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## Narrative Report 2019

Established in 1994, CEEweb is a network of 53 non-governmental organisations in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region. Throughout this time, we have worked in over 20 countries on identifying and changing the drivers behind biodiversity loss; forming common policies and actions for the enhancement of biodiversity in the CEE region; and promoting the enforcement of international conventions for nature and biodiversity conservation.

The year 2019 was a significant year both from an internal perspective, as well as from an EU/regional aspect: CEEweb started the year with an entirely renewed policy team, including two new policy officers with the given task to successfully implement its Core Fund project (**LIFE NGO Operating Grant**). Having inherited an ambitious package of objectives and deliverables from the former CEEweb team, in addition to some postponed tasks from 2018, came with its own challenges and opportunities. After the initial period of getting familiar with the former and planned activities in each core area, then building networks and planning implementation, the new team delivered most, if not all, the tasks of its respective work programme.

### **Nature-advocacy in sectoral policies**

CEEweb's campaign, calling for the preservation of a strong Water Framework Directive and its improved implementation by Member States potentially contributed to the fact that the European Commission declared the WFD to be fit for purpose. We have furthermore contributed to recommendations to the post-2020 EU Biodiversity Strategy, the Common Agricultural Policy, the new EU budget by social media campaigns, seven published positions and reports, collaboration with other environmental organisations, direct messages to MEPs and awareness raising activities among the European general public, especially the youth. It is yet to be seen how much of our contributions will be eventually incorporated into the post-2020 EU strategies but the general statements and commitments of EU institutions are mostly promising and give reason to be hopeful.

### **Sustainability proofing the EU budget and European elections**

CEEweb led a powerful campaign in the months leading up to the EU elections, using citizen messages, social media messages, as well as direct messages targeting MEP candidates, calling for a Multiannual Financial Framework with sustainability proofing, candidates working towards better policies and long-term commitments to nature conservation, environmental protection, climate action and the improved representations of citizen interests for a democratic, resilient European Union. The large turn-out at the elections, the significantly larger representation of green parties, the increased membership of the Environmental Committee and the progressive vision of the new European Commission (as in its Green Deal and the proposed European Climate Law) serve as evidence to the success of our hard work.

## Green Infrastructure

The LinkedIn-based European Green Infrastructure Practitioners' Network and Learning Alliance gained more than 70 new members in one year, largely thanks to its increased activity, sharing over 120 green infrastructure cases and best practices, as well as presenting 10 green infrastructure projects in 2019. The GI Knowledge Hub has contributed to an increased awareness on green infrastructure, ecosystem services, urban biodiversity, the benefits of green areas to human health and well-being, and provided potential ways on how cities and municipalities can lead the way towards resilience in the age of climate change and related environmental challenges. Nature-based solutions have found their way to the EU Green Deal, as integral instruments in climate change adaptation and urban biodiversity.

After the successful completion of **TRANSGREEN** project CEEweb's active contribution to green infrastructure and sustainable ecological corridors continued as part of **ConnectGREEN** project within the framework of Interreg-Danube Transnational Programme.

Through ConnectGREEN project, partners from different countries and various fields of activity (spatial planning, research, government, biodiversity conservation) joined forces to increase the capacity of ecological corridors identification and management and to overcome the conflict between infrastructure development and wildlife conservation. Valuable knowledge and experience will be made available to spatial planners and vice versa for finding the best ways to develop infrastructure and other plans in order secure ecological connectivity in the Carpathians.

In 2019 we successfully completed the '**Smart and Green — On the spot in Visegrad cities**' project, funded by the International Visegrad Fund (IVF), that aimed to tackle existing problems — namely, that while city administrations and decision makers are aware of the existing new technologies, in many cases these solutions cannot be implemented due to legislative and other practical and regulatory barriers in the cities. In the practical aspect, the correlated knowledge pertaining the potential solutions is missing and it was thus necessary to address this gap and extend the existing knowledge — both theoretical and practical — to the corresponding stakeholders from the Visegrad region.

The project carried on a series of visits to four cities — one out of each Visegrad country — to showcase some of their most exemplary cases discovered in the predecessor project. It invited decision makers and city administration representatives from the Visegrad area to visit and learn about smart and green innovations on the spot in Budapest (Hungary), Nitra (Slovakia), Litoměřice (Czech Republic) and Wrocław (Poland), in order to give floor for them to directly discuss these cases, their own urban contexts and, furthermore, spread the word of the good examples from the neighbouring countries. The study visits did not only feature smart solutions which are based on information and communications technology (ICT), but which combine those with green-blue infrastructure nature-based solutions.

## Climate change and agriculture

As part of its European Climate Initiative (EUKI) project called "**An Unavoidable Step After Paris: Cutting Emissions from Farming**" CEEweb contributed to the creation of a forward-looking agriculture sector that makes a significant contribution to the EU's climate mitigation efforts, where a solid knowledge base is needed, as well as knowledge sharing and inclusive stakeholders' dialogue. This includes a national and EU-wide evidence based dataset on farming potential towards climate mitigation, including socio-economic components, but also a policy analysis assessing to which extent this potential is currently achieved or underachieved and what role the current Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) plays in it and should play in the future.



CEEweb launched its new flagship project namely “**Game over? Do not let Climate change end the game!**” (EuropeAid/DEAR) that represents an overarching, interregional set of actions — often gamified — focused on raising the awareness of and activating European youth to help tackle the climate change global problematic.

Climate change is one of the main reasons behind biodiversity loss and ecosystem decline on the one hand, and ecosystem decline is also an aggravating factor behind climate change on the other hand. Thus, the consortium partners including several CEEweb members have come together taking a broad approach on how climate change impacts all life on Earth — in Europe and in the South, and vice versa — and how our choices affect the ecosystems in order to capitalize on the strong synergies in an emotional, life-centred communication campaign.

CEEweb’s latest awarded Horizon2020 project namely **AGROMIX** is an ambitious and international research project aiming at driving the transition to resilient and climate-smart agriculture in Europe. Within the project, the implementing consortium will explore the opportunities provided by mixed farming (i.e. crops and livestock) and agroforestry (i.e. trees and crops and/or livestock) practices for carbon balance and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Within the consortium, CEEweb for Biodiversity will lead the set-up of 14 multi-stakeholder policy workshops for the co-development of mixed farming/agroforestry policies within the European Union (EU), Eastern EU Member States, national states, and federal states.

### **Networking**

CEEweb further enhanced cooperation with SDG Watch Europe, BirdLife Europe, European Environmental Bureau, Eurosite, FOEE, IUCN, WWF DCP, EHF, WWF policy office, HAND, European Wilderness Society, Eklipe Mechanism, Wetlands International and EUROPARC CEE.

### **Fundraising**

To guarantee CEEweb’s financial sustainability the office team were constantly following upcoming funding opportunities and submitted several proposals including CEEweb members wherever possible. 2019 Submissions include:

- a proposal for Operating Grant to the European Commission for 2019 (awarded)
  - an International Visegrad Fund proposal (rejected)
  - an Urban Innovative Action (UIA) proposal on climate mitigation (postponed)
  - several EUKI proposals (3 pending)
  - DEAR proposals (1 awarded)
  - Norway Grant proposal on climate mitigation and adaptation (rejected)
  - LIFE action grant (rejected)
  - 1 Erasmus + proposal (rejected)
  - several DTP-Interreg proposals (1 awarded)
  - 3 Horizon2020 proposals (1 awarded)
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## **Human resources**

Renewal of CEEweb's staff continued and completed in 2019 by the employment of a new policy team and the departure of Klara Hajdu who led policy work for many years. We had several interns and volunteers from various countries (Italy, Hungary, France, UK, Kosovo) assisting in our projects.

A new president of the board Peter Olajos was elected by the AM in March.

## **Membership network**

In cooperation with the Board we started an appraisal of CEEweb's membership network's performance. Next to it we also launched a survey investigating members' competences, interest and needs. Based on the results we reached out to members one-by-one discussing survey results and other issues (such as membership fee). Currently we are working on a strategy on how to handle this precious community beyond 2020 which may result in changes of protocols, meeting practices and the whole membership scheme in 2020.

