

# Implementation of the Pan European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy<sup>1</sup> (PEBLDS)

## Conclusions and recommendations

Although the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) sets out the general objectives of the conservation of biological diversity, sustainable use of genetic resources, and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use, these generalities are still needed to be translated into strategies and action plans in order to enhance and assist their achievement. This is targeted by the PEBLDS, which sets forth more concrete objectives and formulates recommendations specifically for the Central and East European region. Being a Pan-European initiative, it lays the foundations for international cooperation as it has special significance in the case of establishing the Pan-European Ecological Network (PEEN). This is the objective, which has been implemented to the greatest degree in most countries specifically in relation with to the Strategy. The PEEN is building on the following elements:

- **core areas** to conserve ecosystems, habitats, species and landscapes of European importance;
- **corridors** or **stepping stones** to ensure the coherence of the network, which will contribute to preservation of species through facilitating its migration and dispersal between core areas.

It must be pointed out that the other initiative for developing ecological network the Habitat Directive of the European Union do not focus on creating a functional network of protected areas interconnected by ecological corridors but deals only with Natura 2000 sites. It is preferable that these sites are forming a coherent network of habitats, but there are no provisions for it in the text of the directive. Another problem regarding Natura 2000 is that its implementation is not required from non-EU candidate countries. In order to achieve a coherent ecological network throughout the Pan-European region it is most advisable to establish, improve and maintain the PEEN.

Apart from this Action Theme it can be pointed out that only few activities were carried out directly connected to PEBLDS unfortunately. It can be stated in general that PEBLDS is largely neglected in all countries. (In Bulgaria there was not even a single governmental document found that regulates or introduces PEBLDS, in Slovakia it has never been officially discussed at the level of Ministry of Environment, and neither in the Government, thus the implementation of the Strategy has not begun yet.) Although it is difficult to measure its impact, it can be generally said that PEBLDS has only slightly added more to international conventions or national initiatives in making progress in the specific Action Themes and the opportunities provided by it have not been utilised to their full potential.

Taking into account the positive experiences (the progress made in establishing PEEN) and the large ignorance of PEBLDS in other respect at the same time, there are still many opportunities lying in such a Strategy. Nevertheless these opportunities can only be utilised when they are recognised by the national governments and the framework for their realisation

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<sup>1</sup> In Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia.

is ensured at various levels and in several fields. Based on the national reports and their findings the following conclusions can be made:

- As integration of biological and landscape diversity considerations into sectoral plans and policies is crucial (however not properly implemented in any country as it is revealed in the national reports) the focus of the Strategy should be also extended to other fields, such as agriculture and tourism, or water management.
- In the protection of threatened species and ecosystems cross-border cooperation, for instance in creating trans-boundary protected areas, and launching common species protection programmes is required in several cases (as we can see in Poland on the initiative in the region of Eastern Carpathian Mountains). A further strength of an international strategy could be the opportunities lying in sharing the experiences, adopting common guidelines, the transfer of know-how.
- At the national level the Strategy has to be translated into comprehensive strategy and action plan, which harmonizes the targets and obligations of all international commitments as well as national priorities and solutions to the specific problems (as in the case of Latvia for instance).
- The national strategies should contain specific, clear targets with timelines for implementation, as well as appoint responsible institutions, departments or focal points with regular reporting obligations. In addition a prerequisite of implementation of the specific tasks is the availability of sufficient institutional, personnel and earmarked financial capacities.

As the national reports highlighted there have been no awareness raising activities carried out directly connected to PEBLDS (in many countries even professional conservationists are not familiar with the Strategy), although it would largely enhance its acceptance and implementation. In this task the NGOs could play a major role through training programs, campaigns, etc.

- Members of the civil society – NGOs - should be mandated for public awareness raising activities.,

Besides publicity adequate framework for monitoring would also contribute to the effective implementation of such a national strategy under the auspices of a Pan-European one.

- NGO participation in the monitoring and implementation contributes not only to a wider acceptance of the objectives and tasks in the society, but also to more (cost-)efficient realisation of the targets.
- Ministries of environment must implement an assessment to identify synergies between the different international conventions. On the basis of this study a capacity need assessment and gap analyses needs to be done which should result in a horizontal action plan with regards to the implementation of the commitments. Without having done this exercise it is predictable, that the PEBLDS will not be further implemented and the mechanisms, resources attached to its implementation will be useless. It must also be pointed out, that the non-accession countries and the whole NIS region does not have any strategy for nature conservation, thus if the PEBLDS should vanish in light of the EU accession from the agenda, it might have serious consequences in the rest of Europe. Thus it is recommended to assess the potential of the PEBLDS and further its implementation on a pan-European scale.

*National reports from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia,  
Lithuania, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia*  
-Summary-

## **Introduction**

The Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy was established to support implementation of the **Convention on Biological Diversity**. The Strategy introduces a coordinating and unifying framework for strengthening and building on existing initiatives. It does not aim to introduce new legislation or programmes, but to fill gaps where initiatives are not implemented to their full potential. Furthermore, the Strategy seeks to integrate ecological considerations into all relevant socio-economic sectors, and will increase public participation in and awareness and acceptance of conservation interests. The legal basis for implementing action under the Strategy is found in existing international agreements and treaties such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the **Bern, Bonn and Ramsar Conventions** as well as the **EU Habitats and Birds Directives**.

The Strategy is divided into **five-year Action Plans**, which identify the crucial actions towards achieving each set of five-year goals. The first Action Plan for the period 1996-2000 (comprising 11 Action Themes) sets out to remedy the deterioration in the state of the key biological systems and to strengthen their coherence.

The main objectives of PEBLDS (protection of landscapes, different ecosystems and threatened species) require a **comprehensive approach** of biodiversity conservation, which is not entailed in other initiatives, but laid down in Action Themes 0 to 4. Action Theme 0 promotes to assist the introduction of **National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAP)** in all countries of Europe by the year 2000. The NBSAPs should ensure the integration of ecological considerations into all sectors and to harmonise the national activities taken under different conventions and initiatives for the goods of preserving biodiversity. **Action Themes 5 to 11** identify specific objectives as conservation of different ecosystems, such as river ecosystems and wetlands, grasslands and forests, mountain ecosystems and coastal ecosystems as well as threatened species, which targets correspond with the aims of other initiatives.

## **Concrete experiences**

As the objectives of the PEBLDS builds upon existing initiatives, a false assumption could arise from this fact: implementing other conventions could replace the implementation of PEBLDS (**Poland**). Besides reporting about the implementation of PEBLDS is treated as equal with listing activities taken within the framework of other initiatives (**Bulgaria**). In order to avoid this, stricter reporting requirements should establish to the states party to PEBLDS. To retain the original proposals of the Strategy objectives and activities of other conventions should be harmonised with and integrated into the concept of PEBLDS.

Integrating provisions for the implementation of PEBLDS into the main planning documents (NDP, NBSAP, etc.) can further its implementation. In **Latvia** the requirements of several conventions (Ramsar, Bern, Bonn and Washington conventions) are incorporated into the National Programme of Biodiversity. It is the most efficient way of meeting the objectives set by these documents. It allows the saving of financial resources and to use limited human resources in a more efficient way, to avoid overlapping between activities taken under different conventions. As the main limiting factors in implementation of PEBLDS are

financial and institutional capacity constrains careful prioritisation of actions should be done in all countries for the most effective use of these limited resources.

## **Summary by Action Themes**

### **Action Theme 0. Pan-European action to set up the Strategy process**

According to the study conducted in **Bulgaria** there was not even a single formal governmental document found from the period 1996-2003 that regulates or introduces PEBLDS. The lack of any information and decision concerning PEBLDS introduction and implementation does not prevent the representatives of the Bulgarian Ministry of Environment and Water from reporting on the implementation to various degrees of some of its action themes.

In the **Czech Republic** PEBLDS has not been implemented nor the National Biodiversity Strategy was accepted. One of the reasons for this is that in 1998 the Czech Republic started the process of the implementation of the EU legislation in the field of environment and nature conservation and from that time it has been the top priority for the government, the MoE and other governmental organisations. Because of this process some goals were reached, but not in the framework of PEBLDS.

In **Estonia** the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan was accepted in 1999.

In **Hungary** the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan has not been accepted yet.

In **Latvia** the Cabinet of Ministers accepted a National Programme on Biological Diversity on 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2000. The National Programme of Biodiversity is also a strategic document for the Ramsar, Bern, Bonn and Washington conventions. Integration of the requirements of these conventions into the National Programme of Biodiversity is the most efficient way of meeting the objectives set by these documents. It allows a small country like Latvia to save the financial resources and to use limited human resources in a more efficient way, to avoid overlapping and facilitate implementation of the requirements laid down by the conventions and monitoring of this process.

In **Lithuania** the National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan has not been reviewed since 1998 and no amendments have been made either into activity plan or to the proposed budget.

In **Poland** the provision of the Strategy that it should make use of existing structures, mechanisms and funds has been received in Poland as an indication that there is no point in spending time on implementing PEBLDS because implementation of other international conventions and agreements will automatically involve implementation of PEBLDS. That is why PEBLDS is almost completely unknown in Poland, even in the group of people dealing professionally with environment and landscape conservation. The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan was accepted not in the year 2000 the latest, as it was assumed in the Action Theme 0 (0.2), but only at the beginning of 2003.

In **Romania** the strategy is not closely followed, there are very few initiatives aiming directly at the fulfilment of obligations deriving from PEBLDS. There are a number of projects developed as part of national strategies for nature conservation (e.g. NBSAP) or activities related to the obligations concerning the ratified nature conservation conventions (CBD, Ramsar, CMS, Bern convention, etc.), which have strong relevance for the PEBLDS, as well<sup>2</sup>.

Although in the **Slovak Republic** the National Biodiversity Strategy was accepted in 1997, PEBLDS is largely neglected. It has never been officially discussed at the level of

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<sup>2</sup> National Strategy and Action Plan for Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use of its Components (NBSAP) was prepared in 1996.

Ministry of Environment of SR, nor in the Government of SR. For this reason PEBLDS is only listed in some official documents, but its implementation has not begun. Furthermore the most attention of politicians, professional conservationists, NGOs and media is attracted by the accession process to the EU. In this respect, the nature conservation topics are considered to be covered to large extent by the NATURA 2000 related activities, and therefore the PEBLDS remains in the „shadow“ of this process. The wrong situation has even been raised as the National Secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity was abolished in autumn 2001, and its agenda was substantially reduced. By this decision, even the weak activities, related to the PEBLDS till that time, were further reduced to the state close to zero level. Both agendas – PEBLDS and CBD – have remained in the hands of one person, working at the Ministry, however without the needed establishment of the institutional and professional structures.

### **Action Theme 1. Establishing the Pan European Ecological Network**

This is the action theme where the most activities were carried out<sup>3</sup> and the most considerable achievements have been reached in all the countries concerned.

In **Bulgaria** no actions has been taken within the framework of PEBLDS.

In the **Czech Republic** the Nature Conservation Law sets the legal provision for the establishment of an Ecological Network in the country. Every landscape plan has to contain a concept of an Ecological Network. Another proposal is to join an international ecological network.

In **Estonia** the concept of ecological network is embedded in the spatial planning legislation, though the system through which these networks will be preserved and maintained, is not fully established. Two joint projects with foreign participation have advanced the concept in Estonia. First the *“Development of ecological networks in the Baltic countries in the framework of Pan-European Ecological network”* and second the project *“An indicative map of the Pan-European Ecological Network (PEEN)”*.

In **Hungary** the National Ecological Network was designated, however the official designation of the areas which are not under protection currently - ecological corridors and the near-natural areas - has not taken place through a resolution due to the long consultation process, thus their protection has not been enforced either.

In **Latvia** the project *“Development of the European Ecological Network EECONET, 1999-2001”* was implemented (and simultaneously in the other Baltic states). On the basis of the acquired experience, a National Ecological Network has been developed.

In **Lithuania** the project *“Development of Ecological Network in Lithuania”* was conducted in cooperation with other Baltic countries.

In **Poland** the proposal of establishing ecological network is covered to a large extent by designating Natura 2000 sites.

**Romania** initiated the drawing up of the **National Ecological Network**, during these first steps focusing mainly on the mountain ecosystems and on the Lower Danube Green Corridor. In this early stage of the process identification and designation of protected areas, that will form the National Ecological Network, were accomplished

In the **Slovak Republic** several experts were consulted during the development of the methodology of PEEN, and as consultants, they have also participated in the project *„Indicative Map of the Pan-European Ecological Network for Central and Eastern Europe“*.

**Slovenia** is taking part in the establishment of the Pan-European Ecological Network with Emerald pilot project, as a part of preparation for Natura 2000.

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<sup>3</sup> With the exception of Bulgaria.

## **Action Theme 2. Integration of biological and landscape diversity consideration into sectoral policies**

According to the reports the provisions of this Action Theme have not been fulfilled sufficiently.

In **Bulgaria** no actions has been taken within the framework of PEBLDS.

In the **Czech Republic** the integration of principles of nature conservation in all sectoral policies was prepared by the Ministry of Environment and adopted by the government's State program but it has never been implemented.

The *Estonian biodiversity strategy and action plan* set several tasks of biodiversity management planning for several socio-economic sectors: forestry, agriculture, fishery, tourism and industry. Estonia has integrated national forest programmes partly with national biodiversity strategy and action plan, as well as indirectly applying the ecosystem approach and sustainable forest management.

In **Hungary** and **Romania** the lack of sectoral integration of conservation considerations is one of the main deficiencies of the National Development Plan.

In **Latvia** sectors like forestry, Agriculture, Fisheries, transport, Energy have to integrate provisions from the National Programme for Biodiversity in their strategies and programmes.

In **Lithuania, Poland** and **Slovakia** the provisions for integration of ecological considerations into other sectors are set, but their implementation is still insufficient. The national reports give description about the certain problems occurred concerning different sectors.

In **Slovenia** there are activities related to this issue mostly in agriculture and forestry mostly part of the implementation of CBD Convention.

## **Action Theme 3. Raising awareness and support with policy makers and the public**

In the national reports no activity within the framework of PEBLDS is described under this Action Theme.

## **Action Theme 4. Conservation of landscapes**

European Landscape Convention was elaborated on the process of implanting this Action Theme. **Bulgaria** and the **Czech Republic** signed the Convention, and its ratification is on way. In **Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia** and **Slovenia** no activities have been carried out under this Action Theme. In **Latvia** the concept of conservation of landscapes in being incorporated into management plans for protected areas. The work on the strategy of the landscape conservation is in early beginning stage.

## **Action Theme 5. Coastal and marine ecosystems**

In **Bulgaria** protected areas along the Bulgarian Black Sea coast were designated. One of the most significant of such an area was violently destroyed because Bulgaria lacked suitable instrument for landscape protection. All sites considered, 90% of the protected area was legally destroyed for the establishment of resort complex. The project of this complex is recorded as part of the implementation of the Management Plan for the protected area. This was made possible since the order for protected area designation does not include protection of the beach and ecosystem, but only spot habitats of protected plants.

In **Latvia** main issues on marine and coastal biodiversity are included in relevant parts of National Programme for Biological Diversity. The project "Monitoring of Coastal Habitats and Species" has been conducted as a subprogram of the National Monitoring Program. The project "Protection and Management of the Coastal Habitats in Latvia (2002-2005)" has been aimed to establish new protected areas and compile management plans for coastal areas.

In **Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovenia**<sup>4</sup> no action has been taken under PEBLDS.

#### **Action Theme 6. River ecosystems and related wetlands**

In **Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia**<sup>5</sup> no activities have been carried out under this Action Theme. In **Latvia** legislation already foresees restrictions for building new hydroelectric stations and retention of river stretches, and also determines restrictions on forest use and agriculture along the rivers.

#### **Action Theme 7. Inland wetland ecosystems**

In **Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia** no action has been taken under PEBLDS. In **Latvia** the National Programme on Biological Diversity sets the provision for conservation of valuable plant and animal communities in wetlands, especially in territories surrounding peat harvest fields and for prevention of destruction of rare bog and forest habitats due to peat extraction.

#### **Action Theme 8. Grassland ecosystems**

In **Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia** no action has been taken under PEBLDS. In **Latvia** the Code of Good Agricultural Practice was published in 2000. The project “*Meadow Inventory in Latvia (2000 - 2002)*” was carried out by Latvian Fund for Nature with support of the Government of the Netherlands, PIN-MATRA fund. Measures like “*Preservation of Biodiversity in Agriculture*” and “*Preservation of Rural Landscape*” were adopted.

#### **Action Theme 9. Forest ecosystems**

In **Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia** no action has been taken under PEBLDS. In **Latvia** all state owned forests were designated to be certified (FSC) in 2001 and 2002. New restrictions on season of forest management activities are set in legislation. Inventory of “Woodland Key Habitats” was carried out in state owned forests (1997-2002) and project *EMERALD/NATURA 2000* after field inventories foresee establishment of new protected forest territories. In **Poland** according to the National Strategy of Biological Diversity conservation a change in the function of forests is expected from their mostly productive role to an environment-creating role. The concept of multifunctional forest is being implemented, that is connected with a long-lasting reconstruction of forest stands in vast areas (adjustment of the forest stands types to the sites). It is also planned to increase the percentage of forest areas of the country (up to over 30%) by means of afforestation of agricultural grounds excluded from cultivation.

#### **Action Theme 10. Mountain Ecosystems**

In **Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia**<sup>6</sup> no action has been taken under PEBLDS. In **Poland** in recent years the idea of creating transfrontier protected areas and development of international co-operation for the goods of nature conservation as well as sustainable development of regions (e.g. in the region of Eastern Carpathian Mountains) has been promoted.

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<sup>4</sup> Not a part of the Slovenian PEBLDS Programme anymore.

<sup>5</sup> Not a part of the Slovenian PEBLDS Programme anymore.

<sup>6</sup> This topic is not a top priority in the country as these ecosystems are not especially threatened.

**Action Theme 11. Actions for threatened species**

In **Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia** and **Slovenia** no action has been taken under PEBLDS. In **Poland** according to the National Strategy of Biodiversity Conservation some activities were planned to connect the programs of breeding of endangered species with the *ex-situ* method and some of these attempts were successful.

In **Latvia** 11 species management plans were prepared for most threatened species.