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Joint national activities for the ecosystem-based mitigation and adaptation to climate change

Report of activities in 2013

The activities were implemented by:
CEEweb for Biodiversity
Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation
Estonian Fund for Nature
Naturalists Club Poland

The aim of the joint lobby was to communicate the synergies between nature conservation and fighting against climate change, to draw the attention of CEE national decision makers to the huge capacities and potential benefits offered by ecosystem-based mitigation and adaptation and to influence national climate change policies in a way that biodiversity and sustainability aspects are given higher priority in the future. Since climate policies influence an extremely wide variety of initiatives and measures - covering practically every sector such as health and social issues, production systems, spatial planning and the built environment as well as nature conservation, agriculture, forestry and water - the further aim was to channel our messages into the ongoing sectoral national processes too.

The below activities were carried out in parallel in Bulgaria, Estonia and Poland.

I. Provide updated information about the status of National LULUCF Action Plans, as envisaged in the Commission's proposal in 2012 to establish common accounting rules for forestry and agriculture (LULUCF).
Status: completed for Bulgaria, Estonia and Poland
Deliverable: LULUCF fact sheet (see Annex I.)

II. Lobby at national governments for adopting CEEweb's recommendations in relevant national policies (climate change strategies as well as other relevant policies in nature conservation, agriculture, forestry and water sectors).
Status: completed in Estonia and Bulgaria
Deliverable: Report on CEEweb lobby for ecosystem-based climate adaptation at national level in Estonia and Bulgaria (see Annex II.)

Annex I.

LULUCF fact sheet

Summary of information gathered within the framework of the CEEweb activity 'Joint national activities for the ecosystem-based mitigation and adaptation to climate change' in 2013, executed by CEEweb for Biodiversity, Estonian Fund for Nature and Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation

1. General facts about LULUCF

LULUCF stands for LAND USE, LAND USE CHANGE AND FORESTRY. For the purpose of keeping stock of greenhouse gases in the context of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol, LULUCF is an accounting sector that that includes all human management of vegetation and soils in Annex 11 countries to the Kyoto Protocol. It concerns emissions and removals from management of land, except for livestock or biofuels. The following carbon pools are covered by LULUCF:

- aboveground biomass and timber
- belowground biomass
- deadwood and litter
- soil organic and inorganic carbon

Concerned management activities:

- Forest Management
- Afforestation, Deforestation, Reforestation
- Re-vegetation
- Cropland and Grazing Land Management
- Wetland Rewetting and Drainage

According to the IPCC's Good Practice Guidance for Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (2003), the sector covers six major categories of land: "Forests", "Arable land", "Pastures and meadows", "Wetlands", "Settlements" and "Other land". Each of these categories is divided into subcategories: "Land remaining in the same category of land use" and "Lands converted to other land uses". The determination of removals or emissions of greenhouse gases is based on carbon stocks in soil and plant biomass on the area covered by the relevant category of land use.

LULUCF in current climate policies

International level:

- 1st Kyoto Protocol Commitment Period excluded LULUCF
- 2nd Kyoto Protocol Commitment Period for 2013-2020 includes forestry but agriculture is voluntary

- New post-2020 framework will include decisions on LULUCF, adoption is expected in 2015

EU level:

- Climate and Energy Package of the EU: no LULUCF commitment
- Effort Sharing Decision for non-ETS sectors: agriculture included but only non-CO2GHG, i.e. Methane and N2O
- European Commission published a proposal in 2012 to establish common accounting rules for LULUCF
- Mitigation target is not yet included, this will be the second step

The role of forests in climate change mitigation

Forests are a major sink of carbon dioxide (CO2) and play a key role in the absorption of carbon through photosynthesis. They are an important link in the global carbon cycle due to their ability to capture CO2 from the atmosphere and store it in their biomass, forest litter (dead matter on the forest floor) and forest soil. The growth of tree species represents to a large extent net carbon stocks and with this respect evaluation and projections related to the state and the productivity of forests are essential to the analysis of the development of carbon emissions. Furthermore, the growth of woody biomass in forests plays a role in reducing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere (source: Third National Action Plan on Climate Change for the period 2013-2020, Republic of Bulgaria).

The role of soils in climate change mitigation

Soils are active carbon sinks with significant uptake and long-term storage of carbon. Land use changes such as intensification of agriculture or converting grasslands into plough lands can turn soils into carbon sources, releasing huge amount of carbon into the atmosphere. The amount of carbon stored in European agricultural soils only, is approximately 4 times as much as the EU's annual GHG emission. (Lugato et al 2013, EEA 2013). Peat lands are especially important, considering that together with permafrost they store 50% of soil carbon globally, in spite of their relatively small cover of 16% of terrestrial land (European Commission, 2008). Restored peat lands act as climate coolers. Due to land use change and warming climate, peat lands are also potentially the most significant terrestrial GHG emitters beside tropical deforestation.

Currently, soils throughout the EU are facing severe erosion and consequently there is a risk of European soils turning from carbon sinks to carbon sources. In many parts of Europe soils are threatened by urban sprawl, land sealing and intensification of land use, erosion and degradation of ecosystem services. Soil quality is decreasing due to salinization, compaction and contamination, decrease of soil organic matter and loss of soil structure. These can result in losing carbon capture and storage capacity of the soil or even in emission of huge amounts of soil C to the atmosphere (JRC, 2008).

2. The status of National LULUCF accounting and action in Bulgaria, Estonia and Poland

With the Commission's proposal comes the obligation for each Member State to adopt action plans on how they will increase removals of carbon and decrease emissions of greenhouse gases in forests and soils throughout the EU. The proposal does not yet include a commitment

for national emission reduction targets for these sectors but aims to make mitigation action and best practice in the sector more visible.

Bulgaria

1. Status of the LULUCF sector in Bulgaria

The balance between emissions and removal of greenhouse gases in the LULUCF sector is in favor of the sequestration. Sinks are territories occupied by forests, grasslands and meadows. A major source of emissions in the sector is the change in land use and the conversion of forests, grassland into cropland and urban areas.

The analysis of the structure and the changes in land use for the period 1988-2009 shows a positive trend with regard to forest areas. Although the area of pastures decreases the values show that most of them have become forest areas (fig. 1).

Over the past 21 years the absorption of greenhouse gases in the sector compensated between 11.35% -19.9% of the total greenhouse gas emissions in Bulgaria. Biggest role in the sequestration and storage of carbon (94-95% of the total absorption in the sector) have the territories occupied by forests (fig. 2).

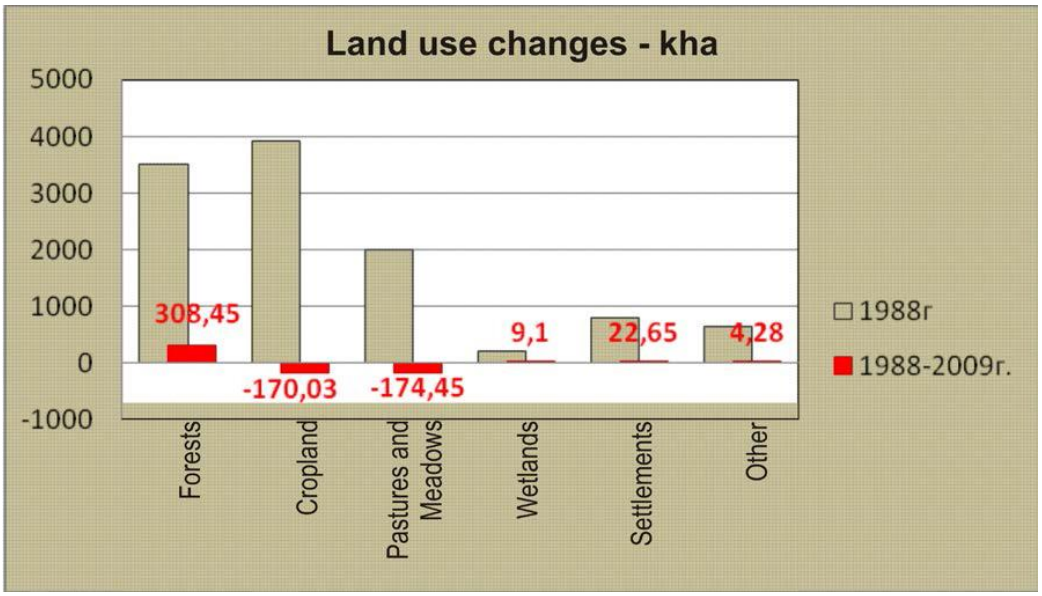

Fig.1. Change in the surface area of different categories land use (1988-2009) Source: Third National Action Plan on Climate Change

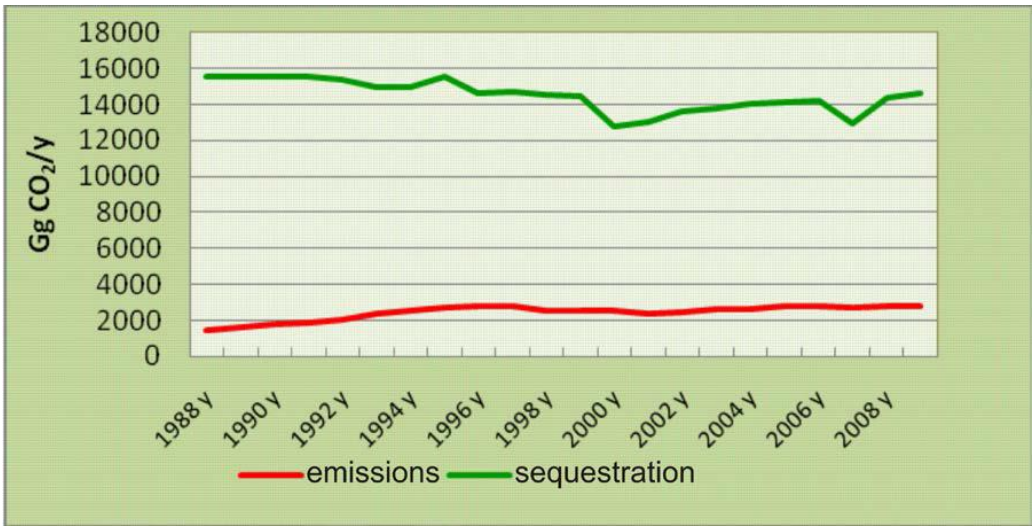

Fig.2. Annual emissions and sequestration of greenhouse gases by the LULUCF sector (1988-2009) Source: Third National Action Plan on Climate Change

2. **Policies targeting LULUCF mitigation actions in Bulgaria**

The sector of Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) was not addressed and no measures were proposed to reduce emissions or to increase the absorption of greenhouse gases in the previous two Action Plans on Climate Change (2000, 2005), but it is covered by the Third National Action Plan on Climate Change for the period 2013-2020.
Sixteen measures were developed to achieve the objectives of the National Action Plan on Climate Change for the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry sector and were grouped into four priority axes.

Priority axis 1: increasing greenhouse gas sequestration

Measures with direct impact on the reduction of GHG emissions
Measure 1. Utilization of „non-wooded areas intended for afforestation " in forest areas
Measure 2. Afforestation of abandoned agricultural land, barren and deforested areas, eroded and threatened by erosion land outside forest areas
Measure 3. Increase of areas for urban and suburban parks and green zones
Measure 4. Restoration and sustainable management of wetlands. Protection and preservation of wetlands in forest areas, peatlands, marshlands

Measures with indirect impact on the reduction of GHG emissions
Measure 1. Development of a financial mechanism to support the activities for creation of new forests
Measure 2. Analysis of the effectiveness of the existing legal framework for regulation of land use change of different types of land and recommendations for its improvement

Priority axis 2: preservation of carbon stocks in forests

Measures with direct impact on the reduction of GHG emissions
Measure 1. Restoration and maintenance of protective forest belts and new anti-erosion afforestation

Measures with indirect impact on the reduction of GHG emissions

Measure 1. Supporting preservation and maintenance of forests of high conservation value and extensive approach for their use
Measure 2. Preservation and improvement of the condition of urban and suburban parks
Measure 3. Prevention of forest fires through introduction of early warning systems

Priority axis 3: increasing the potential of forests to capture carbon

Measures with direct impact on the reduction of GHG emissions
Measure 1. Increasing the density in the listed natural and artificial plantations

Measures with indirect impact on the reduction of GHG emissions
Measure 1. Introduction of appropriate systems to manage forest plantations under changing weather conditions aimed to create highly productive and sustainable mixed forests
Measure 2. Supporting the increase of the percentage of certified forests
Measure 3. Development of good practices for the establishment and management of intensive forest crops for biomass production and establishment of standards for residual biomass after logging
Measure 4. Development of a part in the new strategic documents concerning the forestry sector that involves measures aimed at improving the role and the contribution of forests to carbon accumulation

Priority axis 4: long-term carbon storage in wood products

Measures with indirect impact on the reduction of GHG emissions
Measure 1. Extend the use of wood products as substitutes for products from non-renewable, polluting and energy-intensive materials

Estonia

1. Status of the LULUCF sector in Estonia

The 2013 National Inventory Report (Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Estonia 1990-2011) under the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol is the most recent document describing the current status of climate change mitigation issues in Estonia.
The LULUCF sector, acting as the only possible sink of greenhouse gas emissions in Estonia, plays an important role in the national carbon cycle. The share of LULUCF sector emissions and removals by each land use category during the time period 1990–2011 is presented in Figure 3. In 2011, LULUCF sector acted as a CO2 sink, totalling uptake of 4 262.81 Gg CO2 equivalent. Compared to the base year 1990, uptake of CO2 has decreased by 51.83% and compared to the previous year 2010, 28.26%. In the last decade, CO2 emissions have varied widely due to the highly unstable rates of felling and deforestation. As seen in Figure 3, LULUCF sector has also acted as a net source during 2000–2003, when harvesting exceeded biomass increment in forests. A key driver behind these trends has been the socio-economic situation in Estonia.
Majority of CO2 removals in LULUCF sector come from biomass increment in Forest Land remaining Forest Land and land converted to Forest Land subcategories. In 2011, Forest Land was the only net sink category. During 2003–2007, Grasslands constituted a significant CO2 sink in addition to Forest Land. Grasslands are reallocated to forest land category when the tree grown cover exceeds 30% due to natural succession and reduction of management activities.

Most of the emissions in LULUCF sector are the result of biomass loss due to land conversion to Settlements and drainage of organic soils, minor sources of CO2 are biomass burning (wildfires), cropland liming and peat extraction.

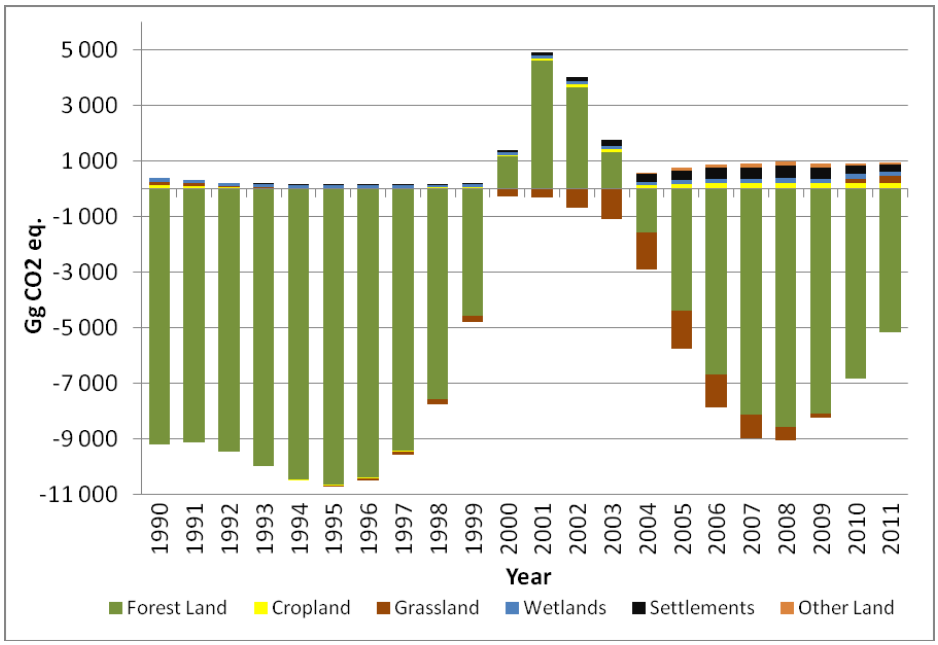

Fig. 3. Trend in Emissions from Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry Sector 1990–2011. Source: Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Estonia 1990-2011.

2. Policies targeting LULUCF mitigation actions in Estonia

There is no comprehensive LULUCF action plan in place in Estonia. The sectors of LULUCF are indirectly covered by the updated draft of the National Environmental Action Plan 2007-2013 of Estonia, to the draft versions of the Development Plan for Ministry of the Environment 2012-2015 and to the Nature Conservation Development Plan up to 2020. There are other indirect strategies and laws on climate change in Estonia, for example the Estonian Forest Development Plan until 2020 and the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan. The ministry is considering the possibility of integrating relevant provisions into the main strategic documents, such as the Estonian Strategy on Sustainable Development, the National Spatial Plan Estonia 2030+ , etc.

Poland

1. Status of the LULUCF sector in Poland

The 2013 National Inventory Report (Poland's National Inventory Report 2013) under the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol is the most recent document describing the current status of climate change mitigation issues in Poland up to 2011.
The greenhouse gas inventory of LULUCF sector comprises emissions and removals of CO2 due to overall carbon gains or losses in the relevant carbon pools of the predefined six land-use categories. The liming of agricultural lands is included in the LULUCF sector, as well. The non-CO^2 emissions from biomass burning and disturbance associated with land-use conversion to cropland are also to be reported here. These activities altogether resulted in 24 170 Gg net removal of CO2 equivalent in 2011.

The most important sub-category as the main source of removal in the sector is Forest Land. The bulk of the CO2 removal is generated in living biomass in Forest Land. The large sink is mainly due to the fact that the total increment of the growing stock in forest lands is always higher than the annual harvest. For activities related to afforestation/reforestation and forest management estimated balance is negative, what means the activity is considered as a net CO^2 sink. Considering the afforestation activity, associated CO^2 sink increased by 12% between 2008 and 2011. The emissions associated with deforestation in comparison to 2008 decreased by 8.7%. The size of net absorption for forest management activity for the year 2011 is approximately 8 % lower than in 2008. Decreasing area subject to the activity "forest management" and increasing volume of harvested timber, drive mainly the final estimates. Volume of harvested timber in 2011 in comparison to 2008, increased by 8.5% from 34.273 million m^3 to the level of 37.180 million m^3.

2. Policies targeting LULUCF mitigation actions in Poland

There is no comprehensive LULUCF action plan in place in Poland. Poland ratified the Climate Convention in 1994 and the Kyoto Protocol in 2002, undertaking to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases (CO2, CH4 and N2O) during the period from 2008 to 2012 by 6 % by reference to the emissions in the baseline year 1988. For fluoridated industrial gases, Poland adopted 1995 as the baseline year.
The government document formulating the state environmental policy, including also as regards climate protection, is the National Environmental Policy for 2009-2012 and Its 2016 Otlook, adopted by the Sejm on 22 May 2009. The document sets out the objectives, priorities, challenges and directions and the main priorities of Poland's ecological policy over the next four to eight years, including the national reduction target arising from the Kyoto Protocol (Sources: Centre for Climate Adaptation, European Climate Adaptation Platform, European Environmental Agency, Climate change mitigation - National Responses).

3. CEEweb's recommendations to enhance the mitigation potential of LULUCF

CEEweb for Biodiversity highly welcomes the adoption of EU-wide rules for LULUCF accounting and the EC's proposal for the adoption of forestry and agriculture-specific targets at EU level. In CEEweb's view, these initiatives need to be supported by a holistic environmental policy framework and a new, more sustainable socio-economic framework involving various sectors on board, such as spatial planning, land use, agriculture, forestry and water management as well. Integrated solutions applying the ecosystem-approach are inevitable in agriculture and forestry. Convergence of interests between soil conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, water management, food production, disaster mitigation and biodiversity conservation needs to be found.
Sustainable management techniques in both agriculture and forestry enhance soil organic carbon content, increase carbon sequestration, water and nutrient retention and decrease the risk of erosion, therefore contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation as well as to long-term food and resource security. Therefore, the future Common Agricultural Policy needs to mainstream sustainable techniques through financially rewarding them. These techniques include diversification of agricultural system both in terms of spatial structure and species and breeds, organic farming, as well as application of techniques which enhance the soil's natural productivity through increasing its SOC.

Sustainable forest management practices (e.g. shelterwood) need to be mainstreamed and widely supported by the future CAP. Specific attention should be paid to avoid emission of high amount of carbon stored by European old-growth, close-to-nature forests by maintaining their natural status. Forest soils, as important but sometimes underestimated contributors of forest carbon storage, must be protected. Biological diversity (i.e. diversity of micro-habitats, species and genetic variables within species) and structural diversity (i.e. age distribution of trees as well as mosaic structures with large trees, openings, young groups, deadwood and in certain habitat types, patches of grasslands and wetlands) of forests need to be enhanced, thus strengthening resilience of forest ecosystem services (including carbon sequestration and storage) under growing climatic stress and additional anthropogenic pressures. Intensive forest management should be restricted to plantations, clearly distinguished from natural forests.

4. Sources

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Annex II.

Report on CEEweb lobby for ecosystem-based climate adaptation and mitigation at national level

Recommended measures for climate change adaptation were collected. See the list of measures below.

Forestry:

- Ensure forestry support schemes favouring ecosystem-based climate change adaptation
- avoid emission of carbon stored by European old-growth, close-to-nature forests by maintaining their natural status
- in protected areas and in special environments (e.g. riparian forests, dry forests), widely introduce non-intervention management
- in case of managed forests, support sustainable forest management systems (e.g. shelterwood) enabling natural processes and strengthening the forests' natural resilience and adaptation capacity as well as enhancing the biological and structural diversity of forests
- in forest management plans, put a special emphasis on sufficient amount of deadwood
- protect micro-habitats in forests with a special emphasis on wetlands, since they have an important role in buffering extreme hydrological events, thus effectively working against both floods and droughts at landscape level
- protect forest soils, as important but sometimes underestimated contributors of forest carbon storage
- in case a shift in tree composition can be expected due to the shift of vegetation zones, prefer natural adaptation (i.e. gradual changes in species composition during a natural process) to artificial one (i.e. introduction of new species)
- enhance the proportion of forested areas with non-use and sustainable use, while restrict intensive use to plantations, clearly distinguished from natural forests

Agriculture:

- Ensure agri-environmental support schemes (CAP or national agricultural payment schemes) for the management of semi-natural habitats, with a special focus on High Nature Value (HNV) or less favoured areas farming
- diversify agricultural landscapes aiming for a mosaic-like landscape, where cultivated lands alter with grazing lands and semi-natural habitats (e.g. forest patches, hedgerows, grassland stripes)
- diversify agricultural system in terms of spatial structure as well as species and breeds of crops and animals
- prefer locally adapted traditional breeds in order to enhance crop diversity at regional scale, and to support high genetic diversity of crops
- apply techniques which enhance the soil's natural productive capacity through increasing its SOC (examples for such techniques: integrating crop residues into the soil, reduced tillage, cover crops and crop rotation, mixed cultures, smaller field size with fields edges and hedgerows, and diversity of management)

Water management:

- prepare vulnerability assessments and risk analyses to underpin a carefully identified set of measures
- avoid or limit development and intensive land use in flood prone areas by appropriate spatial planning
- where possible, dedicate flood prone areas to natural water retention, thus maximising the positive aspects of floods and effectively use flood water in periods of droughts and scarcity
- when designing water reservoirs, prefer natural water retention areas (water bodies, floodplains and water related ecosystems) against structural solutions (e.g. constructed reservoir space)
- handle together flood protection and drought management in an integrated water resources management plan
- restore damaged water based ecosystems and prevent their further damages
- integrate water resources management in the management of the wider landscape

Management and monitoring of protected areas and ecological networks:

Recommended measures at site level:

- prepare climate change vulnerability assessments and re-define conservation objectives according to the results
- restore water retention capacity of habitats
- enhance the heterogeneity of succession stages and microhabitats within sites
- restore connectivity between fragmented sites
- stand for the largest possible natural restoration of degraded sites
- Carry out PA management effectiveness evaluations on a periodical basis
- Establish monitoring system to monitor climatic changes and the effects of climate change on the natural habitats and ecological networks

Recommended measures at landscape level:

- enhance the overall natural status and permeability of landscapes
- Ensure protected status of the most important sites
- maintain or restore natural ecological corridors, ensure connectivity between important natural habitats with corridors defined in a geographically precise way
- Preserve large-scale, not fragmented habitats
- Include elements of inter-network connectivity in national spatial planning in a legally binding way in all levels (local, regional, national) by adopting the Green Infrastructure concept
- integrate water resources management in the management of the wider landscape
- Indicate in the land cadastre whether the area is part of an ecological corridor/network
- Ensure cooperation and establish joint management and monitoring systems between adjacent and/or transboundary protected areas

Integration

- Realise sectoral integration to avoid potential conflicts with authorities from other sectors (e.g. economy, agriculture, forestry, etc), by communication, cooperation, adopting the ecosystem-approach and seeking for multiple benefits of ecosystem services
- Integrate the concept of ecosystem services and their assessment/valuation into national economy and regional/local development plans with special emphasis on the climate protection function of ecosystems

- Introduce biodiversity check to green energy investment and development in protected areas already at the planning phase, to avoid any harmful effects (biodiversity degradation and biodiversity loss)
- Integrate monitoring systems for the conservation status of water bodies and Natura 2000 habitats and species (integration of WFD and HD/BD implementation)

The following national activities were carried on, in order to integrate the above adaptation measures as well as measures on ecosystem-based climate change mitigation into national processes.

Estonia

1. **Renewable energy** – Estonian renewable energy producers have organised an umbrella-organisation that communicates the problems of the sector. ELF has been in good contact with the head of the organisation Rene Tammist and has been supporting their proposals for developing a renewable energy sector. Unfprtunately lately there have been negative political decisions stopping the development of renewable energy sector as well as the Ministry of Economy does not plan sufficient development of the sector with EU support in the new programming period. The website of the umbrella-organisation Estonian Renewable Energy Assotiation: http://www.taastuvenergeetika.ee/en/

- taking part in events: 24-28 October 2013 ELF experts took part in conference "Climate from Nordic-Baltic perspective", the program was very high quality and can be found here: http://www.norden.ee/images/rohemajandus/arhiiv/programme_climate_23-24oct13.pdf
- on 29-30 October 2013 ELF expert took part in The Estonian Offshore Wind Energy Confecense, the agenda can be seen here: http://www.tuuleenergia.ee/en/conferences-in-estonia/agenda/
- taking part in the process of preparing Estonian energy sector development plan 2030+, the consultation is organised by Estonian Development Fund and most of the documents and discussions are led in the password-protected wiki-page: http://www.energiatalgud.ee/ All ELF experts who are interested in the energy topic have been provided password by Estonian Development Fund. ELF has provided input regarding biomass (peat, wood) and has stated that the forest cutting rates should not be planned as high as in the national forestry development plan.
- organising a seminar related to energy resources, renewable energy sustainability criteria (EKOenergy label) – ELF organised a seminar in cooperation with EKOenergy label and support by the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Ceeweb support was used for presenting sustainable biomass potential in Estonia, the program and posters: http://elfond.ee/et/teemad/teised-teemad/saeaestev-areng/taastuvenergia/ekoenergia

2. **Permanent grassland maintenance** – for the climate and water protection purposes it is recommended that peat-soils (former wetlands) are agriculturally used as permanent grasslands not arable fields.

- On the meetings with officials in Ministry of Agriculture we have been supporting the idea to have a subsidy in the Rural Development Plan for the farmers who manage peat-soils and switch from arable field to a permanent grassland.

3. **Wetland restoration** is a good climate measure as meliorated bogs are big methane emitters.

- On the meetings with officials in Ministry of Environment we have been supporting the suggestions to invest into wetland restoration the EU support from the new programing period. As a result Estonia has been planning sufficient amount of the budget to wetland restoration in the new programming period.

4. **Forestry**: our calculations show that Estonian forest cutting rates are at the moment more or less CO2 neutral but Estonian Forestry Development Plan foresees increase in cutting rates making forests CO2 emitters.

- preparing a position paper (in Estonian) and a presentation about sustainable (CO2 neutral and negative) forest cutting rates.
- organising a study trip to Latvia about permanent forestry to officials and scientists

Bulgaria

Forestry

National situation: Natura 2000 covers 34,4% of the territory of Bulgaria. Majority of this surface is forest. Bulgarian legislation recommends at least 10% of the forest habitats to be protected as nonintervention forests but the mechanism how to enforce this is missing for the moment and the forest uses continue business as usual. Bulgarian National and Nature Parks cover about 4% of the territory of the country. They protect the most important Bulgarian old-growth forests. Part of these forests is strictly protected but it is possible and feasible for the area of the strict protected forests inside the parks to be doubled.

Goal: to ensure long-term conservation of the Bulgarian old-growth forests as carbon sequestration areas by enlarging the area of strict protected forests in the parks and in Natura 2000 sites.

Main activities:

1. Lobby for the identification of wilderness areas with non-intervention management in the forests of National and Nature Parks, during the process of the amendment of their management plans.
   - Belasitsa Nature park (11 732 ha): BBF participated in the public hearing of the new management plan of the Park on 18.12.2013. Wilderness zone in the Park was proposed to be mapped and clearly visualized. The proposal was accepted.
   - Central Balkan National Park (72 021 ha): BBF works for the preparation of the new management plan of the Park. In the plan, all old-growth and natural forests inside this Park will be included in non-intervention management areas.
   - Balgarka Nature Park: new management plan will have public hearings in the beginning of 2014, BBF is preparing similar proposal.

- Strandja Nature Park, Vitosha Nature Park, Pirin National Park and Rila National Parks: BBF monitors the development of the management plans in order to ensure the best possible protection of the old-growth forests in these territories.

2. Participate in the amendment process of the Forest Act by lobbying for eliminating the subsidies for using timber for producing electricity.
   - BBF participated in two meetings with the Member of the Bulgarian Parliament Dimcho Mihalevski in the summer of 2013. His proposals for amending of the Bulgarian Forest Act was discussed. The idea to ban the use of the timber for producing electricity was supported and better texts for the amendments was proposed.
   - in August 2013, written proposal was submitted, in cooperation with the Bulgarian coalition of conservation NGOs, to the Bulgarian Parliament about the amendment of the Forest Act including detailed proposals against the use of timber for producing electricity.
3. Analyse the main documents of the funding for biomass in order to avoid perverse subsidies to destroy the Bulgarian forests.
   - A meeting with expert from Ministry of Agriculture is planned.
4. Start collaboration with the roadless areas campaign initiated by the MEP Kriton Arsenis.
   - A skype conversation with the office of Kriton Arsenis was held.
5. Amend the Ordinance for forest planning in order to ensure that the 10% non-intervention managed forest will be included in clear way in the forest management plans.
   - BBF participated in the National round table on the old-growth forest conservation organized by Executive Forest Agency and WWF DCPO on 26.09.2013. Position was presented that the only solution to ensure the real protection and non-intervention management of 10% of the forest habitats is their mapping as part of the process of the preparation of the forest management plan. This position was also supported by the representatives of the Forest University and private forest experts.
6. Participate in experience exchange
   - On 04.10.2013 BBF took part in a conference in Blagoevgrad that was organized by the University of Forestry and WWF. Main topic was “Coniferous old-growth forests in Central and Eastern Europe - benefits and problems of conservation” and the main aim was to enable representatives of different institutions and environmental organizations in Bulgaria to exchange scientific expertise to the characteristics and significance of old-growth coniferous forests. The conference highlighted the need for further discussions and challenges facing the preservation and promotion of these forests.
7. Propose to the Ministry of Environment and Waters to identify the 10% non-intervention management areas in the Natura 2000 forest habitats to be identified during the process of the declaration of the orders of SAC or to be required these areas to be identified and included in the orders in three years.
   - As soon as the Ministry starts the process this proposal will be submitted.
8. Investigate the opportunities to use FSC for old-growth forest conservation and proposals for including the requirements to protect at least 10% of the forest habitats as non-intervention zones into the FSC rules.

- As soon as the next amendment process of the National Standard is started, this proposal will be submitted.

9. Monitoring of national and European programs which could provide money for forest roads.
   - A meeting with expert from Ministry of Agriculture is planned.

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