

Summary of national NGO reports from Albania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro on progress towards the 2010 target

1. Introduction

With the aims of capacity-building, awareness raising and assessment of progress towards the 2010 target, CEEWEB carried out the project "Towards halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010" in South East European countries between December 2003 and 2004. The project included national workshops and round-tables with the participation of NGO and governmental representatives with the aims of awareness raising and building partnerships. Besides, project partners¹ made national assessments of the progress made in their countries towards the 2010 target. The findings of the NGO assessments are summarised below.

2. Advances in national nature conservation and sectoral integration apart from the 2010 target

Nature conservation in the context of national decision making

1. The priorities and general situation of nature conservation in South East European countries is largely determined by the past (that is by the economic and social difficulties mainly in such emerging market economies of Albania, Moldova, Serbia and Montenegro) and the future (the approaching EU accession of Bulgaria and Romania).
2. As the priorities are largely determined by the economic objectives, there is an imminent threat that developments will take place on the clear expense of the national natural assets, as it has been warned in almost all reports. This is also apparent in the acute lack of funding in the environmental sector (both within the government and in the NGOs), which diminishes their potential to mitigate adverse environmental impacts.
3. It is the case in spite that ambitious goals are identified on high political level. For instance Montenegro is declared as an 'Ecological State' in the constitution, and Moldova elaborated a new policy to regulate the relations within the system "Man-Society-Nature" and environmental protection after the country gained independence in 1991.
4. About during the last fifteen years the basic documents in environmental field were elaborated in these countries or their development is underway (such as the National Environmental Action Plan, National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, etc.). However, for instance in Romania despite the well defined objectives of the *National Strategy and Action Plan for Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use of its Components*, mainly due to the preparation for EU accession the priorities have been significantly changed since then. Now the development of the National Ecological Network and the identification of the future Natura 2000 sites are among the main concerns of the relevant governmental institution.
5. In the judgement of NGOs the legal framework of these countries provides good basis for nature conservation (and in principle meets the EU requirements in accession countries,

¹ Albania: Preservation and Protection of Natural Environment in Albania; Bulgaria: Green Balkans; Moldova: BIOTICA Ecological Society; Romania: Milvus Group; Serbia: Young Researchers of Serbia; Montenegro: Eco Centar "DELFIN"
The project was supported by the Swiss Agency for Forest, Environment and Landscape.

as Romania), however some typical shortcomings were pointed out, such as legal inconsistencies, legal gaps and maybe as being the most important, low (or the lack of) enforcement, because in many cases there are no sanction systems in place.

6. Besides low enforcement, weak institutional and human capacities were reported as major impediments of effective nature conservation activities and sectoral integration.
7. The possibilities of nature conservation are greatly limited by the small share of protected areas in these countries, especially as compared to Western Europe (1.96% in Moldova, 4.9% in Bulgaria, 5.18% in Romania and 6.05% in Serbia is reported as protected area). Protected areas insufficiently represent the natural habitats in many countries. For instance in Bulgaria they do not provide enough coverage of plain forest ecosystems, grass and river ecosystems, as well as the ecosystems of the Black Sea aquatory, while in Romania in the continental, pannonic and steppic biogeographical regions. The lack of management plans (or the lack of their implementation) of numerous protected areas also appear as a major problem together with the lack of adequately qualified human resources (despite some progress in some fields e.g. in Bulgaria).
8. There is no integrated and comprehensive nationwide biodiversity monitoring in these countries (except for some separated monitoring programmes and the annual Biodiversity Monitoring Programme (BMP) in Montenegro), thus it is hard to assess the achievement or failure of the 2010 target on the field.
9. The citizen right to access to environmental information is still not respected and provided, although these countries (except for Serbia and Montenegro) signed the Aarhus Convention. It is also partly due to the lack of developed culture to exercise such citizen rights, which is especially true in environmental field. Information exchange is also slow and insufficient among relevant institutions and sectors, though some progress was made in this respect in Bulgaria, where an information exchange mechanism was successfully developed as part of the global Clearing House Mechanism. In addition reliable environmental information often does not even exist in these countries.

Sectoral integration

10. In general agriculture, industrial development, transportation and urbanisation are identified as major threats on biodiversity. At the same time there are no substantive results reported in sectoral integration.
11. Legal basis of sectoral integration have been developed in the form of various laws, plans and strategies (on forestry, water, territory management, environmental assessment, eco-tourism, etc.), however their enforcement seems to be especially problematic.
12. Mechanisms, forums or instruments for sectoral integration either do not exist or do not work properly. The overlap of competencies and unclear sharing of responsibilities also hinder effective integration and cooperation in some cases. As mentioned in the case of Serbia, the cooperation of different governmental and non-governmental organisations largely depends upon personal contacts (which may be however seriously hindered by often institutional changes).
13. However good initiatives exist, for instance a Sustainable Development Council is to be (re-)established in Serbia, which would include up to nineteen representatives of different sectors, including one or two NGO representative(s). Besides, a protocol for cooperation between the Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Waters and the Ministry of Environment Protection of Serbia is being prepared (although it does not provide any

legal constraints for the case of infringement). In addition the respective ministry signed a memorandum with the Agency for Privatization, which obliges new company owners to comply with environmental standards. Although in reality there is a lot of evidence that it is not applied as it should be.

NGO participation

14. The role of environmental NGO movement in solving national environmental problems in these countries is fairly different. Although the insufficient and insecure funding is a general problem, its extent, as well as the human and technical capacities of NGOs greatly differ.
15. Although with small capacity, Bulgarian nature-conservation NGOs are reported to exert serious influence on actions in this sector, through participation in development of laws, plans and strategies, as well as field activities. Almost 100% of all protected areas designated during the recent years were proposed by NGOs, including two big nature parks. Some Romanian NGOs also deal with the designation of Natura 2000 areas, others with the protection of endangered species, etc. (funded mainly by international donors). One of the most important events in the nature conservation NGO cooperation was the establishment of the "Natura 2000 Romania" NGO coalition. The coalition is coordinated by a Representing Council, has a secretariat and 37 members – all NGOs acting in nature protection.
16. In other countries as Albania, Serbia and Montenegro NGOs have less human and financial capacities and thus possibilities to have a large impact. However, for instance the number of NGOs has significantly increased recently in Albania (from 7 organizations in 1994 to about 70). Moreover a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with the NGO community in order to include them in the process of drafting new laws and regulations and running new projects. International cooperation has started already with other NGOs and umbrella organisations, however cooperation even among national NGOs could be still enhanced on national activities in these countries.
17. NGOs traditionally undertake environmental awareness raising activities in every country. In other fields of work, there are also examples of good cooperation between NGOs and governmental organisations. In Serbia it resulted that the Institute for Nature Protection of Serbia recommended that NGOs should become governing bodies in special nature reserves.

3. Achievements resulting from the 2010 target

Ownership of the 2010 target

18. All these countries participated in the Kyiv Conference with governmental and non-governmental representatives and the ownership of the 2010 target to halt biodiversity loss seems to be strongly linked to the Environment for Europe process. In all these countries the ministries of environment (most recently this ministry was established in Albania in 2001) are responsible for the 2010 target mainly through their nature conservation units. Thus it can be said that the target is not dedicated to high political level, which would be needed for their achievement. As it was pointed out in Montenegro, after the Kyiv Conference the institutions and persons responsible for the implementation of the outcomes were not identified.

Visibility of the 2010 target

19. In general the visibility of the target is very low, including the ministries, NGOs and the public. It gets the proper attention neither in communications, nor during official meetings (in the parliament, (inter)governmental committees, working meetings); in

most countries it does not appear in official national documents. For instance in Romania even the name of the target is only known by those who directly work in biodiversity protection in the Ministry of Environment and Water Management and by some representatives of NGOs active in this field. The idea behind the name is known by very few people.

20. Despite the huge-scale international conferences where this commitment was made, the target does not appear in the media at all. Positive exceptions can be reported however from Bulgaria, where the Government presented the target to the media and the public after the 7th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (held in February 2004) and at a National Working Meeting on the occasion of the International Biodiversity Day, on 22 May 2004.
21. At the same time there are a few official documents where the 2010 target appears, such as the National Environmental Strategy and Action Plan 2005-2014 of Bulgaria, where the 2010 target was adopted as a sub-target in the section on biodiversity. The 2010 and other targets of the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity are included and would appear in the National Environmental Action Plan of Serbia as well.

Change in attitude and priorities due to the 2010 target

22. There are no noticeable changes in the attitude of decision-makers and the public due to the 2010 target in any of these countries. Biodiversity has not become a higher priority either.

Direct results that can be explicitly credited to the 2010 target

23. The fact that the commitment of the 2010 target was made on international level does not seem to ensure any extra efforts in the national implementation. It means that the achievement of the target is hindered by the same factors as any other nature conservation and sectoral integration activities. Other national priorities (economic growth, poverty reduction, etc.) prevent any substantial progress even though the issues of these economic, social and environmental problems are interwoven and can be only solved in a holistic way in the long term.
24. As it was recognized in Romania, the 2010 target is considered by the decision makers as an expression of the political will of Romania to reduce (stop) the loss of biodiversity by 2010 and not as a commitment resulting in concrete obligations for the country. As a result no separate human/financial resources are allocated for the implementation of the target.
25. The progress in nature conservation that follows making the 2010 commitment in 2002 and 2003 definitely contribute to its achievement, however the extra efforts that would be necessary are still not visible anywhere.

Monitoring and evaluation of efforts for reaching the 2010 target

26. As pointed out before, integrated biodiversity monitoring system that would enable the monitoring of the commitment in the field is generally not well developed and does not properly function in these countries.
27. As for monitoring governmental efforts on policy level towards halting the loss of biodiversity, no reporting system could be reported from any country.

NGO participation related to the 2010 target

28. In most countries NGOs contribute to the 2010 target in an indirect way through their usual activities apart from the target. As recognized in Bulgaria, NGOs are still unaware of the significance of the adopted 2010 target as a reason for mobilization of resources and implementation of biodiversity conservation activities. As for Serbia, the only example of awareness raising on 2010 among NGOs was the training and round-table organised within the CEEWEB project "Towards halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010" by Young Researchers of Serbia in Belgrade, May 2004.

29. Although not directly related to the 2010 target, BIOTICA Ecological Society and REC-Moldova organized a multi-stakeholder conference "From Rio to Johannesburg" with the similar aim to assess progress after making international commitments in the field of sustainable development during the nine years after the Rio Summit.

4. Recommendations with regard to achieving the 2010 target

Although NGO recommendations are country specific to some extent, some of them should be mentioned here.

Recommendations on the policy level

- Rearrangement of priorities and recognition of biodiversity conservation as a social and political priority direction, so that environmental values get a greater weight in decisions
- Joining international biodiversity conventions (as the Bern and Bonn Conventions by Serbia)
- Undertaking appropriate and necessary legislative and administrative measures for the implementation and enforcement of ratified international conventions
- Co-ordination of activities among the various sectors and the elaboration of sectoral programmes for biodiversity integration
- Translating global sustainability goals into national goals and targets as an essential step to ensure integration of these goals into national policies
- Developing national development plan and other planning documents that ensure the effective sectoral integration of nature conservation considerations
- Analyses of legislation and filling legal gaps
- Incorporation of sanctions into the legislation (e.g. for the enforcement of legislation on environmental crime)
- Finalizing strategic documents on environmental policy, such as national environmental action plans, biodiversity strategies and action plans
- Identifying, mobilizing and employing necessary resources for environmental and biodiversity plans
- Paying adequate attention to the 2010 target through its appearance in official documents, communications, official meetings, orders as well as through public consultations, the media, etc.
- Adoption of new legal regulations on economic incentives (e.g. taxes on the use of natural resources, pollution charges and penalties, user and product charges)
- Development of a funding strategy for biodiversity conservation
- Introduction of binding procedures of public hearings on local and national levels in the legislation

On the institutional level

- Creation of an inter-ministerial reconciling body to ensure the integration of biodiversity conservation considerations in other sectoral policies, with NGOs members as well

- Improvement of coordination, exchange of information and collaboration among sectors (including governmental and non-governmental organisations)
- Using multi-stakeholder dialog as the main planning tool on local, regional and national levels
- Adoption and implementation of effective mechanisms for legislation enforcement in the field of access to information, public participation in environmental decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters according to the provisions of the Aarhus Convention;
- Establishment of biodiversity conservation units in all main sectoral ministries and strengthening the expert knowledge on biological diversity in national authorities
- Significant increase in the number of staff dealing with nature conservation inside the ministries of environment

Direct actions

- Significant increase in the budget of the ministries of environment
- Effective management of existing protected areas as well as their expansion (also in order to make them more representative of the natural habitats in the country), and the establishment of national ecological networks
- Development and implementation of management plans for protected areas and species
- Restoration and redemption of degraded lands
- Consolidating, testing, refining, documenting and producing workable sets of policy-relevant biodiversity indicators
- Elaboration of methodology for biodiversity monitoring, development of a functional biodiversity monitoring system
- Scientific assessments (e.g. on practices, methods and technologies for natural resource management, alien animal species and for producing red lists) and establishing data bases (e.g. on genetic resources)
- Public awareness campaigns on the 2010 target as well as on biodiversity conservation issues in general, which may also make the difference in the success of key issues like Natura 2000 network, National Protected Area Network, etc.
- Moving forward the development of environmental education on all levels, developing education modules, training teachers, etc.

In the non-governmental sector

- Strengthening cooperation between NGOs and the central, regional and local nature conservation authorities
- Enhancing NGO efforts to monitor governmental activities for implementing and enforcing environmental legislation, conventions and international agreements with relevance to nature conservation
- Creation of a forum for nature conservation NGOs in order to ensure good exchange of information, data and experiences and to prepare common projects
- Better information of NGOs about international conventions in order to be able to monitor the implementation of legislation, submit proposals for improvement and help halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010.