activities BIOTICA also conducted research of biodiversity in the project region, tried to involve the local population and local public authorities and carried out awareness raising activities.

In order to facilitate the creation of National Ecological Network, as it is also stipulated by CBD and PEBLDS, BIOTICA made a review of some laws from two points of view. On one hand the review aimed to discover some gaps in legislation regarding the creation of the ecological network. These findings were presented to governmental and nongovernmental organizations during a National Conference on Dniester Basin Biodiversity. On the other hand the competences and possibilities of local authorities were investigated.

BIOTICA was selected for the environmental assessment of businesses, which are credited and started within the Rural Investments and Services Project (RISP) financed by the World Bank. According to the World Bank requirements, BIOTICA experts developed procedures for the environmental screening of loan applications and identifying the possible environmental impacts of these activities financed under the RISP project. It included assessing the legal and regulatory framework, institutions, administrative procedures and enforcement capacity for environmental management in Moldova. Within this assessment mitigation activities to be proposed to the executors of the projects in order not to affect environment were developed. For this activity BIOTICA first of all used the *CBD Decision VI/7 on Identification, monitoring and assessments* and its *Annex Guidelines for incorporating biodiversity-related issues into environmental impact assessment*, which comprises the main stages of an environmental assessment process.

Talmaza Wetland is an important core area for the planned National Ecological Network. BIOTICA conducted research of biodiversity within this region, with special attention being paid to bat species, which are all protected in Moldova. When preparing the Management Plan for the Talmaza Wetland the *Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for the Sustainable use of Bio-*

diversity (especially *principles 5, 9, 11, 12*) and *IUCN Guidelines* for compiling management plans for protected areas were taken into account. Also some public awareness raising activities on the importance of bat conservation are conducted among young people from the region.

On 26-28 October 2005 the representatives of BIOTICA Ecological Society took part at the Forum of Environmental NGOs from Moldova, where NGOs from the entire country participated. The participants of the Forum discussed, among other important things, the implementation of the international conventions to which Moldova is a Party, including CBD, the preparation for the Pan-European Ministerial Conference in Belgrad in 2007, and other international events. During this Forum proposals were made regarding the creation of a National Council that can assess the implementation of international conventions in Moldova, and concrete actions for the implementation of the international responsibilities of the country (Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity, etc.) and of the National Strategy and Action Plan on Biological Diversity Conservation.

Opportunities, obstacles and lessons learned from the project

In a world where the first goal is economic development, especially for the developing countries, CBD provides useful directions in which countries should work in conserving the biological diversity.

During the project first of all we learned more about the tools provided by CBD and the decisions of the COPs. Among its provisions we could find useful instruments as for example for impact assessment (*art. 14 (a) and (b)*), pollution control (*art. 8(i)*), instruments for controlling modifications and releases of organisms (*art. 8(b) and 8(g)*), instrument for capacity building (*art. 12*), instrument for monitoring (*art. 7*), for increasing public knowledge and awareness (*art. 13*), for local implementation (*articles 8(j) 10(c)*), and all these can be used by NGOs to do practical activities and to promote them at the State level and among other NGOs.

One important obstacle for implementing these international policies, however, is that other priorities (such as economic development, providing new working places, etc.) sometimes overshadow environmental concerns. Financial and human capacities decrease, and even if there is a range of useful laws regarding biodiversity, they are not enough and sometimes contradictions appear among their provisions. Another problem is that governmental processes and law making need a lot of time.

The wish to cooperate with NGOs or other institutions with good specialists is not very high in many cases within the government. Even if formally there are intergovernmental Committees regarding different environmental issues (for example National Committee “Ramsar” created in 2002, national committee regarding biological security created in 2003, national committee on implementing the National Strategy and Action Plan on Biological Diversity, etc.), none of these are working and nobody knows who their members are. This is a big obstacle in implementing the respective laws, strategies and international conventions to which Moldova is a Party.

Another obstacle that was felt during the project is the formal character of NGOs involvement in preparation of the documents. For example NGO proposals for the national report for Aarhus Convention were not taken into consideration even though before sending the report a round table with NGOs had been organized and proposals and modifications to the report’s text had been collected.

Even though many people are aware what CBD is, but they do not know that this Convention provides some concrete programmes of work, some concrete instruments that can be used in the day-to-day activity of NGOs and governmental organizations. So the lack of awareness regarding CBD instruments is also an obstacle.

Recommendations for NGOs

First of all it is very important for NGO representatives to know CBD provisions, its principles and its tools. For this aim it is good to organize trainings on CBD for NGO staff in order to prepare them to use CBD effectively.

As CBD and PEBLDS provisions are clear, NGOs can first of all make them well-known for other actors, such as governmental representatives, local public authorities and other NGOs. For this some seminars, trainings, round tables should be organized where the country's commitments in the field of biodiversity conservation should be presented.

NGOs should also have a role of watchdogs of CBD implementation at the state level and should organize campaigns in supporting or against the Government's activities, publish articles in newspapers and magazines, give radio and TV interviews.

NGOs should be involved in development of ecological education and information for the public and local authorities. They can lobby for the elaboration and approval of necessary environmental legislation and participate even in their preparation.

NGOs should conduct practical activities of biodiversity conservation, such as biological survey and inventory; develop activities for restoration and rehabilitation of biodiversity valuable sites, etc.

NGOs should create a viable network through which they can exchange information, implement some joint projects and work together in promoting CBD provisions implementation at the State level.

It is possible to create a public Committee, which can monitor the implementation of international agreement on biodiversity conservation to which Moldova is Party, which could offer recommendation to the Government and remind it about the international commitments.

Recommendations for governments

The most important recommendation for governments is to strictly observe conventions and international agreements on biodiversity ratified by the Republic of Moldova and to implement their provisions, and not only to look at the Convention's provisions before some international events. In line with this it is necessary to create a legislative framework for CBD and PLEBDS implementation, and it is necessary to fill the existent gaps in the existing legislation. It is needed to adopt the draft laws proposed by NGOs or governmental institutions and develop others if necessary, using CBD tools, and involving representatives of the scientific community, NGOs and governmental organizations.

It is very important to guarantee the transparency of environmental decision-making by ensuring the accessibility of the projects and draft laws on Internet and mechanisms of bilateral cooperation between the authorities and the public. Open and effective access to information that relates to the quality of the environmental components is also very much needed.

For the proper implementation of the CBD it is necessary to create viable and working intersectoral bodies, such as inter-ministerial committees with annual work plans and reporting requirements. For that, first of all, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources should develop some guidelines for other ministries regarding CBD implementation. In order to involve NGOs in these thematic Committees a representative of NGO community should be a member of them.

The promotion of CBD among the public, campaigns and concrete activities on CBD implementation coordinated by the CBD Focal Point should be financed from governmental sources.

Measuring progress in nature conservation against
the CBD and PEBLDS – case study from Macedonia

MAKMONTANA

Actions within the project

MAKMONTANA has been involved in the development of the Balkan Mountain Convention from the early stages. It addressed all participating organizations in the process for strong acknowledgment and implementation of the twelve principles of the ecosystem approach as leading guidelines in the process of its formulation. Having in mind that the parties of the Balkan Mountain Convention are parties to the CBD, the twelve principles of the ecosystem approach provide guidance for each of these countries. This effort was put together and officialized on the meeting on the Balkan Convention Initiative that was held at FAO in Rome on 17 June 2005. This constitution was also confirmed with the mission of our occupant on the Balkan Desk in Brussels, within the framework of the Initiative for the Balkan Mountain Convention.

During the preparatory process of the management plan for the National Park “Pelister”, MAKMONTANA introduced to the relevant stakeholders the concept of ecosystem approach as a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way. It helped to make the management plan more sustainable and participatory. Special attention was given to principle 2, 4 and 12 of the ecosystem approach, the principles seemed very useful to the stakeholders but the connection to the CBD was far out of the planet for them.

The National Forestry Policy and Strategy formulation also provided an opportunity for MAKMONTANA to draw attention of the decision-making bodies to the CBD and PEBLDS. This helped to improve policies in accordance with the CBD Decisions (*Decision V/6 article 2 and Decision III/12: Programme of work for terrestrial biological diversity: Forest biological diversity, Annex:*

Input to the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests, Related recommendation (b) and Decision VI/22: Forest biological diversity), though the connection given between the proposed measures and the CBD decisions did not seem interesting to the participants only the content of the propositions.

MAKMONTANA pointed out the risks of GMOs at the GMO – Free Balkans Conference, and noted that it is of decisive importance to determine under what premises a predicted or observed effect of the GMO on the environment can be classified as “environmental damage” and therefore as not tolerable.

Using an asset-related approach in defining ecological damage is recommended. Using this approach, valuable environmental assets can be understood to be biological diversity, and thus any change or disturbance of the assets/biological diversity can be defined as an ecological damage. This is also touched upon by the Convention on Biological Diversity (e.g. through *Decision VII/30* of the CBD defining biodiversity loss and the CBD information paper *UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/9/INF/26*).

Opportunities, obstacles and lessons learned from the project

MAKMONTANA sees the CBD as providing a framework for conserving biological diversity (as well as for achieving other goals, such as on access to genetic resources). The Convention provides a good opportunity for Parties to update and bring into line a wide range of biodiversity-related policies, and in particular to make the linkage between policies on protected areas and policies of other sectors.

But both the CBD and PEBLDS only provide a framework, while the actual decision in adaptation and narrowing down to local conditions for implementation is set to the parties themselves. The guidance set by the CBD COP decisions gives the freedom to address global issues in a proprietary way by local governments and organizations in a manner that is best seen fit to serve the result.

Always, when possible, referring to the decisions by the Conference of the Parties gives the needed argumentative positions that provide backstopping to the aimed goals. This tool is well applicable when influencing important national processes such as strategies or action plans. But the use must be well elaborated without leaving any possibilities for misinterpretation of the stated position, since most of the people involved are not really familiar with any of the decisions or articles of the CBD.

As maybe the most important opportunity for the use of CBD and PEBLDS as tools, which was created within the project, is the actual possibility for networking in lobbying. Through implementation of the project, MAKMONTANA had the opportunity to establish contacts with several NGOs from the region that face similar realities and have similar goals. The exchange of ideas, especially project ideas, seeing others' successes and downfalls creates environment for elaborate and successful ideas to turn into action and be supported by the experience of others. This position enables for good ideas easily replicable and sometimes scaleable methods that support sustainability and the protection of nature and biodiversity in one country, to be implemented in another country.

But networking is not only constrained to NGOs from abroad. All NGOs with unifying goals, such as the prevention of loss of biological diversity in the country, are welcome to work together and collaborate in achieving the goals. This opportunity is of great value when dealing with issues of national importance, since a unified approach with the help of the CBD as a tool can give significant results.

The use of CBD and PEBLDS as tools for achieving goals is very dependant on the possibility to communicate with the people in charge about the importance of the CBD itself. The lack of knowledge about its importance, what it means and sometimes even about its existence present a barrier in its use in lobbying. Therefore we were asked direct questions, such as what CBD is, weather Macedonia is really a signatory of the CBD, and it represents a serious matter that must be overcome with knowledge and influence.

On the other hand, this ignorance – extremely low awareness about the CBD is not limited to governmental personnel, but it is rather a national fact. The general public does not seem to be very interested about the global decisions and conventions that should be reflected in the countries' everyday life either. This obstacle seems even greater, since the support of the general public is lacking if these decisions and conventions are delivered in the language of the experts. And if delivered in the language of the people, the Convention does not bear the importance that it should.

Recommendations for NGOs

Seeing the CBD as a framework for conserving biodiversity (as well as for achieving other goals, such as on access to genetic resources), it gives enormous possibilities in making argumentative negotiations usually with governmental representatives, when making a point. But it must be substantiated, and as mentioned before, the government must realize the importance of CBD itself. Therefore an awareness raising activity about the importance of the Convention must be well elaborated prior to any argumentative efforts. If this is not a case, then a proper reference to the CBD must be made. Brochures and internet references are welcomed, that is why NGO websites with adequate information on the CBD, especially together with pointing out to the relation with the organization's activities can prove handy.

The role of the NGOs can be seen actually as a medium between the CBD with its Conference of the Parties and the national implementation of the decisions of the COP. Therefore each NGO must make sure that they influence all national processes to develop in accordance with the Convention.

On the other hand, when communicating with international organizations, especially donor organizations dealing on issues related to CBD is more successful. Therefore acquiring funds for the fourth point of the operational guidelines for the application of the ecosystem approach can be easier, than to actually see it implemented since the CBD is not brought down to the level of local communities and people and local governments simply do not understand when you mention CBD.

In conclusion, these tools can be used most effectively when dealing with organizations and institutions (people) that are familiar with the CBD. These could be other environmental NGOs, people dealing with international environmental commitments, possibly the Ministry of Environment, and international organizations, especially international donor organizations that guide their work in line with CBD. Therefore the most effective use of these tools for every NGO would be in their fundraising activities.

Recommendations for governments

The CBD provides a good opportunity for Parties to update and align their wide range of biodiversity related policies. In particular they can make the linkage between policies on protected areas and policies of other sectors, since the principles of the ecosystem approach can be also applicable to sectors other than nature conservation.

For this aim, however, governmental experts must be properly acquainted with CBD. Once this is achieved, the need for a cross-sectoral body that works on the implementation of CBD and other related issues will more easily emerge. And this can be only done through closer communication between the government and the civil sector.

EUROPEAN BIODIVERSITY RESOURCING INITIATIVE

ECNC

The European Biodiversity Resource Initiative (EBRI) has been initiated in the framework of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS), for the financial sector to increase their involvement in sustainable development issues. The 5th Ministerial Environment for Europe Conference in Kyiv (2003) welcomed the EBRI results and also adopted a Kyiv Biodiversity target on the initiative.

While the purpose of Phase 1 of the EBRI was to establish an operational framework that would bring the needs for biodiversity resourcing in Europe together with the interests of the Banking Community and International Financial Institutions (IFIs), Phase 2 (2002-2004) focused on making information, expertise and project-related experience available to potential entrepreneurs in the EECCA region. A European Task Force on Banking, Business and Biodiversity has been established to guide this work, with the involvement of various financial institutions, including EBRD and EIB. ECNC is providing chair and secretariat of the Task Force.

The European Task Force has concentrated on the development of tools to promote sustainable investment related to the preservation of biodiversity. A parallel deployment of a Biodiversity Finance Facility (BFF) and a Biodiversity Technical Assistance Facility (BTAF) has been proposed. Other Task Force members have contributed through thematic presentations and case studies at Task Force meetings.

A major step in EBRI Phase 3 was to complete the elaboration of the concept of a Pan-European initiative for financial resources targeted for biodiversity investment. The work program will include an outreach to entrepreneurial investment strategies and also capacity building for the associated financial intermediaries working at the local level with international funding sources.

EBRI Phase 3 therefore concentrated on the financing of biodiversity investment, guided by the experience of IFIs in encouraging biodiversity-related investment in developing countries and those with economies in transition. Biodiversity values can only be realized by entrepreneurs if there are markets, which does not mean to transform markets, but to accelerate market activity.

The issue of business and biodiversity including the role of financial institutions, is receiving more and more attention in EU framework. The Portuguese government together with the European Commission and with support of the Countdown 2010 Partnership organizes a high level EU Conference on “Business and Biodiversity” in November 2007, which should result in concrete commitments on this theme of the corporate sector.

Related to EBRI some practical activities have started, some of which are summarised below.

Pilot projects for Biodiversity Technical Assistance Units in Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland

Biodiversity business opportunities exist, primarily in the sectors such as agriculture, eco-tourism or sustainable forestry. Companies active in the sectors that most impact on biodiversity are mainly micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The principal objective of the Biodiversity Technical Assistance Units (BTAU) project running in Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland is to assist SMEs in the enlarged EU to contribute biodiversity conservation.

The project helps to explore the specific link of SMEs to society, economy and biodiversity and highlight the opportunities and constraints faced by SMEs in managing biodiversity sustainably while achieving economic viability. Activities include the following:

- » Identify in a pro-active manner, a pipeline of bankable biodiversity-related projects;
- » Harmonize concepts and procedures for valuation of biodiversity resources;
- » Strengthen formal and informal networks;
- » Establish operational networks of expertise;
- » Develop bio-tools kits and operational guidelines;
- » Provide training courses and make accessible information databases.

The project is led by the Royal Society for Protection of Birds (UK) together with ECNC, and other partners include the Birdlife partners in project countries (OTOP, MME, BSPB), and the Hungarian Development and Trade Agency (ITDH). The BTAU project will run till the end of 2007. It is financed by the Directorate-General for Environment of the European Commission.

European Biodiversity Financing Compendium –
Synthesis of knowledge on biodiversity financing
that is applicable to the European context

The European Task Force for Banking, Business and Biodiversity has for several years been supporting the development of instruments that will be useful for both entrepreneurs and their partners in local financial institutions in developing pro-biodiversity business investment opportunities. For this aim the Biodiversity Financing Clearing House Mechanism (CHM) has been under development under the auspices of the European Task Force. This CHM has been housed already for several years on the Strategy website created for PEBLDS (www.strategyguide.org). It has become a reference for all aspects of biodiversity financing. The volume of material now available, however, presents users with a great difficulty to choose the resource most pertinent to their interests.

For this reason a double objective is proposed for the future. (a) The first objective is to make it possible to use the CHM more easily, and therefore the intention is to prepare a thematic catalogue for the CHM, by key word reference. (b) In addition, the thematic catalogue will be a way to prepare the information available in the CHM so that it will be possible to organise and write a compendium of the information that will be most likely to assist a range of target groups to engage in biodiversity financing initiatives.

Several target groups will benefit from the resulting European Biodiversity Financing Compendium. There is immediate relevance for local entrepreneurs and financial establishments, international financial institutions (IFI) and governmental agencies that have a policy (and programmes) to promote pro-biodiversity investment. There is also the NGO movement that provides the encouragement for innovative financial mechanisms for biodiversity.

Lifescape Your Landscape

The overall objective of the LIFESCAPE project is to demonstrate benefits for people to profit from the rural landscape while preserving its beauty. There are 14 project partners in 5 countries – the Netherlands, France, Belgium, England and Germany, sharing their experiences they have gained implementing 20 projects.

The conclusion of these LIFESCAPE outputs is that investing in sustainability projects and nature and landscape are very profitable for the rural economy. Also, through an innovative financing instrument, funding streams can be made available for landscape conservation activities while the scheme is also in the interest of the participating bank and the supporting local authorities, companies and private persons.

The project will run till April 2008, and is financed by European Union through INTERREG III B Programme.

PSKOV MODEL FOREST IN RUSSIA

WWF

Pskov Model Forest area covers 18,400 hectares of forestland located in Strugo-Krasnensky District of Pskov Oblast, Northwest Russia. Local landscapes vary from swampy flat plains to elevated sites. The area belongs to the sub-zone of the southern taiga with predominant species of pine, birch, aspen and spruce. Broad-leaved species are found along rivers and streams.

The Pskov Model Forest project was initiated by WWF, as the development of a forest conservation and sustainable forest program use is one of the priorities for WWF in Russia. The WWF 's forest policy aims not only to establish an ecologically representative network of protected areas for old-growth forests, but also to develop mechanisms of sustainable forest management for intensively exploited forests. To reach this goal, the WWF

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is creating a network of model forests in Russia. Pskov Model Forest project will be the next step in the development of the model forest network. The area received a model forest status in 2000.

The goal of the Pskov Model Forest Project is to develop and implement an economically efficient, environmentally sound and socially beneficial forest management model in a specific territory and disseminate the project's positive outcomes in Northwest Russia.

The main objective of Phase I (2000-2004) was to develop and implement basic methods of more intensive and sustainable forest management in the project's model forest area. The main objective of Phase II (2005-2008) is to implement and disseminate a model for more intensive and sustainable forest management in four Subjects of the Russian Federation (Leningrad, Pskov, Arkhangelsk, and Vologda Oblasts).

Partners and active participants of the project include both Russian and international organizations:

- » Ministry of Natural Resources of the Russian Federation
- » Administration of Pskov Oblast
- » Administration of Strugo-Krasnensky District of Pskov Region
- » Forestry Agency for Pskov Oblast
- » Northwest Forest Inventory Enterprise
- » St. Petersburg Forestry Research Institute
- » Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)
- » Stora Enso Oyj
- » WWF Germany

I. Economic objectives of the project

- » Ensure the economic stability of the forest complex;
- » Co-operate with the regional and local administrations in improving the system of forest taxes;
- » Analyze advantages and shortcomings of different methods of forest use (leasing, auctioning);
- » Improve marketing of forest products for small logging businesses;

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- » Establish mechanisms balancing mutual economic interests of Leskhoz enterprises, logging companies, state bodies and local self-government;
- » Develop forestry and forest use methods that are based on forecasting forest fund dynamics allowing for the optimal combination of economic requirements and ecological restrictions;
- » Introduce and promote modern machinery and technology.

2. Social objectives of the project

- » Promote community involvement in forestry decision making;
- » Determine forms of involvement for the local community and the public of the region in the forestry decision making process:
 - » Participate in forest management meetings,
 - » Hold public hearings,
 - » Arrange community centre;
- » Create a system of public access to information on forest management, forest use and the distribution of forest income:
 - » Set up an information centre;
 - » Hold community meetings;
- » Increase public awareness of sustainable forest management (SFM):
 - » Develop educational programs;
- » Support public participation in the solution of forest problems.

3. Ecological objectives of the project

- » Ensure and support environmental functions of forests including the conservation of biodiversity;
- » Monitor the impact of different forestry practices on the condition of forests;
- » Develop the system of activities in forestry aimed at maintaining biodiversity and stability of ecosystems including water resources and soils;
- » Establish criteria and indicators of biological diversity;
- » Develop and apply landscape planning method.

A new model for more intensive and sustainable forest management was developed and tested in the leasehold area operated by STF-Strug Company. The model provides for tenfold increase of forest revenues over the rotation period (approx. 100 years).

More intensive forest use is based on transition from the principle of “gathering” to “the well-managed market garden”. According to the concept prevailing in the Soviet times, forests grow on their own, so all people have to do is to come and fell trees. However, conclusions of project specialists have proved that without ongoing care of the growing stock it is not possible to obtain valuable high quality timber or conserve forest ecosystems and maintain biodiversity.

The Pskov Model Forest was among the first forest projects in Russia to practically demonstrate community involvement in forestry decision making. Principles of building up relations with local residents, among others, include availability of information related to project activities, consideration for local interests, and cooperation in forest management planning. A number of mechanisms and procedures for involving the community in forestry decision making have been tested since the project start-up in 2000. Public hearing and Forest Club are among of them.

Public hearings

The highlight of the Pskov Model Forest Program in 2002 was public hearings, a forum of stakeholders that adopted the landscape ecological forest management plan for the model forest area.

Public hearings presented an innovation in the forestry decision making system. Public hearings were organized prior to the official approval procedure by the state forest inventory enterprise. The purpose of the public hearings was to bring to light interests of different stakeholders (a private forest company, public forest management authorities, local government, environmentalists and various community groups) and to jointly elaborate guidelines for the final version of the forest management plan given those interests.

Participants of public hearings in the Pskov Model Forest area represented groups of key stakeholders who benefited from forest resources one way or another. For the local community the forest was associated with healthy environment and recreation, so they were concerned about consequences of

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intensive use of forest resources in the area. A forest company with a long-term forest lease was interested in sustainable and profitable business. The state forest management unit (leskhoz) responsible for management of public forests wanted evidence that the company's activities were in conformity with forest legislation and would not cause negative impacts on forests. Local government was concerned about stability of forest revenues and jobs for the local population. The hunting society was determined to conserve capercaillie mating grounds and other relevant areas.

The discussion during the public hearings resulted in adoption of one out of eight forest management scenarios that served as a compromise of various interest groups. This document of public consent was used for preparing an official management plan by the Northwest Forest Inventory Enterprise. Currently the projects partner company "STF-Strug" is working in accordance with this plan.

Forest Club

In 2000 the Pskov Model Forest initiated the establishment of a Forest Club as an ongoing community forum in the model forest area. The Forest Club presents an informal voluntary association of local residents who are socially active and interested in environmental issues and forestry. The Club is open for everybody who is willing to join in a discussion or common activity.

Club meetings are held twice a year with about 30 individuals attending. Among subjects under discussion are recent developments in the national forest sector, local environmental initiatives, updates about Pskov Model Forest's activities and other topical issues. Through an open discussion club members work out a common attitude, which is communicated to the broad community, authorities and business structures by mass media.

Public involvement in the discussion and solution of local issues related to forestry enables the project to

- » get the community's feedback and incorporate social issues in forest planning and management;
- » reduce social risks and conflicts in intensively exploited forest areas;

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- » get the community's input in forestry decision making process before official forest decisions have been finalized;
- » enhance the level of environmental awareness;
- » raise the level of social responsibility for forests and forest management.

IDENTIFICATION OF HIGH NATURE VALUE FARMLAND IN PAN-EUROPE

ECO Forum¹²

Traditional agricultural systems have shaped much of the rural environment in the Pan-European region, having created semi-natural habitats for a wide range of species, many of which are of particular conservation concern. Thus the continuing decline in traditional, extensive and mixed farming practices, with the trends of agricultural intensification and land abandonment in certain regions is leading to biodiversity loss in much of the region's farmland.

High Nature Value (HNV) farmland comprises those areas in Europe where agriculture is a major (usually the dominant) land use and where that agriculture supports or is associated with either a high species and habitat diversity or the presence of species of European conservation concern or both¹³. It is estimated that HNV farmland covers 15-25 % of the EU countryside, with the largest areas being found in Eastern and Southern Europe and Northern Britain. However, data are very scarce for countries outside EU, which makes estimation for this subregion especially difficult.

The need for measures to prevent the loss of HNV farmland is widely acknowledged, also on the political level. In the Kyiv Resolution European

¹² ECO Forum: Identification of High Nature Value Farmland in the EECCA region, 2007, realised with the financial support from UNEP and the Government of Norway

¹³ Andersen et al, 2003, in EEA 2004, High nature value farmland: Characteristics, trends and policy challenges. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

Ministers of Environment committed themselves to identify the HNV areas in Pan-Europe by 2006 and put a substantial proportion of these areas will under biodiversity-sensitive management by 2008.

In order to support the achievement of these targets, two workshops were organized by the WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme (WWF-DCP) and the European ECO-Forum / BIOTICA Ecological Society in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme-Regional Office for Europe (UNEP-ROE). These workshops took place in Chişinău, Moldova and Belgrade, Serbia in February and November 2006. Financial support was given by the Council of Europe and the governments of Switzerland and Norway. Expert input was provided by the European Forum for Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (EFNCP) and the European Environmental Agency (EEA).

Identification of HNV farming

There are a number of approaches possible for identifying HNV farmland, including the species approach, satellite imagery interpretation and farming system approach, all having their own limitations. Knowledge regarding relationships between agricultural practices and biodiversity is important for any identification exercise.

The major approach currently is based on satellite imagery interpretation, better known as CORINE land cover. The EEA established a set of criteria and standard classes giving a broad indication of HNV areas with high proportion of semi-natural or natural vegetation, and with a mosaic of habitats and/or low-intensity land uses (type 1. and 2. HNV farmlands) at a European scale.

Until now two general maps for the EU countries have been created, according to a minimum/maximum method, providing a 25-40% estimate for the territory. Minimum is: "What land cover classes are going to be HNV farmland most of the time?" Maximum is: "What land cover classes are going to be HNV farmland some of the time?"

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Preparation for identification of High Nature Value farmlands in the Western Balkans is in its early stages or non-existent, though the designation of potential NATURA 2000 sites (in Croatia) and harmonization of EMERALD, CORINE, and EUNIS classifications could contribute to HNVF identification. Also, the Western Balkan countries have developed national agriculture strategies, rural development policies, laws and regulations, such as Less Favoured Area payments (Serbia and Montenegro) and agri-environmental measures (Croatia).

Workshop participants proposed some actions to tackle the most urgent needs:

- » Translate HNV farming into the West-Balkan languages, finding words to express the concept adequately;
- » Compile more precise information on the character and distribution of HNV farmland in the Western Balkans, and assess the way in which these systems are changing and what the related implications for nature conservation are;
- » At the same time, build awareness and clarify misunderstandings before talking about policy measures. Actions may include:
 - » Prepare simple literature and/or a website to explain/share concepts;
 - » Use specific examples so people can relate to them;
 - » Consider 'demonstration' farms to illustrate the concept, especially outside of designated areas;
 - » 'Train the trainers' workshops;
 - » Link HNV farming explicitly to international agreements and EU law;
 - » Cultivate pressure and support from high-profile international organisations (e.g. WWF, IUCN) to reinforce local messages;
 - » Get international institutions, including the EU, FAO and World Bank to support overall message;
 - » Do not forget Ministries of Finance;

- » Discuss HNV farming informally with other stakeholders and use their reaction to develop coalitions of stakeholders which together can make critical mass to which ministries often respond better. In particular:
 - » Stress urgency of task;
 - » Build link in farmers' minds between HNV and economic viability;
 - » Make link to EU and accession process;
 - » Have P.R. strategy aimed at general public to build support and understanding;
 - » Use consumer power;
- » Ministries of Agriculture and Institutes of Nature Conservation are crucial players, who need to be involved. There is also a need to raise awareness of the importance of agri-environmental programmes within Ministries of Agriculture where such programmes do not yet exist, especially in the context of EU accession;
- » Involve actors from Croatia and Bulgaria, since they are at different stages of EU accession and have valuable experience;
- » Make the most of the Belgrade Environment for Europe conference:
 - » as an awareness-raising opportunity in itself;
 - » as a reason for governments to do something now;
- » For all this work, get know-how, support and help from foreign, experienced organizations, and last but not least do fundraising.

Identification of HNV farmland in EECCA

Although estimates for HNV farmland in the EECCA region are not available either, it can be assumed that diversity of HNV farmlands in the region is significant both in terms of share of land and the related agricultural systems. It is suggested by the fact that in most of the countries agriculture is an important sector of the economy in terms of employment, as well as land cover.

Steps have been already taken to identify HNV farmland areas in EECCA countries within a project¹⁴ coordinated by Biotica Ecological Society from

¹⁴ UNEP Project High Nature Value Farmland of EECCA Subregion, implemented by Biotica Ecological Society, Moldova and experts from the European ECO-Forum, 2006

Moldova. The findings of the project were presented during the workshop in Chisinau¹⁵, Moldova.

The experts of the European ECO-Forum identified the following examples of HNV farmlands in EECCA countries¹⁶:

- » Bagerovo steppes in the north part of the Kerch penninsula (Ukraine)
- » Ulitau dry-steppes landscapes in Arganati Mountains and in the north part of the Ulitau Mountains (Kazakhstan)
- » The floodplains of Soj river (Belarus)
- » Sevlich reserve alpine meadows in the central part of the Karabachos plateau (Armenia)
- » Colchis swamps (Georgia)
- » Teriaevskie ponds in Moskow oblast (Russia)
- » Aivazia tract in the Dniester river valley (Moldova)

At the moment only NGOs are involved in the identification of the HNV farmlands in the EECCA region, though capacities also exist at other levels (governmental organizations, expert organizations, educational centres, protected areas authorities, etc.). A main impediment is that experts from these organizations and institutions are mostly not aware about the HNV farmland concept.

In order to address the most urgent issues, participants from the Chişinău workshop discussed and listed the next steps to be undertaken to identify and protect HNV farmlands in the region. The identified actions are in no way a comprehensive action plan for the HNVF identification and conservation in the region but rather the actions setting the enabling conditions to do it.

A. Identification of HNV farmland:

I. Inventory:

- » Translate the HNV farmland concept into workable criteria and/or examples relevant for the region;

¹⁵ Andreev, A. and I. Jura (eds.) 2006, High Nature Value Farmland of EECCA subregion: Vision of the experts of the European ECO-Forum from the subregion countries, Biotica Ecological Society, Moldova

- » Execute a comprehensive inventory of HNV farmland in the region, based on a widely agreed methodology to assess the values. This could be also part of a general biodiversity assessment, as there is a broad need on data of nature values in the region.
2. Networking: At the same time with the inventory, start networking between stakeholders to build awareness and capacity. Actions here should include:
- » Raise understanding that inter-sectoral cooperation is needed;
 - » Ministries of Agriculture and Academies of Sciences are crucial players and should work together with the Ministries of Environment;
 - » Build up a good understanding and cooperation between ministries and NGOs;
 - » Organize HNV farmlands training for specialists on vegetation, fauna, agriculture, GIS from the region to help them understand the concept;
 - » Attract international high-profile organizations (UNEP, UNDP, IUCN, WWF, etc) to support and reinforce the message at all levels, including putting pressure on national governments;
 - » Involve local authorities in this issue either by legal requirements or voluntary cooperation (monitoring, feedback);
 - » Convince local, informal key-leaders to become partners and support the message;
 - » Organize national (identification) workshops involving ministries, Academies of Sciences and other stakeholders, and international experts and donors;
 - » Identify funding opportunities. There should be a strategic decision on what can be done with national resources and for what international financial support is necessary.

B. Conservation of HNV farmland:

Networks for cooperation: Any efforts for the conservation of HNV farmlands should involve partners from various sectors – and not only agriculture and nature conservation, but also foresters and forestry departments as they work in similar and/or neighbouring terrains. Some of the other necessary actions and needs include:

- » Need for inter-sectoral cooperation with ministries, other governmental organizations, local authorities and NGOs to catalyze change. The Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Agriculture need to sit together and discuss their responsibilities for HNV farmlands. In these discussions the link between nature and people should be recognized and supported;
- » Public awareness and information distribution. This will not only increase the public's knowledge of the national natural values but will also serve as moral stimulation for land owners and users to be proud to have these HNV on his land and develop a sense of responsibility.
- » Disseminate best practices and utilize the existing know-how and support from foreign institutions and experienced organizations;
- » Regional trans-boundary cooperation to join efforts for areas in similar ecological, political and economic situation.

Policy:

- » Advocate for political priority to HNV farmlands. It was widely recognized that until the issue gets among the political priorities little will be achieved at national level;
- » Improve biodiversity conservation policy needs at national level. Many of the Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans were only drafted without being approved or if approved are not implemented. The HNV farmlands concept should become part of this improved nature conservation policy and legislation;
- » Integrate conservation of HNV farmlands in existing (sectoral) laws (e.g. laws on pastures or organic farming);
- » Consider incentives rather than just fines and taxes in terms of administration and financial measures;
- » Improve management of protected areas and their buffer zones. Stricter law enforcement.

Regional characteristics:

- » Include HNV farmland concept into current issues like soil protection, poverty alleviation, flood protection and forestry;
- » Use local customs, by involving local leaders;
- » Give an important role to women to take the HNVF issue forward;

.....

- » NGOs to work directly with land users as long as governments are not supportive enough.

CREATING THE PAN-EUROPEAN ECOLOGICAL NETWORK

Biodiversity Conservation Centre

The establishment and implementation of ecological networks require the use of specific methodology and sound data on the target region. The examples summarised below show that a variety of NGO approaches exist, which can respond to the differing situations in the establishment of PEEN and its elements on subregional, national and subnational scales.

INITIATIVES AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

The European Centre for the Nature Conservation (ECNC) actively promotes the PEEN and involves relevant governmental bodies, NGOs and individual experts in its establishment. ECNC projects focus on promoting the concept of ecological networks in general, on raising awareness of the issues involved, and on fostering understanding of the concepts. With the Council of Europe, ECNC shares responsibility for the work programme to establish PEEN under the Kyiv Biodiversity Resolution and Action Plan. ECNC is the lead organisation in Europe concerning the development of indicative maps of PEEN, completed for Central and Eastern Europe and South-Eastern Europe including Turkey.

PEEN in South-Eastern Europe¹⁶

In preparing the Indicative map of PEEN in South-East Europe, ECNC, the overall project coordinator, has closely cooperated with the non-commercial Centre for Cartography of Flora and Fauna in Ljubljana (Slovenia).

¹⁶ Source: <http://www.seenet.info>

The drafting process of the map involved a team of experts and government representatives from the countries involved (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia-Montenegro, Slovenia and Turkey), as well as an advisory group of representatives of international NGOs. Eurosite, EUCC-the Coastal Union, IUCN, BirdLife International and its relevant national partners, national NGOs of the majority of the participating countries have contributed to drafting the map. A first draft map was distributed among a wide range of stakeholders and experts both in these countries and in wider Europe. The results of this consultation were incorporated in a final draft map completed in 2006. It shows core areas of European importance, existing and potential corridors.

Since 2006 ECNC has started SEENET – a two-year programme of activities support of the implementation of PEEN in South East Europe and the Black Sea region (more concretely, Croatia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and Turkey). The main objective of this programme is to facilitate that these countries are fully involved in activities in support of PEEN and that interests and considerations specific to these regions are taken into account. To achieve this, the programme takes an integrative approach, aimed at involvement of all relevant stakeholder groups and specifically including non-conservation stakeholders.

The programme takes into account coastal and marine areas as well as terrestrial areas. ECNC, Eurosite, and EUCC-the Coastal Union have established the programme staff co-ordinating its implementation. The SEENET programme includes 6 subprogrammes:

1. Promoting the ecological network concept, and PEEN in particular, among relevant actors and in relevant forums in South-East Europe, Eastern Europe and Turkey;
2. Initiating and supporting capacity building programmes for governmental and non-governmental organisations in these regions;
3. Supporting organisations from South-East Europe, Eastern Europe and Turkey in successfully applying for funding for projects in support of ecological networks and PEEN;

4. Stimulating the involvement of other sectors, such as agriculture, transport, fisheries and spatial planning in discussions concerning ecological networks in general and PEEN;
5. Stimulate and support discussions in EU about connectivity and ecological networks; where appropriate, promoting interests of and considerations specific to South-East Europe, Eastern Europe and Turkey;
6. Supporting effective implementation of activities focussing on ecological networks under the CBD, the Environment for Europe process and the PEBLDS, while in particular promoting the interests and considerations of South-East Europe, Eastern Europe and Turkey.

The inventory of relevant stakeholders, a contact database, a distribution list, periodical SEENET e-bulletin, two stakeholder seminars, stakeholders brochure translated to the national languages are among the numerous programme outputs until today. The contact database contains more than 90 positions including more than 30 NGOs.

Ecological network for the Southern Balkan¹⁷

Arcturos NGO (Greece) carried out the programme on the development of a network for legal protection and management of protected areas in the Southern Balkans, with the support of the Council of Europe. Promotion of the EU Directives, the Bern Convention, PEEN and ecological networks was part of the work carried out, which also aimed to establish common strategies for the protection of nature in Southern Europe. Conservation of ecological networks for large carnivores and co-operation of carnivore related issues was a major concrete dimension of the programme as these species vitally need natural areas situated in several neighbouring countries.

The programme aimed at legislative harmonisation and management of protected areas in the region, but capacity-building of NGOs and conservation agencies in the area was also an objective. An international network of

¹⁷ Sources: the documents STRA-REP (2002) 8; STRA-REP (2002) 17; <http://www.arcturos.gr/en/initiatives/A.asp>

NGOs BALKANNET including more than 20 organisations from all the Southern Balkan countries was a good institutional base for the programme success.

*The European Green Belt Project*¹⁸

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 born the idea to turn the old border strip between East and West Germany into a nature reserve unifying both parts of the country. The Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland (BUND, Friends of the Earth Germany) initiated Germany's Green Belt Project, which received broad support from the public and environmental policymakers. Hundreds of volunteers mapped the distribution of plants and animals within the Green Belt, promoting new protected areas. In addition to biological inventory, 140 ha of land along the Green Belt was purchased by 2003, and active promotion of the Green Belt in mass-media, as well as fundraising was carried out through the distribution of Green Share Certificates for private donors.

The German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation organised in 2003 the international and national conference "Perspectives of the Green Belt" in order to initiate the European Green Belt from the Barents Sea to the Adriatic Sea. IUCN endorsed the international NGO leadership of the "Green Belt" ecological corridor project under the auspices of the Countdown 2010 initiative. Currently the project is extended right across Europe, from north to south. Besides serving as an ecological corridor, it could also provide a communication and marketing tool for nature conservation and sustainable development and make a link between Natura 2000 and the Emerald Network, transcending frontiers between European Union member countries and non-members.

¹⁸ Sources: Germany's Green Belt, 2003; the document STRA-REP (2004) 17

The UNEP/GEF/WWF Project “Development of the ECONET for Long-term Conservation of Biodiversity in the Central Asia Ecoregions” concerns the region of 4 million square kilometres, uniting five countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan) and hosting a unique and high biodiversity. The main goal of the project is the creation of a common ecological network in Central Asia and its integration into regional and national plans of sustainable development. It also aims the development and practical implementation of optimal mechanisms of transboundary cooperation and the coordination for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of nature resources. The project is also based upon regional conservation initiatives, such as the establishment of International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFSAS), Interregional Sustainable Development Commission (ISDC) and development of Regional Environmental Action Plan (REAP- with the assistance and support of UNEP).

Within the WWF Central Asia Programme an ecological network scheme for the whole region was developed in close cooperation with various stakeholders. Original methodological approaches towards the planning of ecological networks at the ecoregional level was specially developed to implement this project, keeping in mind the specificities of Central Asia, where extensive areas still remain untouched or slightly affected by human impact.

In order to identify the necessary directions of the development of ECONET Central Asia, a gap analysis of existing protected area system was conducted on the basis of integrated analysis of biodiversity characteristics and socio-economical situation in the region.

In accordance with the decision of ISDC, ECONET shall be integrated into REAP as a major component, in order to ensure biodiversity conservation of the region. The countries of the region also proved their important commitment by adopting the developed ECONET scheme as the basis for national plans of protected areas system development, as well as for land-use system

¹⁹ Source: WWF, 2006, ECONET Central Asia. The web of life

development. Besides that, on the own initiative of the governments new protected areas of different status are in the process of establishment (in accordance to identified priorities of ECONET).

INITIATIVES AT COUNTRY LEVEL

Turkmenistan²⁰

The Ministry of Nature Protection of Turkmenistan realised the “Improvement of Protected Areas System in Turkmenistan (ECONET)” project with the support of UNDP. The Biodiversity Conservation Center (BCC) from Moscow (Russian Federation) was invited as an international consultant to participate in the project. BCC worked out the recommendations on the development of the National Protected Area System including a ten-year development plan, proposals for the creation of the first National Park in Turkmenistan, draft management plans for three Nature Reserves, and recommendations on the monitoring programme for Nature Reserves (Chronicles of Nature). The recommendations on changes in the National Protected Area System envisioned its further development into a National Ecological Network. It was drafted by adapting the relevant part of the ECONET Central Asia Scheme (see above) to the main conservation policy documents, the existing infrastructure, and planned social and economic development of Turkmenistan and in line with the need to enlarge the scale of the output maps. The final version of the Long-Term Development Plan of the Protected Area System included a lot of proposals, made by local experts and NGOs during three project workshops.

²⁰ Source: Biodiversity Conservation Centre, 2006, Recommendations on the long-term changes in the system of protected areas in Turkmenistan. In Russian

The BIOTICA Ecological Society has developed the Concept of Creation of the Ecological Network of the Republic of Moldova with the support of the National Ecological Fund of the Republic of Moldova and under the supervision of the Ministry of Environment and Territorial Management of the Republic of Moldova.

The Concept includes:

- » a Glossary;
- » criteria for identification and evaluation of the ECONET components;
- » operational lists of extinct or endangered species to be used, as well as “redlisted” species when implementing the criteria;
- » the list of identified ECONET components with the assessment of the importance of each site;
- » the ECONET map (1:500 000) showing the distribution of core areas, international, national and main local corridors;
- » draft action plan of ECONET creation and functioning;
- » the analysis of the legal base of the ECONET with proposal for its improvement.

The system of criteria allows the identification and quantitative evaluation of ECONET components including its significance for maintaining biodiversity and geosystem balance.

The ECONET-Moldova, if realised, is expected to ensure not only the conservation and restoration of the biological and landscape diversity, but also the rehabilitation of natural resources and the prevention of desertification.

²¹ Source: BIOTICA, 2001, *The Concept of Creation of the Ecological Network of the Republic of Moldova*, Academician Leo Berg – 125 years: Collection of Scientific Articles, Bendery. Pp. 153-215. In Russian

Russian regions

Though the Russian federal legislation does not directly envision ecological networks, it provides opportunities to realise the ECONET concept in line with PEBLDS. This circumstance together with the large size and the heterogeneity of the Russian territory require various approaches to ECONET planning in its regions.

The Concept of the Transition of the Russian Federation to Sustainable Development specifically mentions that the largest areas of natural ecosystems on Earth can be found in Russia. Biodiversity Conservation Centre (BCC) has indicatively identified these ecosystems on the map calling them the Great Euro-Asian Natural Backbone. BCC, Greenpeace Russia, Socio-Ecological Union, World Resources Institute and Global Forest Watch Russia initiative jointly identified the Intact Forest Landscapes within this natural area. A voluntary forest certification is expected to keep the naturalness of these forests. At the same time several areas of highest conservation value and under threat are recommended to be included in the Perspective Federal Protected Area Scheme under development by WWF-Russia.

Keeping in mind a high degree of landscape polarisation in old-developed regions, BCC has worked out for such cases a very simple methodology of rapid mapping of the regional ecological structure based on the analysis of freely accessible ordinary topographic maps. Output schemes of ecological structure are enough for the further gap analysis of protected area system and drafting ECONET schemes. BCC and relevant regional conservation agencies and partner NGOs have developed ECONET schemes for 16 administrative regions of the Russian Federation applying this methodology. At least four administrative regions included the corresponding schemes in the long-term territorial development plans. In these cases NGOs were involved as necessary to ensure the sound integration of the ECONET scheme into the development plans of the region. Additionally conservation agencies of six administrative regions adopted corresponding ECONET schemes as basic conservation policy documents.

*Belgium, the commune of Chaudfontaine*²²

Belgium's Walloon Region proposed the programme of Local Nature Development Plans (LNDP, Les Plans Communaux de Développement de la Nature) in 1995. It envisions, *inter alia*, the setting up of local ecological networks maintaining habitats for plants and animals. Local citizen and non-governmental organisations have been actively participating in the realisation of this programme for more than 10 years. For example, a nature management forum was set up in Chaudfontaine in partnership with about 50 partners including both municipal and state bodies, as well as several youth and environmental citizen organisations, such as Amis de la Nature (Friends of the Nature). They ensure the public care for the green places and contribute to the inventory of springs, landscapes of interests and other natural features. One of the established working groups tackled the issue of footpaths and tracks. The volunteers carry out both desk research (identifying old paths on a map dating from the previous century, analysing different plot plans, etc.) and research in the field. In this way, the group fulfils a function of supervision and expert appraisal for foot or cycle paths in the municipality. For every new housing estate project (very numerous in this urban periphery) the group is consulted for its opinion on the pedestrian ways to be maintained or created and also on the landscape aspects related to these new developments. Thus the ecological network map produced by a drawing office and the data on paths gathered by the group became tools that are regularly used for territorial planning at a level where the local population can directly perceive and intervene in the developments.

²² Sources: the document STRA-REP (2000)3;
http://www.chaudfontaine.be/site/citoyennete/organismes_div

The pilot project “Implementation of the Pan-European Ecological Network at local level” was realized based on the agreement between the Council of Europe and the Vinnytsya Regional Ecological Association “Green World of Podylla” following the model of the Walloon Local Nature Development Plans. Other NGOs were also involved including the National Ecological Centre of Ukraine and several local citizen organizations and groups. They worked in cooperation with Vinnytsya Natural Resources Department, local authorities, Geomatika Institute, experts from the universities of Kyiv and Vinnytsya and individual local experts and volunteers. First the data were gathered by local experts, which made it possible to identify the various sites of greatest interest in terms of biodiversity and identify indicatively the future ecological network. The projected ecological network was mapped taking into account human activities. LNDPs were developed for each of the eight communes of the Nemyriv District based on this map.

In the second phase of the project further activities were carried aiming at biodiversity conservation by using the concept of the LNDP:

- » Inventory and official description of the territories important for biodiversity conservation and their designation as territories subject to protection;
- » Organization of the territory management aimed at biodiversity conservation;
- » Increasing the recreational potential of nature areas around Nemyriv as incentive measure for their protection;
- » Implementation of public outreach and environmental education campaign for raising awareness and the enhancing positive attitudes of the local population to the idea of the ecological network.

²³ Sources: the documents STRA-REP (2001)1; STRA-REP (2003) 1; STRA-REP (2004) 7; STRA-REP (2004) 8; STRA-REP (2006) 1

COUNTDOWN 2010

In order to join forces and meet the 2010 target to halt biodiversity loss, more than 300 partners ranging from national to local governments, from non-governmental organisations to businesses have started to take up this challenge in Europe. They have created Countdown 2010, a powerful network of active partners working together to reach the 2010 biodiversity target.

While Global Biodiversity Outlook and the Belgrade Assessment show that reaching the 2010 biodiversity target would require unprecedented additional efforts, there is an emerging consensus about what needs to be done to save biodiversity within the next years. In order to support these necessary actions, the Countdown 2010 set the following objectives:

- » Gain maximum public attention across Europe for the challenge of saving biodiversity by 2010;
- » Encourage and support the full implementation of all the existing binding international commitments and necessary actions to save biodiversity;
- » Demonstrate clearly what progress Europe makes in meeting the 2010 biodiversity target.

Principles

Sound science: all Countdown 2010 work is underpinned by sound science and/or relevant practical conservation experience and is carried out to the highest possible standard.

Transparency: Countdown 2010 is committed to the principle of transparency in process and decision making. It ensures public access to information, while respecting individual privacy and institutional confidentiality, as appropriate.

Subsidiarity: the Countdown 2010 Secretariat works at the most appropriate level (local, national, regional, multi-regional) and it undertakes only those Countdown 2010 activities that partners are unable to.

Autonomy: Countdown 2010 is an independent alliance. It is governed by the will of its partners through the institutional mechanisms in place (Advisory Board and Partners' Assembly).

The role of individual partners

Our claim is broad and simple, providing the space for organisations to continue their work with the tools and issues that are closest to their own core capacity and objectives. Zoos might focus on environmental education, forestry enterprises on how to reduce their own impact on biodiversity, and some nongovernmental organisations will campaign for better implementation of nature legislation in Europe.

Public institutions of all kinds, from national, regional and local governments and municipalities to international business and local NGOs, are joining the Countdown 2010 network.

Partnership Procedure

Partnership of Countdown 2010 is open to governments, local authorities, civil society, and private sector organizations which demonstrate a clear commitment to contribute toward the achievement of the 2010 biodiversity target. Partners have the opportunity to participate in two different structures, according to their specific interest, core business or mandate:

1. National Countdown 2010 Hubs, gathering all the partners under the same banner. Where possible, the National Hub will correspond to already existing IUCN National Committees – or other existing fora.
2. Partners' Assembly as the annual meeting of the entire network.

Ambassadors

Countdown 2010 Ambassadors are an esteemed group of influential decision makers coming from any sector and level, working in any country or from an international scope, who can demonstrate their commitment to the 2010 biodiversity target. In their personal capacity, they will act to help reduce, or stop altogether, the loss of biodiversity.

Current list of ambassadors:

- » Aldo Cosentino, Italian Ministry of the Environment
- » Achim Steiner, United Nations Environment Programme

Secretariat

A small Secretariat is responsible for the management and coordination of this decentralised system. At its first meeting in February 2004, the Partners' Assembly requested the IUCN Regional Office for Europe (ROfE) to host the Countdown 2010 Secretariat. In its action, the Secretariat applies the principle of subsidiarity: it only undertakes those activities that the partners are not able to undertake by themselves. It profiles and builds on existing initiatives and products, adding value through communication, facilitation, coordination and profiling the work of its partners.

The Secretariat therefore seeks to involve as many organizations and to form as many strategic partnerships as possible in order to achieve the objectives of Countdown 2010. The Secretariat performs the following functions:

- » Provide overall day-to-day coordination of Countdown 2010;
- » Undertake financial and human resource administration of the initiative;
- » Strive to increase the number of participating organizations throughout Europe;
- » Keep an updated database on partners and project implemented under Countdown 2010 umbrella;
- » Invite participating organizations to become members of the Advisory Board;
- » Communicate intensively with partners to build their understanding and ownership of Countdown 2010;

- » Promote long- and short-term secondments of staff and interns from partners to the Secretariat;
- » Develop and implement the communications and media strategy;
- » Help prepare events; organize ad-hoc conference and workshop on Countdown 2010 issues;
- » Authorise use of the Countdown 2010 logo for fundraising purposes.

