NGO preparatory workshop for the Emerald Seminar in the West-Balkans

meeting report

Time/Date: 31 October – 1 November, 2011
Location: Bar, Montenegro
Organiser: CEEweb (contact: Ildiko Arany, arany@ceeweb.org)

Background

Set up under the Bern Convention, the Emerald Network of protected areas aims to supplement the Natura 2000 Network, on a similar basis, in non-EU countries, based on the highest possible methodological synergy. Once established, the network will significantly speed-up future designation of Natura 2000 in EU candidate and potential candidate countries. As the European Union is also a Contracting Party to the Bern Convention, Natura 2000 is considered to be the EU contribution to the Emerald Network.

Between 2 and 4 November 2011, the Council of Europe and the Bern Convention has organized a biogeographic seminar for the designation of Emerald sites in 6 West-Balkans countries: Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia & Hercegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia and Albania, covering four biogeographic regions: Alpine, Continental, Mediterranean and Pannonian. The seminar was technically and scientifically supported by the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity.

NGO participants were delegated by national NGO communities of each participating country and contributed to the seminar with significant amount of information. Being a member of the Emerald Working Group of the European Habitats Forum, and including most of participating NGOs in its membership, the umbrella organization CEEweb for Biodiversity has supported the NGO input to the seminar by providing expert advice, sharing experiences from the Natura 2000 designation seminars, and organizing a 1.5-days preparatory meeting back-to-back to the seminar.

Objectives of the preparatory meeting:

- Clarify and understand the biogeographic process, how it works, and what is needed by NGOs to be effective at the biogeographic seminar
- Review existing information and data, identify gaps, and determine steps for addressing these gaps
- Try out how the Seminar will happen – final trial!

1st day discussion:

1. Short introduction
2. latest update about the relation of Emerald to future Natura 2000 network

Iva Obretanova (CoE) has confirmed that Emerald is the basis of future N2000. The strong connection is in fact historical: EU’s first goal of N2000 was to fulfil Bern Convention requirements (later on it adopted many other goals). They harmonize annexes to be as compatible as possible.

Previous to the seminar, the European Commission had re-stated in its meeting with the EHF that the Emerald work would greatly facilitate the Natura 2000 process. However, it would still be necessary for any acceding state to undergo a full Natura 2000 assessment / Biogeographic seminar. Nevertheless, Emerald will speed up the process very much as all the data and the site delimitations will be there.

NGO position on double process: double seminars mean double possibility to extend the network. Our messages should be:

- Emerald assumptions are close to Natura 2000 ones. Therefore all Emerald sites must be designated as Natura 2000 sites in the future. We cannot imagine any arguments for avoiding such designation of Emerald site.

- Nevertheless, due to some incompatibilities, separate Natura 2000 seminar should be conducted.

- If the new knowledge appears, even SUF conclusion from the Emerald seminar should be re-opened on the Natura 2000 seminar for targeted species/habitat

3. Understanding the biogeographic seminar (presentation on previous Natura 2000 biogeographic seminars), Ildiko Arany, CEEweb

see presentation

4. understanding what we are trying to achieve, using first hand NGO experiences from Biogeographic seminars on Natura 2000 designation – Presentation, Pawel Pawlacyzk, Naturalists Club Poland

see presentation

2nd day discussion:

1. Clarifying what is official treatment of Emerald sites in each country (Andrea Stefan, WWF MEDPO). General discussion on overview maps, with an emphasis on transboundary issues (frequency of sites, species occurrences) and geographical gaps (Pawel Pawlacyzk, Naturalists Club Poland).

questions discussed:

- ensuring protection of designated or proposed sites
- ensuring funding for the process
- sufficiency of national proposals as what is apparent from the overview maps

NGO strategy:

Being aware that available scientific data are often scattered and old, and governments’ capacities and financial resources have been and are low, during the seminar a joint NGO remark was made, offering
their partnership for governments and the ETC during future process. They are ready to contribute with collecting available information, gathering new information and help in establishment, management and monitoring of the Emerald network.

NGO plans for future activities up to 2014:

- lobby at national level for ensuring the protection status of sites and for including Emerald into national IPA programmes
- submit complaints to the Bern Convention if necessary (info on complaints procedure sent by Pawel Pawlaczyk)
- provide updated information to the European Habitats Forum, the Bern Convention Standing Committee and the European Commission
- lobby at EC for cross-check of EU funds in order to avoid development programmes degrading proposed or shadow sites
- organise 2 preparatory meetings for West-Balkan NGOs, involving Natura 2000 experts from German NGOs and CEEweb members from CEE EU member states. The meetings will allow NGOs to cross-check transboundary data, update each other, identify possible gaps and agree in coordinated action.
- compile standardised datasets of shadow sites based on GIS methods, and provide these datasets to national governments and the ETC-BD. (sample database sent by Pawel Pawlaczyk)
- participate in the Third Biogeographic Emerald Seminar of West Balkan Countries

2. “The Trial” – Trying to play the real Biogeo seminar – as it would / could happen

Participants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zamir Dedej</td>
<td>Institute of Nature Conservation in Albania INCA</td>
<td>Albania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genti Kromidha</td>
<td>Institute of Nature Conservation in Albania INCA</td>
<td>Albania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vladimir Stupar</td>
<td>ArborMagna</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zrinka Jakl</td>
<td>Sunce</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertina Brajanoska</td>
<td>Macedonian Ecological Society</td>
<td>Macedonia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasa Kovacevic</td>
<td>Green Home</td>
<td>Montenegro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabor Mesaros</td>
<td>Protego</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pawel Pawlaczyk</td>
<td>Naturalists Club Poland</td>
<td>Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrea Stefan</td>
<td>WWF MEDPO</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arany Ildikó</td>
<td>CEEweb</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filip Franeta</td>
<td>Green Home</td>
<td>Montenegro</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information contact:
Ildikó Arany, Programme coordinator arany@ceeweb.org