

## Annual activity report of the Central and East European Working Group for the Enhancement of Biodiversity

2006

### Activities and projects

#### **International Activities**

##### **GEF**

The Global Environmental Facility (GEF) is the financial instrument of the so called “Rio Conventions”, where NGOs play an important role both in the development and in the implementation of GEF projects. Accredited NGOs form the global GEF NGO network represented on GEF statutory meetings by the Regional Focal Points. CEEWEB, as the Regional Focal Point for Central and Eastern Europe, supplies both the CEE NGOs and GEF Secretariat with information, concerns and technical issues, co-ordinates the NGO input from the region to the Council Meetings and assists NGOs to become GEF accredited members. Last, but not least, CEEWEB regularly consults with the implementing agencies.

In 2006 CEEWEB took part on the Council Meetings of GEF. The main issue of these meetings was the discussion of the RAF (Resource Allocation Framework). The GEF NGO Network was making the case how - possibly badly – can this new system influence the NGOs access to GEF funds.

Besides this work CEEWEB has been invited by GEF Secretariat to take part in a small policy level meeting with selected NGOs and GEF implementing agencies in order to advise GEF Secretariat on NGO cooperation for the future. One of the most important outcome was the underscoring the need for a full time NGO coordinator within the GEF Secretariat. However, it needs the approval of the GEF Council. Since than CEEWEB is campaigning with European donor governments to support an NGO coordinator position at the GEF Secretariat until Council Discusses the joint NGO/GEFSEC proposal.

#### **Participation in the “Agriculture and environment” Advisory Group**

CEEWEB maintained its seat in the Advisory Group on “Agriculture and environment” of the European Commission. CEEWEB attended one meeting on 5 May 2006, in Brussels. The main focus was on the effectiveness and efficiency of agri-environmental measures and on the 2007-2013 Rural Development programming. The meetings were rather informative than interactive.

## **Cooperation within the European Habitats Forum**

The EHF is an ad hoc committee created on the request of the European Commission, which represents the civil interests on the EU's nature conservation policies and directives.

CEEWEB was officially accepted as full member of EHF in the year 2002, and thus the first purely CEE based NGO network joined the EHF. In 2006 EHF had two meetings, on both of them CEEWEB was represented.

EHF gave the mandate to CEEWEB to organize the NGO input to the Biogeographic Seminars of the new EU member states and this activity has been duly implemented and reported.

## **Participation in the work European Environmental Bureau**

CEEWEB maintains its membership in the EEB and it is represented in both the Biodiversity and the Agriculture Working Group. CEEWEB attended all the meetings organised in 2006 for both WGs- The Agriculture Working Group meeting focused on strategic issues like future priorities for the Working Group. As a result of the meeting the group members got recent information on the ongoing discussions on EU level and on possibilities for lobbying on agricultural issues.

The key topics for the Biodiversity WG were financing Natura 2000, Complaints procedures, and the EfE process.

Hungarian NGOs elected CEEWEB in September 2006 to be their representative to the EEB Board for the next two years.

## **Natura 2000**

On the basis of the mandate from the European Habitats Forum, CEEWEB continued to coordinate the NGO input into the Biogeographic Seminars in the Natura 2000 designation process. To help NGO preparation for the seminars, there was a preparatory meeting held for the Continental region (26th and 27th January, 2006 in Prague). In this meeting, update on the actual situation of Natura 2000 in the participating countries was provided, as well as valuable help and information to the NGOs for their preparation work. Several CEEWEB members represented the European Habitats Forum in the Biogeographic Seminar: Naturalists Club Poland, Salamandra, Veronica (Continental, 26-28 April, 2006, Darova, Czech Republic), whereas Tamás Papp from Milvus Group and Ildikó Arany from CEEWEB Office participated as observers in the Boreal and Continental Biogeographic Seminars, respectively.

CEEWEB Natura 2000 Working Group had its meeting in 18-20 May 2006, Budapest. Future activities of the WG were discussed in the following areas: Diversity newsletter, CEEWEB Academy, networking, activity in EEB Biodiversity Working Group and in EHF, National Development Funds screening. Also the WG started to prepare the big project on Natura 2000 management on military training areas. The implementations will start in 2007.

The largest event of the WG in the period was the CEEWEB Academy on Management of Protected Areas and Natura 2000, 24-28 August 2006 in Kiten, Bulgaria. The idea of this Academy emerged from the Natura 2000 WG, as well as most of the participants and lecturers were themselves members of the WG.

## **The Carpathian Convention**

CEEWEB continues working on the implementation of the Carpathian Convention. In the framework of the UNEP-led Carpathian Project (see below) CEEWEB focuses on strategic aspects of sustainable tourism development in the Carpathians: the preparation of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Protocol of the Convention. A concrete project that aims at sustainable rural development of mountain areas in Romania is another contribution of the network to the implementation of the convention. CEEWEB is also an active member of CERI (Carpathian Ecoregion Initiative) designing and following up the activities of the organization as a Board Member. CEEWEB is involved into the preparation for the first Conference of the Parties (COP1) to the Carpathian Convention in December 2006 (attending the second preparatory meeting for COP1, planning and implementing a side event for the COP1, coordinating the activities with other NGO networks active in the Carpathians, including ANPED and CERI). CEEWEB also maintained its membership in the CERI (Carpathian Ecoregion Initiative) Board and attended its Annual Meeting.

## **The Carpathian Project**

The full name of the Carpathian Project is the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians in a Transnational Framework. The project is led by the Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention at the UNEP-Vienna, implemented by 19 partners, and co-financed by the EU CADSES Programme. CEEWEB is a partner in the project responsible for the preparation of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Protocol to the Convention.

From the start of the project CEEWEB has established an *ad hoc* Carpathian Convention Tourism Working Group (CCTWG) and developed a background document on Sustainable Tourism Opportunities in the Carpathians. The background document was presented at the COP1 of the Carpathian Convention.

## **Sustainable regional development model project in the Carpathian Mountains**

As a follow up to the Brasov meeting on the Carpathian Convention in 2003, the DOEN foundation (NL) selected the project idea of CEEWEB dealing with sustainable rural development in Transylvania, Romania. The objective of the project is to implement a model project in the Carpathians which demonstrates the possibilities and potential for better way of living on the basis of sustainable rural development. The project results were used as case study during the first COP in 2006. The two-year project started in March 2005, to be finished in 2007, it is implemented in partnership with a Romanian CEEWEB member organization, the Milvus Group.

The main results of the project are the following so far: development plan is designed by the community, study trip for locals, local museum, publishing local periodical newspaper, preparation work for an extensive orchard, preparation work for environmental school and camp, a professional and detailed tourism assessment is completed, preparation work for brochures. The project is more or less implemented according to the original project schedule.

### **Measuring progress in nature conservation according to the CBD and PEBLDS**

The project launched in the beginning of 2005 aimed for the incorporation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and its regional arm for implementation, the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) into national policies and decisions, as well as for raising awareness on them. In the second phase of the project, the partners (BIOTICA Ecological Society from Moldova, Green Action from Croatia, Makmontana from Macedonia and Young Researchers of Serbia) prepared their final reports and shared their experiences at a workshop at the 4<sup>th</sup> Biodiversity in Europe conference in February, 2006 in the Plitvice National Park in Croatia.

### **Preparing for COP-8 of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the 4<sup>th</sup> Biodiversity in Europe Conference**

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is the most holistic convention aiming for the conservation of biodiversity. The 8<sup>th</sup> meeting Conference of the Parties took place in March 2006 in Brazil, and was preceded by intense policy preparation. CEEWEB provided input into the consultations on EU and national level in Hungary and afterwards disseminated the outcomes of the negotiations.

As an important event in the run up of the 8<sup>th</sup> COP meeting, the 4<sup>th</sup> Biodiversity in Europe conference took place in February, 2006 in the Plitvice National Park in Croatia. CEEWEB organised the participation of 16 NGOs from the Central and East European region. With the prepared NGO statements and interventions during the official meetings about communication and education, protected areas, invasive alien species and the future of the PEBLDS among other topics, the NGOs showed a great activity and tried to influence the consultations for the most desirable outcomes. The report, NGO statements and outcomes of the 4<sup>th</sup> Biodiversity Conference, as well as of CBD COP-8 are disseminated on the CEEWEB website.

### **Co-organising a seminar on the Convention on Biological Diversity for experts from Central and Eastern Europe**

In the follow up of the 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of Parties to the CBD, the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation organised a seminar for nature conservation experts from the CEE region between 4-9 July, on the Isle of Vilm, Germany. For the preparation and implementation of the seminar CEEWEB was asked and offered its help as a co-organiser. The seminar aimed to show the relevance of the CBD to the work of the various participating experts and present at least a part of the large body of information, guidance, obligations and requests directed at a broad range of stakeholders at the national and international level under the CBD.

## **Activities in Hungary**

### **International Biodiversity Day**

In 2006 CEEWEB organised the celebration of the International Biodiversity Day (IBD) in Hungary in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment and Water, where special attention was given to involve students with the ambition to become journalists. Students of 12-18 years were invited to submit essays about the importance of biological diversity and the role of media in environmental awareness raising, and could personally participate on the celebration of IBD on 22 May 2006 in Bugac, in the Kiskunság National Park. The Minister of Environment and Water of Hungary gave a press conference to the “student journalists” and professionals, and later inaugurated the newest educational trail of the National Park called the “Trail of Birds and Trees”. After a walk on the newly opened nature trail, the students could discuss the characteristics of good articles, and listen to the experiences of professional journalists in small groups. The students were invited to write articles about the IBD, which were commented by the professionals. The final articles appeared on the Hungarian CEEWEB website and on Hungary’s Clearing House Mechanism, and the best ones were even selected for publishing in the printed media.

In addition to the event in the Kiskunság National Park a much wider audience was targeted in the nationwide postcard campaign. On the week of the IBD, 30,000 postcards were distributed in the country in pubs, cinemas, restaurants for free. It bore a message that explained the relationship between human well-being and biodiversity in an easy language.

### **Capacity building of Hungarian NGOs on the Convention on Biological Diversity**

Responding to the great need of capacity building on international nature conservation policy and instruments, CEEWEB organised an NGO seminar on 25-26 April in Budapest. The seminar provided an insight into the functioning and provisions of CBD, with special focus on some issues, such as on protected areas and the ecosystem approach. The invited representatives of the Hungarian Ministry of Environment and Water explained the international policy forming processes regarding the CBD within the EU, which requires the development of a common EU position for the COP negotiations. The Cartagena Protocol and the question of GMOs were also thoroughly presented by a Ministry representative, which met the great interest of the participating NGOs. The Hungarian National Focal Point presented her personal experiences at COP-8 and also talked about national implementation issues.

### **Capacity building of Hungarian NGOs on EU and lobby tools and possibilities**

Capitalising on CEEWEB’s knowledge and experience in the EU, CEEWEB organised a one-day seminar for Hungarian – not only environmental – NGOs. It dealt with the functioning of the EU in general and particularly with questions about lobbying on EU level. Lecturers included CEEWEB staff, representatives of Ministries and also representatives of the EU. The seminar was followed by a discussion among the NGOs about the EU in general and the lack of knowledge among civil society about EU related matters. Publications related to this activity were widely distributed and received with great interest.

## **Monitoring the National Rural Development Programme for 2007-2013**

CEEWEB was actively participating in the public debate of the Hungarian National Agriculture and Rural development Strategies. One questionnaire was developed and filled in by the members of the Rural Development Working Group of CEEWEB. Our colleagues kept in touch with the desk officers in DG-Agri responsible for the programming, so CEEWEB lobby activities are both on EU and national level.

With regards to concrete national activities, we have established an expert group of independent experts and with their help CEEWEB formulated a number of critical documents with regards to the Hungarian Rural Development Programmes. A number of Hungarian NGOs also joined the statements, thus CEEWEB was assisting the NGO movement with this activity. More over, CEEWEB was playing a key role of the establishment of the Hungarian Rural development Working Group of NGOs. In the frame of a number of consultative processes CEEWEB was invited and took active part in policy formulation with regards to the Program.

### **Hungarian Natura 2000 working group**

CEEWEB has continued the facilitation of the Hungarian Natura 2000 Working Group. CEEWEB organised four meetings for the WG in 2006, during which the members of the WG (Hungarian Ornithological Society, Hungarian Association of Nature Conservationists, WWF Hungary and CEEWEB) were able to discuss and agree on common strategy and harmonised their work programs related to Natura 2000 in order to enhance civil participation in decision making processes. The cooperation also helped to keep up the active communication with decision makers and civil society, thus the WG was instrumental in critical comments with regards to a number of questions dealing with the implementation of the Directive.

CEEWEB has organised a Forum, which invited as lecturers decision makers, civil society representatives and experts covering the topic of the financing Natura 2000 in the light of the National Development Plan and its Operational Programmes.

During 2006 CEEWEB has prepared two publications in Hungarian dealing with Natura 2000 – Monitoring Natura 2000, and Natura 2000 in the New Hungarian Development Plan. These publications were printed and widely distributed, and were also placed on the website in order to make it available for the wider public for reading and download.

CEEWEB, together with the other members of the Hungarian Natura 2000 Working Group organised a section workshop during the 16th National Gathering of the Hungarian environmental NGOs, during which the activities of the WG was presented and a discussion took place with invited experts on the actual questions of the national implementation of Natura 2000.