

Work Programme of CEEWEB for 2006

Introduction

THE MISSION OF CEEWEB IS THE CONSERVATION OF THE BIODIVERSITY THROUGH THE PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

The need to conserve biological diversity is not only vital for its immanent value but also for the goods and services it provides for humanity and which is essential for social and economic development. This has evoked a great number of environmental NGOs to cooperate in the Central and Eastern European region as well. Although the situation of the NGO movement is different from country to country, the problems they tackle are greatly similar. Some of these common issues are the economic trends, which threaten natural assets and are largely enhanced by the past or still upcoming EU accession of CEE countries in the today globalised world, the problematic enforcement of EU and national environmental legislation and the low environmental awareness of the public. Considering that the region has common environmental problems and values, it became evident for the environmental NGO movement in the CEE countries that co-operation on international level promotes solving their national problems efficiently.

CEEWEB was founded in 1994 as the common will of environmental NGOs from twelve countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The overarching aim for the establishment of the CEEWEB network was to work on the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity in CEE countries, to get familiar with each others' environmental activities, exchange ideas and experiences and to start working on joint projects. These projects are to focus on concrete nature conservation and lobby activities, raising public awareness, and tackling cross-border nature conservation issues and policies.

Later it became obvious, that the greatest challenge for the conservation of biological diversity in these countries is related to the EU membership and the enlargement in Bulgaria and Romania. Tackling this issue calls again for the empowerment of a truly Central and East European NGO network.

ACTIVITIES of CEEWEB in 2006

1. WORKING WITH GLOBAL INSTRUMENTS

1.a Convention on Biological Diversity

Besides forming common policies and actions in the CEE region¹, promoting sustainable development and raising public awareness, a further aim of CEEWEB is promoting the enforcement of biodiversity conventions with special regards to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Being a holistic convention with the objectives of conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and equitable sharing of benefits, the implementation should be furthered in several areas in a multi-stakeholder approach. On Pan-European level the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy provides a frame for the regional implementation of the CBD. (See more below)

The European Union is also Party to the Convention and thus committed to implement its provisions as a regional economic organisation. As Member States delegate specific tasks e.g. in the field of environment, agriculture, transport. to the EU level, and at the same time the implementation of the Convention requires substantial efforts in these fields, EU policies and activities must also take the requirements of the Convention into account and they should be efficiently coordinated both horizontally at EU level, and vertically with the MSs' policies and activities.

In addition to working with the EU and national governments, CEEWEB aims to find the entering points into the global CBD process in order to provide input from the lower levels. The various thematic fields CEEWEB works in (Natura 2000 Network, agrobiodiversity and rural development, sustainable tourism, CITES, etc.) are all relevant in contributing to the objectives of the Convention and can bring valuable experiences and expertise into higher policy forming forums. Currently there is still a lack of knowledge and interest about the CBD among NGOs and other stakeholders in the region, which calls for further capacity building and involvement.

Overall objective

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CBD IS REALISED THROUGH THE COOPERATION OF VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS AND SECTORAL INTEGRATION ON ALL POLICY AND DECISION MAKING LEVELS

Objectives

- Raise the profile of biodiversity conservation and CBD among stakeholders (NGOs, governmental officials, European Parliamentarians, European Commission, other Convention's Focal Points (e.g. Carpathian Convention)), which is necessary for their involvement in the implementation.

¹ With special focus on the 10 new member states, the 2 accession countries and countries involved in the good neighborhood policy of the EU

- Support that policy making and implementation at the EU, regional and national levels are in line with the requirements of the Convention, the decisions made at the Conference of Parties (COP) and the adopted guidelines and work programmes.
- Support that the EU takes a leading position at COP-8 (representing all the MSs' opinions) and that all the regional interests and conditions are duly taken into account.
- Help the NGOs better realise the role and opportunities that CBD as a legal instrument can provide for nature conservation.
- Enhance cooperation between NGOs and government (CBD Focal Points, other officials).
- Ensure that NGOs are able to deliver NGO opinions and expertise into the policy making process on the global level.
- Mobilise grassroot NGOs to participate in a more coordinated and focused way in the implementation of CBD through practical projects.

Activities

- Establish NGO task force on CBD in CEE countries in order to coordinate NGOs' activities, share best practices for implementation in the various policy fields (nature conservation, forestry, agriculture, infrastructure, etc.).
- Build capacity among NGOs on the CBD and the PEBLDS through information dissemination on the CBD meetings (ad hoc meetings, SBSTTA meetings, CBD COPs, etc.), their preparations, main issues on the agendas and the outcomes (via e-mail list, the website and *Diversity* newsletter).
- Monitor governmental efforts for the implementation of CBD, assessing the progress on the basis of third national reports.
- Coordinate CEE NGO involvement in the COP-8 preparatory conference 'Biodiversity in Europe' in February 2006 in Croatia.
- Prepare and disseminate explanatory briefings on the outcomes of COP-8, which will be sent to relevant stakeholders (various national ministries, business associations, NGOs, authorities, etc.) in countries where such activities are not coordinated and done by ministries of environment.
- Organise seminar/workshop NGOs on the CBD and PEBLDS following the CBD COP-8 on the meeting outcomes and their possible integration into national activities and into the PEBLDS process.
- Campaign on biodiversity linked to the International Day of Biodiversity (22 May) targeting European Parliamentarians, the European Commission, international business associations.

1.b CBD Guidelines for Biodiversity and Tourism Development

Taking into account the increasing pressure on habitats and species exerted by tourism related activities, there is a need that NGOs push tourism development towards sustainability. For this aim it is necessary to improve the capacity and enhance the knowledge of NGOs working on tourism and biodiversity, as due to a lack of capacity, financial and human resources they are not having the possibility to solve those problems just by themselves.

For this reason CEEWEB members established the Sustainable Tourism Working Group in 2003 to tackle the specific problems in this area and determined to make full use of the International Guidelines for Biodiversity and Tourism Development of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Overall objective

TO MAKE TOURISM IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES SUSTAINABLE THROUGH JOINT ACTIVITIES, SUCH AS INFORMATION EXCHANGE, PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICES, TRAINING AND EDUCATION, POLICY-MAKING, PILOT PROJECTS AND LOBBYING.

Objectives

- Ensure that all stakeholders understand and are aware of sustainable tourism according to the definition of Commission on Sustainable Development.
 - Change the attitude and behaviour of relevant stakeholders towards sustainable tourism, with regard to e.g. undertaking, planning, management and development through training and education.
 - Influence decision bodies (e.g. governments, industry, NGOs) at all levels to respect the principles of sustainable tourism in policy-making.
 - Develop common pilot projects addressing the components and proving the feasibility of sustainable tourism.

Activities

- Create ways and means (web, discussion groups, electronic and printed publications) among the NGOs participating in the CEEWEB Sustainable Tourism Working Group, as well as among the stakeholders for spreading the information regarding sustainable tourism in CEE.
- Use suitable resources, e.g. EU PHARE/LIFE programs for implementing pilot projects.
- Compile a reasonable set of information on sustainable tourism.
- Develop a comprehensive document for training and education through compiling existing experiences and provide it through e.g. online training programs.

- Organize training/education courses for the Working Group in order to achieve a common level of understanding of sustainable tourism (within the framework of 'CEEWEB Academies').
- Identify and create ways and means for implementing the concept of sustainable tourism in CEE through the selection of different cases in different countries.
- Promote the implementation of the European Agenda 21 for Tourism.

1.c CITES and EU Wildlife Trade Regulation

The EU Environmental Action Programmes and legislation on the protection and conservation of the Community's indigenous species made wildlife trade regulations shift from a national affair to a matter of Community competence. The European Union Wildlife Trade Regulation (Council Regulation (EC) No. 1332/2005 from August 9 2005) enforces CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) within the EU and provides additional measures for the conservation of species in trade. There are still misgivings about the European Commission becoming a Party to the Convention, however the Commission is still committed to achieving European Community membership of CITES as soon as possible.

Realising the challenges of wildlife trade in CEE countries, especially as many of them being on the external border of the EU, NGOs formed the CEEWEB CITES WG and initiated a regional assessment on the implementation of the Convention

Overall objective

TO PROTECT ENDANGERED SPECIES BY IMPLEMENTING THE PROVISIONS OF REGULATIONS CONCERNING WILDLIFE TRADE, SUCH AS THE CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE OF ENDANGERED SPECIES (CITES), EU WILDLIFE TRADE REGULATION AND RELEVANT NATIONAL LAWS IN CEE COUNTRIES.

Aims

- Share information, exchange experience and train the members of the CEEWEB CITES Working Group to reach a common level of understanding.
- Enhance capacity of stakeholders, such as custom police and officers, management and scientific authorities and NGOs in selected CEE countries.
- Raise awareness among the general public and opinion leaders through coordinated outreach activities.
- Obtain a clear picture about the implementation of CITES and EU Wildlife Trade Regulation in seven CEE countries.
- Ensure improved legislation and implementation according to the results of the analysis of the legal and operational frameworks.

Activities

- Develop a monitoring system of implementation of CITES and EU Wildlife Trade Regulation in CEE countries.
- Assess the implementation of the Washington Convention and EU Wildlife Trade regulations in the CEE region.
- Assess the magnitude of retail commerce in CITES species in seven countries of the CEE region.
- Assess the magnitude of e-trade in CITES species in seven countries of the CEE region.
- Lobby for the improvement of legislation and implementation according to the results of the analysis of the legal and operational frameworks.
- Participate in the Commission's activities on the EU Wildlife Trade regulations.
- Strengthen the CEEWEB CITES WG through capacity building activities.
- Regular consultations with International Fund for Animal Welfare.

1.d Global Environmental Facility

The Global Environmental Facility (GEF) was established as one of the results of the Rio Summit in 1992. Its mission is to provide financial mechanism among others to the implementation of CBD. The so-called GEF NGO network represents the public opinion in formulating the policy of GEF. It functions through the network of Regional Focal Points (RFPs), which is always an NGO with regional outreach capacities. In the Central and East-European region CEEWEB holds this position.

Overall objective

THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL FACILITY IS THE INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENT PROVIDING AMPLE TOOLS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY FOR GOVERNMENTS AND NGOS ALIKE. CEEWEB SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY TO REMAIN ONE OF THE KEY PLAYER IN THE GEF "FAMILY" FROM THE CEE COUNTRIES.

Objectives

- Support the reform of the GEF NGO Network for a more effective and efficient functioning.
- Involvement in the GEF Secretariat in its work of rebuilding NGO portfolio and work program.
- Ensure the involvement of the NGO movement in the planning and decision making processes of GEF.
- Encourage NGOs to get accredited to this process.
- Provide know-how for NGOs considering applying for GEF support for projects.

Activities

- Provide information on GEF news and policy issues mainly via mailing list and website.
- Conduct preparatory consultations prior to Council Meetings electronically.
- Present the NGO concerns from the CEE region on the CEF Council Meetings.
- Prepare a publication “The new GEF – an NGO guide”.
- Attend the bi-annual Council Meeting of GEF (the main decision making event) and represent the concerns of the CEE NGOs.
- Lobby the constituencies representing the CEE countries.
- Initiate the process of restructuring the European NGO caucus in light of the changed recipient position of the new EU member states.
- Provide information for NGOs interested in submitting GEF project proposals as a “clearing house”, especially in the Carpathian Region.
- Take part and provide assistance in GEF’s regional activities, such as the Country Dialogue Workshops and the Capacity Development Initiative.

2. WORKING WITH PAN-EUROPEAN INSTRUMENTS

2.a Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy

The ‘Environment for Europe’ (EfE) process sets the Pan-European environmental agenda since its launch in 1991. It regularly brings together ministers of environment to discuss major issues, review achievements, set targets and agree on future cooperation. NGO participation is valuable contribution in the process.

At the third Ministerial Conference in Sofia 1995 the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy was adopted, which aims to be the regional arm of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Since then the PEBLDS has set priority issues for action through its past Action Plans and the current Rolling Work Programme, such as the establishment of the Pan-European Ecological Network, sectoral integration, awareness raising and capacity building.

In 2005 CEEWEB has been elected as one of the three NGOs to be permanent member of the PEBLDS Bureau – the operative body of the PEBLDS Council.

Overall objective

THE PAN-EUROPEAN BIOLOGICAL AND LANDSCAPE DIVERSITY STRATEGY AS THE EUROPEAN RESPONSE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CBD, PROVIDES A UNIQUE HOLISTIC FRAME FOR INTERNATIONAL ACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES WITH EFFECTIVE RESULTS.

Objectives

- Promote better understanding and interest among NGOs and stakeholders on PEBLDS, its related activities and the opportunities that the Pan-European process provides for nature conservation.
- Engage nature conservation NGOs and all relevant stakeholders more in the activities connected to the PEBLDS, policy shaping and monitoring.
- Initiate regular consultations connected to undertaking the international commitments and in implementing them within the 'Environment for Europe' process.
Ensure that biodiversity is a high on the agenda of the EfE process focusing on the 6th Ministerial Conference in 2007.

Activities

- Set up a task force in order to coordinate NGO involvement into the next Ministerial Conference held in 2007 autumn in Serbia among the CEE based NGOs.
- Build capacity through information dissemination and trainings for NGOs within the CEEWEB Network, but also for other interested CEE nature conservation NGOs as well.
- Inform NGOs about PEBLDS meetings (ad hoc meetings, PEBLDS Bureau and Council meetings, Biodiversity in Europe Conferences, etc.), the preparations, the main issues on the agenda and the outcomes to the NGOs via e-mail distribution lists, website and the *Diversity* newsletter.
- Organise seminar/workshop NGOs on the CBD and PEBLDS following the CBD COP-8 on the meeting outcomes and their possible integration into national activities and into the PEBLDS process.
- Participate on the PEBLDS Bureau and Council Meetings.
- Co-implement the PEBLDS work program with UNEP, ECO-Forum and other actors in the field of education and training, agriculture and monitoring.

3. WORKING WITH EUROPEAN UNION INSTRUMENTS

The European Union is clearly a major force in shaping the political and natural landscape in CEE countries: in new member states and also in accession and candidate countries. This influence is manifested in the political priorities of the Lisbon process and in the various sectoral policies, but also exerted in the form of the EU Structural and Cohesion Funds that are often used for environmentally controversial investments.

The global economic competition and globalisation reprioritised the political EU agenda in the last years, pushed social and environmental issues into the background and made the transition to sustainable development even more difficult. As the new Commission formulated “the most urgent issue facing Europe today is clear: growth and jobs”. In this environment the CEE countries find themselves in an especially difficult situation to defend their natural environment, even if it is the basis of any human (and thus economic) activities.

For this reason it is especially important to promote a concept of sustainable development which is not defined through competitiveness, but realises that the aim is the social improvement of citizens’ life, for which environment is a condition, and economy is only a tool.

Thus socially and environmentally responsible NGOs and other stakeholders should offer a viable and long-term alternative for development within and outside Europe. The need for alternative will be also evoked in the coming years or even decades by the challenges of climate change, ageing society and the environmental degradation. Substantial changes are also needed if the EU is to meet its target to halt of the decline of biodiversity by the year 2010.

3.a EU Sustainable Development Strategy

The Amsterdam Treaty and the draft Constitution included sustainable development among the general objectives of the EU. The Gothenburg European Council in 2001 endorsed the Sustainable Development Strategy, This Strategy, as it is pointed out, gives a third dimension to the Lisbon Strategy of becoming the most competitive economy in the world. This approach however contradicts the recognition that the economic, social and environmental problems are intertwined and cannot be tackled along different sets of priorities through separate strategies that are often in conflict with one another.

Despite the economic oriented approach taken in the Strategy, it has been difficult so far to give the environment and sustainable development objectives the attention that they need. By the end of 2005 a first review of the Sustainable Development Strategy is supposed to have delivered a revised Strategy with “sharpened” objectives.

Overall objective

TRANSITION TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ON GLOBAL, EU AND NATIONAL LEVELS BASED ON CHANGED VALUES, CULTURE AND POLICIES AND PRIORITIES.

Objectives

- Recognition by politicians, NGOs, private actors, educators that sustainable development is a necessity that can only create long term well-being and peace in Europe and the world, and it becomes the lead objective of EU's economic, social and environmental policies.
- Ensure that progress within the EU is measured increasingly according to sustainability criteria at the Spring Summits.

Activities

- Publicise the findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment for highlighting the necessity of structural changes in the present production and consumption patterns.
- Provide input into the relevant EU discussions, in particular with regards to the work in the Commission, the Councils and the European Parliament through cooperation with other NGOs (e.g. EEB).
- Inform and involve CEE NGOs as much as possible in sustainable development issues.

3.b Strategic Environmental Assessment as an instrument for sectoral integration

The Amsterdam Treaty provides for in article 6 that “environmental protection requirements must be integrated into the definition and implementation of the Community policies and activities referred to in Article 3, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development”. The new Constitution of the EU includes this article as well (III.4). According to the Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment Directive programs and plans with likely significant affects on the environment should be subject to strategic environmental assessment, in order to evaluate their environmental performance and to influence the way they are implemented. The Directive came into force in 2004, but available experience on the implementation is still scarce.

Overall objective

INTEGRATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS INTO NATIONAL PLANS AND PROGRAMMES WITH A VIEW TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

Objectives

- Promote the effective and appropriate use of SEAs as an instrument for sectoral integration.
- Raise awareness of policy makers at the national level about sectoral integration.

Activities

- Assess current practices in performing SEAs of national plans and programmes in cooperation with other NGOs.
- Provide information to the Commission on the implementation of the SEA Directive in cooperation with other organisations (e.g. EEB).
- Share information and experiences with other countries through participation in the EEB Biodiversity WG.

3.c EU biodiversity policy

The European Union committed itself to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010 at the Gothenburg European Council in 2001. The EU biodiversity policy review, which was launched in 2003 and includes the assessment of the implementation, appropriateness and effectiveness of the Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans is to produce the policy instrument for achieving the target in the form of a delivery plan. The stakeholder consultation of the review cumulated in a stakeholder conference in Malahide, called 'Biodiversity and the EU – Sustaining Life, Sustaining Livelihoods', organised by the Irish Presidency on 25-27 May 2004. The Commission will develop a Communication (delivery plan) keeping the basic objectives and targets from the Message from Malahide by the end of 2005 which will outline the planned measures towards the target.

Overall objective

EU BIODIVERSITY POLICY BRING CLOSER THE HALTING OF BIODIVERSITY LOSS IN EUROPE AND GLOBALLY

Objectives

- Assist the preparation and implementation of the Commission Communication for delivering the 2010 target.
- Ensure that CEE MSs contribute to the implementation of the measures within the “delivery plan”.
- Monitor the effectiveness of biodiversity policies and environmental performance in CEE MSs and other countries.
- Raise awareness of policy and decision makers about biodiversity issues and the necessity of their integration.

Activities

- Follow up the progress in the preparation and implementation of the “delivery plan”.
- Communicate main threats to achieving the 2010 target through preparing a publication on selected activities that were most harmful to nature in CEE countries and thus impede the progress towards the 2010 target.
- Develop user-friendly indicators for NGOs for assessing the environmental performance of CEE countries according to their own commitments (within the programme called ‘*CEEWEB Watch*’).
- Based on the developed indicators assess the environmental performance of CEE countries and publicise the results digitally and in print (within the programme called ‘*CEEWEB Watch*’).
- Provide input on biodiversity related issues into the consultation process conducted by the Commission before the review of the 6th Environmental Action Programme is published.
- Inform CEE NGOs about the development of the “delivery plan” and the measures national governments shall make.

3.d Natura 2000

The establishment of the Natura 2000 network is coming to an end now, most of the Biogeographic Seminars are already over in the EU15 countries, and the new Member States have made good progress too. The Alpine, the Pannonian and the Boreal Seminars will have been done by the end of 2005, and the Continental Seminar is planned to take place at the beginning of 2006. Besides taking part in the process of the latter, NGOs now have to focus on the further accession countries: Romania and Bulgaria, which have started to frame their lists of proposed Sites of Community Interest.

The next tasks for new EU Member States of the CEE region concerning Natura 2000 will be assuring sufficient financing (both on EU and national levels), management of sites in order to maintain their favourable conservation status, as well as monitoring and reporting in order to meet EU obligations. For all this Member States need to create the proper legal regulation and institutional basis. NGOs can have a significant input in these fields, which will be among the main activities of CEEWEB in 2006.

Overall objective

REACH AND MAINTAIN THE FAVOURABLE CONSERVATION STATUS OF SPECIES AND HABITAT TYPES OF EUROPEAN IMPORTANCE IN THE CEE REGION.

Objectives

- Ensure that site designation is based on purely scientific ground, and the sites are sufficient to maintain favourable conservation status of the species or habitats which they host.
- Promote NGO involvement in the bilateral negotiations following the Seminars.
- Ensure that management plans of Natura 2000 sites are appropriate for reaching and maintaining the favourable conservation status of species and habitats.
- Enhance cooperation with other NGOs (IUCN, WWF, Bird Life) on monitoring and reporting and financing issues.
- Ensure that Regional Development Plans and National Development Plans of the Member States provide adequate financing for Natura 2000.
- Build capacity of NGOs potentially dealing with Natura 2000 in the accession countries (Romania, Bulgaria).
- Ensure adequate representation of the specific CEE concerns regarding Natura 2000 in the work of the European Parliament and of various bodies of the Commission.
- Harmonize other multilateral agreements (PEBLDS, Carpathian Convention) with Natura 2000 objectives.

Activities

- Promote and coordinate NGO input to the continental biogeographical seminar (foreseen in the first half of 2006) through organizing NGO preparatory workshops (according to the mandate given by the European Habitats Forum).
- Lobby for NGO involvement in the bilateral negotiations following the Seminars.
- Cooperation with the Baltic Environmental Forum (on the basis of a signed Memorandum of Understanding) on the follow up of the biogeographic seminar and NGO capacity building.
- Coordinate CEEWEB Natura 2000 Working Group of the CEE region, promote exchange of information and experience through the established mailing list and WG meetings for coordinated CEE positions on Natura 2000 issues.
- Provide input into the Commission's and EP's preparatory and legislative activities with special focus on financing, monitoring and communication of Natura 2000.
- Share experiences on site designation process and policy forming with NGOs from the accession countries through the activities of the CEEWEB Natura 2000 WG (also involving NGOs from accession countries) with the help of training and publications.
- Follow up Natura 2000 financing in Rural Development Plans and National Development Plans in a number of new MSs, lobby for better financing if necessary on national and EU levels.
- Monitor the completion of LIFE+ programme, prepare position paper(s).

- Disseminate information on Natura 2000 financing, management and monitoring and other emerging issues to CEE NGOs and other stakeholders via the website, electronic and printed publications.
- Organise seminar within the ‘*CEEWEB Academy*’ seminar series on Natura 2000 management for CEE NGOs.
- Organize seminars on Natura 2000 financing based on the finalised Rural and National Development Plans and LIFE + possibilities.
- Support the NGO shadow monitoring through coordination in the CEE region in cooperation with other NGOs (e.g. WWF, BirdLife).
- Support the work of the CEEWEB Natura 2000 WG by maintaining the mailing list, and organising two meetings in 2006.
- Continue work in the EEB Biodiversity WG and propose to host a joint Agriculture and Biodiversity WG meeting in 2006.
- Continue participating in the work of the European Habitats Forum.
- Cooperate further with EHF, EEB, BL and WWF and provide input and participate in their work when needed.
- Promote the integration of Natura 2000 issues in the activities of the Carpathian Ecoregion Initiative through maintaining the Board membership.
- Maintain digital and printed library on Natura 2000 in the CEEWEB Policy Office.

3.e Agriculture and rural development

The latest round of reforms of the Common Agriculture Policy took place in 2002 and 2003, when the concept of compulsory cross-compliance and the general principle of decoupling support from production were introduced. However the simplification of the CAP is still going on, which will provide for a more transparent policy.

In preparation for the 2007-2013 programming period of the EU, the MSs prepare their Rural Development Plans in line with the EU Strategic Guidelines for Rural Development and National, Regional Development Plans and Operational Programmes. For a viable rural economy and healthy natural countryside it is crucial that these plans integrate sustainability and biodiversity considerations and provide adequate funding for socially and environmentally adequate farming.

Overall objective

INTEGRATING THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABILITY INTO THE AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY IN CEE COUNTRIES WITH A VIEW TO MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE BIODIVERSITY IN RURAL AREAS, AS WELL AS INTEGRATING CONSERVATION PRINCIPLES INTO AGRICULTURE, AND IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE.

Objectives

- Influence policy makers at national and EU level for giving a higher priority to ecosocial dimensions of agriculture.
- Assess the special problems of rural areas in CEE countries and monitor the development of national rural development strategies and plans following the EU Strategic Guidelines for Rural Development in the CEE countries for the period 2007-2013.
- Monitor the implementation of the “partnership principle” in the development of national rural development strategies and plans in the CEE countries and ensure that rural development policy implementation for the period 2007-2013 is based on public participation, among others public involvement in monitoring committees.
- Ensure the knowledge and information exchange regarding rural development policy and its relevance to nature conservation within the CEE region to reach a common level of understanding in order to form and articulate common positions.
- Maintain the communication and information channel between the Commission and CEE NGOs.
- Advocate specific CEE concerns regarding agriculture and rural development in the work of the European Parliament and of various bodies of the Commission and the Council.
- Raise the profile and empower NGOs in CEE countries for playing an active role in consultation processes.
- Disseminate best practices on sustainable rural development projects in selected CEE countries, also with a view to LEADER or LEADER-type programmes.
- Build capacity of NGOs potentially dealing with agriculture and rural development in the CEE region.
- Deepen the cooperation with other NGOs (e.g. EEB, Bird Life) on agriculture and rural development issues.
- Harmonize the Carpathian Convention and PEBLDS with CAP 2nd pillar objectives.
- Further the sustainable regional development in a pilot project in the Carpathians.

Activities

- Establish a CEEWEB Advisory Committees in selected CEE countries as a pilot activity to assess the special problems of rural areas in the region to formulate common principles and to form statements and proposals in order to influence EU agri-environmental and rural development policies.
- Monitor the development of national rural development plans and strategies.
- Monitor the CAP reform and develop well-founded proposals reflecting the positions of CEEWEB member NGOs.
- Provide information to CEE NGOs about the implementation of the simplification of CAP.
- Continue the participation in the official advisory committee “Agriculture and Environment” of the European Commission.
- Participation in the official advisory committee “Rural development” of the European Commission.
- Ad hoc participation in relevant hearings and consultations of the EP and the EC in order to ensure the maximum representation of CEE views and concerns.

- Work together with environment, animal welfare, rural development and farmer organizations, resulting in coordinated activities at EU and national level, and possibly joint statements and lobby actions.
- Organize a conference on regional development projects aiming sustainable development.
- Co-ordinate and strengthen the CEEWEB Agri-environment WG through electronic communication and with at least one WG meeting.
- Participate in the EEB Agricultural WG twice a year.
- Further cooperate with and establish partnership with international NGOs (e.g. Friends of the Earth, WWF, Bird Life, PREPARE network) and networks working on agriculture and rural development issues.
- Promote the integration of rural development issues in the activities of the Carpathian Ecoregion Initiative through maintaining the Board membership.
- Share knowledge with the Ecotourism and rural development WG of the Carpathian Ecoregion Initiative.

3. f European Agenda 21 for Tourism

The European Union has also realised the threats that tourism bears on the natural environment and that it continues to be an increasing problem. For this reason a European Agenda 21 for Tourism is under development with the involvement of NGO experts as well. CEEWEB through its member organisation Ecological Tourism in Europe actively participates in representing the views of the civil society during the drafting process.

Overall objective

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IS IMPLEMENTED IN EUROPE WITH A VIEW TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ADEQUATELY BALANCING SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS.

Objectives

- Ensure that the European Agenda 21 for Tourism adequately integrates biodiversity considerations along with social and economic aspects.
- Increase the knowledge on the European Agenda 21 for Tourism among NGOs.

Activities

- Participate in the final drafting of the European Agenda 21 for Tourism.
- Promote the widespread distribution of knowledge on European Agenda 21 for Tourism among CEE NGOs.
- Promote the implementation of the European Agenda 21 for Tourism in CEE countries.

4. WORKING WITH REGIONAL INSTRUMENTS

4.a Carpathian Convention

Biodiversity is under serious threat from unsustainable exploitation, pollution and land-use changes throughout Central and Eastern Europe. The relatively modest level of development in the region provides opportunities, as well as challenges for the sustainable use of biodiversity. This is realised in the Convention for the Sustainable Development in the Carpathians (Carpathian Convention), which is signed by six Carpathian countries – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine.

By promoting sustainable rural development through policy work and practical projects, which includes sustainable agriculture and sustainable tourism, access to sound transport, food and energy sources and respect for local cultures and traditions, a chain reaction with positive multiplier effects can be achieved throughout the region's rural economy. CEEWEB launched a pilot project in Romania for these aims that can provide positive model for the implementation of the Convention.

Overall objective

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CARPATHIAN CONVENTION IS REALISED WITH THE ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL POPULATION AND DIVERSE, INCOME GENERATING RURAL ACTIVITIES THAT RESPECT THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION.

Objectives

- Provide stakeholders involvement in the governmental procedures.
- Actively participate in the preparation of a possible future sustainable tourism protocol.
- Link CEEWEB's Natura 2000 activities with the implementation of the Convention.
- Integrate the Convention's related activities with the EU rural development and biodiversity policies.
- Provide input from CEEWEB organisations to the Convention's Working Group on biodiversity and working group on tourism development.

Activities

- Participate at COP-1 and the related preparatory activities.
- Continue the implementation of public participation schemes in the Convention's processes through regional workshops together with ANPED.
- User's guide to the Convention's provisions on sustainable tourism and regional development targeting NGOs, selected local authorities and National Parks.
- Participate in the working group tourism for the development of the Carpathian Tourism Development Strategy.
- Liaising with the Interim Secretariat.

- Communicate the outcomes of the sustainable regional development project in the Carpathians carried out by CEEWEB to the Parties.
- Maintain the position as Board member of CERI.
- Inform the NGOs within the scope of the Convention about policy developments, implementation of the its work programme and CEEWEB's related activities.
- Provide input into the preparation of the Balkan Convention through sharing experiences gained during the preparation of the Convention.

5. COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

CEEWEB has the mandate to work in the Central and East European region on biodiversity related issues. However, there are also several other organizations, networks that have biodiversity portfolios and / or work on the perimeters of biodiversity. CEEWEB is seeking active cooperation with these organizations.

Overall objective

THE VARIOUS NGOS AND NGO NETWORKS IN EUROPE HARMONISE AND COORDINATE THEIR ACTIVITIES FOR MAXIMUM RESULTS AND EFFECTIVENESS IN NATURE CONSERVATION.

Objectives

- Cooperate with NGO networks working on the Carpathian Convention
- Maintain cooperation with IUCN on the 2010 Countdown Initiative.
- Increase cooperation with Ecological Tourism in Europe for participating in the final drafting and implementing the European Agenda 21 for Tourism.
- Further the cooperation within the European Habitats Forum. Further the cooperation between IFAW and the CEEWEB CITES WG.
- Make a strong presence in the Carpathian Ecoregion Initiative (CERI).
- Play an active role in the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), specifically in the Biodiversity and Agriculture working groups.
- Initiate cooperation with the Bankwatch Network and with the Baltic Environmental Forum.
- Be accredited to the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and further work with UNEP Regional Office for Europe.

Activities

- Hold meetings with executives of partner NGOs in order to harmonize the organization's work programs, if possible organize joint activities.
- Present CEEWEB's activities on various meetings of the target partners
- Actively prepare and participate at UNEP's civil society regional consultations
- Disseminate the results of the 7th Global Civil Society Forum in the CEE region and follow up the decision with regards to "Tourism and Environment"

- Work on the profiling of stakeholder involvement in the implementation of the Carpathian Convention, which will take shape in joint projects deriving from the decision of the first COP based on the signed “Memorandum of Cooperation” with ANPED
- Further participate in the meetings of EEB’s Biodiversity and Agriculture WGs, taking the lead on regional development, financing and monitoring Natura 2000 and CBD/Countdown 2010 issues. Continue the participation in the Countdown 2010 initiative under the coordination of IUCN.
- Further act as board member of the Carpathian Ecoregion Initiative, participating in the implementation of its work program.
- Participate in activities of the European Habitats Forum, further being the coordinator for the NGO input to the Biogeographic Seminars and the follow up (bilateral meetings) activities. Taking part on the bi-annual EHF meetings.

6. COOPERATION WITHIN THE NETWORK

CEEWEB represents the network of several dozen nature conservation organizations from Central and East European countries, working together to protect the biological heritage of the region. Presently CEEWEB is the only network in operation which has been set up and run by nature conservation NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe.

The CEEWEB Policy Office aims to strengthen the Network and its common identity through a number of services and other activities, as well as build the capacity of its individual members.

6.a Working Groups

Member organizations of the CEEWEB network can establish thematic Working Groups (WGs) as mission-oriented task forces, led by an elected Chair and receiving financial and administrative support from the Secretariat for implementing their work programme. The WGs set their own goals and objectives, stated in their multi-annual work programme. The resources provided by CEEWEB and the own fund-raising activities of the Working Groups constitute the financial basis for their activities. The operating conditions of the Working Groups are regulated by a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Chair of the Working Group and by the CEEWEB Secretary General. The Annual Meeting decides on the establishment of new working groups. Their elected chairs also become members of the CEEWEB Board, thus the specific policy priorities are adequately represented in the strategic planning of the organisation.

Currently three WGs operate, on Natura 2000, Sustainable Tourism and CITES, while the aim of the Policy Office is to give kick-off for WGs on Agri-environment and CBD as well. (The WG Work Programmes with objectives and planned activities for 2006 are integrated into the thematic chapters of the CEEWEB Work Programme.)

6.b Internship programme in the Policy Office

CEEWEB aims to strengthen the relation and cooperation with the members through launching an internship program. Thus the Policy Office plans to receive interns from member NGOs to gain practice and work experience in the policy work of CEEWEB in areas relevant to their sending organisation. The interns will be based at the Policy Office, thus they will have experience working in a multicultural team. This also builds fundamentals for later cooperation between the Policy Office and the sending organisation to which the intern returns after the completion of the internship programme.

6.c 'CEEWEB Watch' of environmental policy performance

Following the 2004 Annual Meeting, CEEWEB launched a joint activity in the Network called '*CEEWEB Watch*'. The aim is to strengthen the watchdog role of CEE NGOs in the field of environmental policy and draw the attention of the public and decision-makers on environmental issues and governmental commitments.

First a monitoring methodology will be developed which is tailor made for the specific needs and working conditions of NGOs. With the help of the methodology NGOs will be able to monitor and report on the environmental performance of their governments with regards to their commitments of fulfilling the EU environmental agenda regularly (once a year). The methodology will be tested first in a smaller number of countries in 2006. Later annual, independent reports will be published, both digitally and in print with the involvement of more CEE NGO partners.

6.d 'CEEWEB Academy'

The Annual Meeting mandated the Policy Office in 2004 to design and financially ensure a seminar series called '*CEEWEB Academy*'. The objective is to provide capacity building and knowledge transfer in order to achieve a common level of understanding among the various CEEWEB NGO members with different background and capacities, who can thus work together in a more effective and harmonised way in a more coherent network.

The topics of the '*CEEWEB Academies*' in 2006 are sustainable tourism and management of Natura 2000 sites. The two or three-day seminars include presentations by internationally recognised speakers, discussions and working group sessions. The background materials and presentations will be downloadable from the website. The primary aim is not only to impart academic knowledge through the seminars, but to develop a proper, holistic approach and view that support the prevention of environmental problems and long term solutions.

The secondary purpose of the '*CEEWEB Academy*' is to increase the internal cohesion of the Network by creating a common understanding about the topics discussed.

6.e 'CEEWEB Science'

Following up the decision of the 2004 Annual Meeting, CEEWEB will share the scientific results generated by Network members in the form of a joint publication called '*CEEWEB Science*'.

The purpose is to:

- Demonstrate the scientific competence of the network.
- Promote and make the scientific results of Network members accessible
- Facilitate NGO-scientific cooperation through showing the connections between these sectors in practice and promote future common research projects, practical use of scientific results of universities, research institutions, etc.

The Policy Office will collect the scientific results of Network members, while scientific experts will review the submitted materials to ensure the good quality of the publication. The target group will be all CEEWEB members and other NGOs, donors, decision makers, researchers, students (for establishing contacts with NGOs and cooperate on scientific research). CEEWEB will endeavour to publish '*CEEWEB Science*' once a year.

6.f The newsletter of CEEWEB: 'Diversity'

Diversity is the printed form of information exchange within the CEEWEB Network, which was restructured in 2005. CEEWEB distributes '*Diversity*' to the entire network of CEEWEB, to donors, policy partners (European Parliamentarians, governmental officials working on environmental issues), and key NGO networks (e.g. ANPED, IUCN, Bird Life, WWF) with whom CEEWEB works in partnership.

Through '*Diversity*' CEEWEB aims to

- Encourage communication and strengthen cooperation between the CEEWEB members and the Policy Office (serve as a channel for members for sharing project ideas, experiences and methodologies).
- Contribute to the capacity building of individuals working in the member organisations, e.g. through the introduction of best practices and concepts.
- Inform about international and EU policies, agreements and achievements in the field of biodiversity and related areas, provide analytical information in order to enhance the common level of understanding.
- Inform about CEEWEB activities, events, publications and planned projects.
- Stimulate interest and curiosity through presenting a great diversity of issues in an attractive way.

6.g Website

The CEEWEB homepage (www.ceeweb.org) is a stable contact point for the whole network, where continuously updated information is available with regards to the issues CEEWEB works on (e.g. biodiversity, EU policies, tourism, CITES, Natura 2000). The homepage hosts the publications of the digital library (from the CEEWEB Policy Office and the members).

6.h Mailing lists

The CEEWEB Policy Office maintains a mailing list for all CEEWEB members and it also hosts a mailing list for each CEEWEB WG for thematic issues. Besides matters about the operation of the Network (Annual Meetings, board Meetings), information on policy development is provided, input into joint positions is sought, opportunities, requests for cooperation are announced, discussions are generated and occasionally decisions are made.

6.i Policy Office support

The staff in the CEEWEB Policy Office provides professional support for the policy work of the Network in thematic areas as well as takes care of the administrative tasks and financial duties. The network coordinator assisted by a volunteer and the office manager provides services to network members (website, printed and digital library, mailing lists, '*Diversity*', general information services, fundraising, assisting member applicants, etc.). The network coordinator is also in charge of organising the statutory meetings.

In 2006 the Policy Office will do an assessment of the Network and propose possible changes for the structure.

The Policy office is further assisting the staff to develop their own curricula through different seminars, conferences and trainings in 2006 as well.

6.j External communication of the Network

CEEWEB aims to communicate its view and positions in the media, as well as publicise its events and products to a wider audience. It includes communication through the website (redesigned in 2005), press releases and conferences, radio interviews, publications, the *Diversity* newsletter, events, etc.

7. STATUTORY MEETINGS

7.a Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting (AM) is the main decision making and planning instrument of the Network. The AM is open for all members and for organisations that apply for membership, but it may also invite representatives of other NGOs /networks for working out future possible cooperation. It decides upon the work plan and budget for the next year, elects / confirms the officers, adopts the annual narrative and financial reports, endorses the establishment and the Work Programmes of Working Groups. It may also change if necessary the statutes of CEEWEB and approves the membership of new applicants.

The AM also aims to strengthen and build the cohesion among members through the personal meeting, social activities the common thinking and planning in thematic areas.

7.b Board Meetings

The Board is entitled to make strategic decisions in the interim periods between AMs and give quick response to suddenly emerging issues. The Board monitors the CEEWEB activities continually and provides interim budget control. The BM may also decide, who from the Board or member organisations shall represent CEEWEB at some meetings and forums. It is planned to have quarterly BMs in 2006.

The Board consists of the President, Vice-president and two regular members elected by the AM for two years, as well as the CEEWEB Working Group Chairs elected by the WG members.