Minutes of CEEWEB Sustainable Tourism Working Group Meeting

Babia Gora, Poland; June 7-8, 2006

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Minutes by: Kristina Vilimaite

1. Country reports

The reports should be constructive: instead of simply criticizing the situation or actors, they should look into solutions on how to enhance the cooperation for sustainable tourism. They will be published on CEEWEB website, the reports from the Carpathian countries will be used in the framework of the Carpathian Project.

Difficulties, solutions, suggestions

The participants presented the draft versions of the country reports. Possible ways of dealing with difficulties in collecting and presenting the information were discussed.

The number of protected areas in some countries (Serbia, Poland) is too high to list. Suggestion: such information can be presented with a map or just a short list of the most important protected areas can be included into the report. Graphs or tables will be used for presenting lengthy or complex statistical information, but this will be decided and done later, during the editing and formatting phase of the country reports.

There is no clear definition of sustainable tourism in the legislation in Serbia; except that the ministry of Environment has a kind of definition online, but the information on the webpage of the ministry on sustainable tourism is extremely poor.
Suggestion: **when collecting information the sources should be clearly indicated** (for the webpages the date of viewing should be included). All the opinion (e.g. about the quantity or quality of the information) should be supported by the facts or links to the documents online. When an interview is made, the name of the person, date, and type of the interview (phone/personal interview) should be always mentioned.

The problem of definition exists in general (tourism – eco-tourism – sustainable tourism), therefore it is difficult to distinguish and extract sustainable tourism related information from the information on tourism in general.

Suggestion: **NGOs should raise the issue of unclear definition and stress that big gaps in collecting information on sustainable tourism exists.** These issues should be raised both on the national and on the international level, including the Carpathian Convention COP1. Collection of information on sustainable tourism across the countries based on similar indicators should be suggested.

The **country reports can be updated annually** to prevent the information getting outdated.

**While collecting information there should be opportunities sought for establishing the cooperation with other institutions.** Information collected by the EU bodies can be useful (EUROSTAT, national representatives).

**Additional sources of information:** some information exists in the reports of the World Travel & Tourism Council or World Tourism organization and EBRD (Who recommended it? What is the title of the report?). Also the laws on Access to Information should be utilized in collecting information (any governmental body should answer the request in a period of one month if it has the information available).

The definitions of protected areas in Romania are not compatible with the IUCN criteria (they do not coincide). The same applies to Poland. It was not decided how to deal with this issue.

It can be observed that there are no NGOs in the region that are exclusively working on sustainable tourism and at the same time are critical about tourism development. People typically can only see that tourism brings profit, they do not see how it harms the environment and communities. It may be necessary to discuss this with the universities educating students on tourism. **The report could include some observations on media’s perception about tourism.**

**Analytical skills of media should be developed.** For example, media training could be a part of the action plan for a country. Kruno Kartus (Osijek Greens, Croatia) already plans something of a kind in Croatia. Pavel Antonov (the REC) is an experienced trainer on environmental journalism (Kruno Kartus has participated in one of his trainings).
The cooperation in preparation of the reports

Csaba Domokos from Milvus Group is doing the report on Romania together with Andrei Blumer (AER – Association for Ecotourism in Romania).

Milka Gvozdenovic and Tijana Spasic are working together on the report, Edita Stojic Karanovic from “Danube - River of Cooperation” is involved in reviewing the drafts. The report could be commented by Jovan Popesku (CenORT - Centre for Responsible and Sustainable Tourism Development, Belgrade, Serbia), and Violeta Orlovic from the E-team (formerly she worked for the Institute for Nature Protection).

Grzegorz Rakowski from the Institute of Tourism Warsaw could review the report done by PTTK representatives.

REC implements a project related to the Carpathian Convention. Kristina will check with Dana Romanescu from the REC about the outcomes of the project (in respect of gathering data about the Carpathians).

The use of the reports

The final country reports produced should be used as tools. It is not enough to put it onto the website, it is important to disseminate it to the stakeholders. We should design a concept for using the country reports (why, who and when should get it). A summary report for decision makers can be prepared, the report can be promoted with a press release.

“Political” concern was raised: it may be not in the hands of the representatives of some of the organizations to impact the final decision on the use of the report. A danger that an organization will not be willing to sign under the country report if it does not coincide with the official position of the organization may exist. Everybody should think about this. A related issue is the communication of the members of the CEEWEB WG back to the organizations they represent. It is important to present the report under development in a good light from the very beginning.

New deadline for the country reports is the end of June.

2. Reports on the national funding sources

Decision was taken to include the reports on the national funding source to the country reports. The deadline will be the same: end of June.

3. Draft promotional brochure

Kristina Vilimaite has presented the draft brochure on sustainable tourism. The group decided to continue developing the brochure in the proposed style. The brochure will be done as a map of an imagined sustainable tourism area with the ST concepts
explained through the legend. On the other side of the map six existing sites will be presented as good examples of sustainable tourism.

It is crucial to test of the brochure with the potential users. The English language brochure will be tested and improved, then translated to other languages and before finalizing it will be tested again.

The brochure targets decision makers, either they are politicians or teachers at tourism schools or community leaders. Therefore it will have to be used accordingly – distributed to the people that may have impact on developing sustainable tourism in the countries.

The brochure should be ready for the Carpathian Convention COP1, Kristina Vilimaite will manage the process of the preparation.

4. Publications on ST topics

The publications should make a toolbox that people should use. The publications will target those that may initiate the process of sustainable tourism development from inside or from outside of a community. The goals of the toolbox (all four publications) are: 1) to help a person/organization in starting the development of sustainable tourism in an area; 2) to enable the members of STWG to train others or start pilot projects next year with the help of these publications.

As there are publications available on some topics related to sustainable tourism, the toolkit should be unique. The focus on practical implementation of sustainable tourism in communities is a unique angle, examples should be abundant, step by step processes for the communities should be explained.

UNESCO is looking for good examples on dissemination of the sustainable development idea. They could potentially fund the publication of the toolkit and co-finance the brochure.

The first publication on SWOT should still be developed. Katrin Gebhard will facilitate the process, the tentative deadline for the draft is end of June.

The second publication will be on Product Development. UNEP publication on product development and marketing should be looked at (though it targets tourism industry mainly). The publication may include a checklist.

The team for the development of the second publication: Csaba Domokos (coordinator) and Siim Kuresoo, Katrin Gebhard, Kristina Vilimaite, Tijana Spasic.

Deadline for the final text: mid-September

Tool for S-T, Green T were the titles proposed for the toolkit. The group also decided to have a logo developed (Kristina responsible).
5. Election of co-chair

Bernadetta Zawilinska was nominated and has agreed to be a co-chair.

6. Next working group meeting

The Impact Assessment and Impact Management will be the topics of the third training. A biosphere reserve on an island near Naples (Italy) is proposed. Additional proposals are welcome, but the location has to be within a biosphere reserve. Mia proposes the Black Sea coast, she will check if there is a coastal area or mountainous area on a biosphere reserve that has visible impacts. The meeting should take place at the end of October. The chair is currently discussing the possibility of co-funding this meeting with UNESCO. That means that more participants will be invited to the meeting in addition to the STWG members.

The next meeting of the STWG will take place during the CEEWEB Annual Meeting at the end of September.

7. Plans for country actions

Each organization represented in the STWG should prepare a summary about the benefits of the participation in the working group activities, on how the experiences are used, what are the remaining needs. This step is also a logical conclusion from the country reports: after learning about sustainable tourism we see that there is an urgent need to act. The summary should connect the goals of the STWG to the goals of the organization, find common points. It is important to show in the summary how the participation in the STWG will contribute to the goals of the organizations.

At the end of 2006 we should see how 2007 for STWG activities will look like. Two areas can be foreseen:
1. Other trainings of STWG could be done (based on the needs assessment included in the summaries from organizations)
2. Implementation of pilot projects may start. STWG may help to do such actions during the pilot projects, which individual members are not yet ready to do alone.

The summary will be prepared according to the template, Kristina Vilimaite will manage the process.

Action plans for Croatia and Bulgaria

Actions in the countries could include, for example, the enhancement of transparency in respect to sustainable tourism development, awareness raising. Implementation of National Strategy on Eco-Tourism with regional action plans in Bulgaria is needed. The action plans will be reviewed at the next meeting of the STWG.
8. Second day

Introduction on sustainable tourism product development (including VIABONO criteria) was done. Study visit served for analyzing three product examples (handicrafts, accommodation and a nature trail). Information about Pan Parks and ECAET was included, SWOT of products was discussed.

Summary: Tasks, Deadlines and Responsibilities

Country reports
   Deadline: June 30

Reports on the national funding sources
   Joined to the country reports
   Deadline: June 30

Brochure on sustainable tourism
   Deadline: the Carpathian Convention COP1.
   Responsible: Kristina Vilimaite

The publication on SWOT
   Katrin Gebhard will facilitate the process
   Deadline for the draft: June 30

The publication on Product Development
   The team for the development of the second publication: Csaba Domokos (coordinator) and Siim Kuresoo, Katrin Gebhard, Kristina Vilimaite, Tijana Spasic.
   Deadline for the final text: mid-September

The summary reports
   Each organization represented in the STWG will prepare a summary about the benefits of the participation in the working group activities, and the remaining needs. The template will be prepared and the process will be managed by Kristina Vilimaite.
   Deadline: for the CEEWEB Annual Meeting

The country specific action plans
   They will be reviewed at the next meeting of the STWG