



LEARNING FROM THE PAST - WORKING FOR THE FUTURE

Action Plan BBI-Matra 2005 – 2008

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agriculture, nature
and food quality

LEARNING FROM THE PAST WORKING FOR THE FUTURE

It is often said that nature knows no boundaries. This is certainly true for much of the European flora and fauna. Europe's nature is made up of a network of ecological relationships. Rivers and coastal zones cross national boundaries. Migratory species, of birds and other animals, travel from country to country. Many migratory birds forage and hibernate in the Wadden Sea and breed in Russia and Siberia. Since the end of the Cold War, growing ties between Eastern and Western Europe have reinforced this view of Europe's nature as a single entity. Lagging economic development in much of Central and Eastern Europe has been largely responsible for the preservation of nature there.

In other regions we have witnessed the dramatic impact that non-suitable production processes have had on the natural environment. The Netherlands and other Western European countries acknowledge that they too, have a responsibility to conserve and promote a sustainable use of nature in Central and Eastern Europe. It is, for example, our common vision to establish a pan-European Ecological Network (PEEN) in the future.

For this reason, the Dutch government has since 1996 assigned a special budget, in the Matra programme of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in Central and Eastern Europe. Implementation of this budget is based on an Action Plan. The results show that, with relatively modest resources, this programme is able to reach many organisations, support a number of activities, and promote collaboration among Dutch, local and international organisations. These activities fulfil a clear need and are widely seen as relevant. They are well integrated into the situation at the local level, generate local capacity to continue the activities, and consequently encourage sustainability for the Central and Eastern European countries.

The third Action Plan, the 'BBI-Matra Action Plan 2005 – 2008' was published in April 2005 and has a budget of € 4 million per year.

This brochure has been developed to give an impression of all the relevant activities that have taken place since 1996, and to encourage new and good ideas for the future.

We are very proud of all the good initiatives that have been developed in the past. We thank all the people and organisations, which have put so much effort in these activities, and which have brought them to a successful end. We trust these examples will generate new ideas and inspire the reader in the future.

GIUSEPPE B. RAAPHORST

Director of the Department of Nature
Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality





BBI-MATRA POLICY

OBJECTIVE

The Netherlands is committed to several international schemes and treaties for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the pan-European region. During the pan-European Ministerial Conference 'An Environment for Europe' in Kiev in 2003, the Kiev Biodiversity Resolution was adopted. The main objective of the BBI-Matra Action Plan for 2005–2008 is based on this resolution:

To halt the loss of biological diversity in the pan-European region by the year 2010, by supporting and strengthening civil society organisations involved in nature themes.

THEMATIC APPROACH

The BBI-Matra Action Plan is a combination of two international policy programmes of the Dutch government. Its objectives and financial resources fall within the remit of the Matra Social Transformation Programme. It also falls under the objectives of the International Policy Programme on Biodiversity (BBI). As this shows, the Action Plan is actively involved in assisting the democratisation process in the Matra countries and in preserving sustainable use of biological diversity. The following themes have been devised to achieve the objectives of the BBI-Matra Action Plan for 2005–2008.

THE DUTCH NATIONAL ECOLOGICAL NETWORK (EHS) AS A COMPONENT OF THE PAN-EUROPEAN ECOLOGICAL NETWORK (PEEN)

The decline in European nature gives great cause for concern. That is why the Dutch government is working to conserve nature in the Netherlands, for example with the construction of the National Ecological Network, 'the green backbone of the Netherlands', important for the preservation of plant and animal species. The present administration has reserved extra funds so that the network objectives can be realised by 2018.

Our national network will link up with a European network, which is intended to be completed in 2020. Our network is embedded in national policy and depends on the regional context. The BBI-Matra Action Plan will contribute to the creation of this ecological network, including Natura 2000 for the EU (candidate) member states and the Emerald Network for the other pan-European countries.

DIRECT ECOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE NETHERLANDS AND CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Nature pays no heed to national borders, and nature in the Netherlands cannot be separated from the larger whole. It is thus important for the Netherlands to contribute, for instance, to the improvement of water management in relation to nature, the environment and open space in Central and Eastern Europe. Damage to wetlands and coastal areas in the Eastern European region has consequences for the millions of birds that migrate annually along the Western Palaearctic route and so affects the ecological quality of the wetlands in the Netherlands. The Netherlands lies at a junction of migratory bird routes, which means that our nature areas represent an essential link in the worldwide protection of birds. Activities to protect birds in the Netherlands cannot take place independently of activities elsewhere along the route. The Netherlands wishes to strengthen these ecological relationships through the BBI-Matra Action Plan.



ECOLOGICALLY RESPONSIBLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

As stated in the BBI, our economy is characterised by an intensive use of natural resources, many of which are imported, including agricultural products, fish, wood, oil and gas. In this way the Netherlands uses a sizeable portion of the natural resources and biodiversity of other countries.

The Netherlands recognises that its sizeable ecological footprint is inherent to international trade, and is therefore working to restrict the negative consequences as much as possible. It is working to reach agreements within international frameworks on environmental standards and other measures that will guarantee the strengthening and sustainable use of biological diversity. In order to meet its commitments, the active involvement of businesses and financial institutions in nature policy in Central and Eastern Europe is important. Aspects of biodiversity must be integrated in economic sectors such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, recreation and tourism, and transport.

To realise this involvement and ensure that businesses and financial institutions in Central and Eastern Europe really do contribute to halting biodiversity loss, collaboration is being sought between non-governmental organisations, businesses and financial institutions. In the framework of this Action Plan, NGO activities will be supported in order to encourage awareness of ecologically responsible entrepreneurship.

SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

The Matra Social Transformation Programme has made an active contribution to promoting security, cooperation and democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. Since 1994, the Dutch government has used it to encourage social regeneration in countries throughout the region. The general aim of Matra is to support the transition to a pluralist, democratic society governed by the rule of law. It therefore supports activities that promote reform of the state, its institutions, civil society organisations, and the connections between them. The principles guiding the Netherlands in carrying out the Matra Programme have been to promote strategic cooperation and coalition forming, the adoption and implementation of the body of Community law, and harmonisation with European standards.

The Matra Programme is based on twinning, that is, strengthening networks between the Netherlands and target countries, as well as supporting activities that encourage the transition process of a state, its institutions, its civil society and their underlying relationships.

International cooperation is the best means of halting the global loss of biological diversity. Nature management is not a Matra theme, but it is a theme which appeals strongly to many NGOs. That is why it is highly relevant to the reconstruction and strengthening of civil society. It is the reason why the Netherlands continues to invest in networks of NGOs and public administration in the area of biodiversity. It can increase public awareness of the need for conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.

BODY OF EU LAW

Another line of approach taken in the BBI-Matra Action Plan is European unification, which not only leads to change in the composition of the EU, but also means that its neighbours will change. Accession to the EU poses an enormous challenge for candidate countries to implement the body of EU law on biological diversity within just a few years (including the Birds and Habitats Directives, the Water Framework Directive, and the CITES Regulation). The BBI-Matra Action Plan has an important role to play in this area by supporting and helping the countries to prepare. This is different from the pre-accession support given by Brussels. The aim is to add extra value by increasing civil society's ability to exert influence on biodiversity policy.

IMPLEMENTATION

INSTRUMENTS

The BBI-Matra Action Plan for 2005–2008 has two instruments: the Subsidy Scheme and the Matra Small Nature Management Programme (Matra/KNIP).

SUBSIDY SCHEME

The Subsidy Scheme continued for projects in the candidate member states and the eastern neighbours of the enlarged EU; it is not applicable to new member states and the EU's southern neighbours. It is open to organisations established in the Netherlands and, indirectly, to their partners in Matra countries. In this way the scheme makes maximum use of the knowledge, expertise and networks of civil society and promotes twinning in the Matra Programme.

The scheme will be implemented by the National Service for the Implementation of Regulations of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. It consists of two parts, Part I and Part II. When the scheme is published, emphasis can be placed on one or other of the thematic approaches (see chapter 1) or country groups, gearing the approach to the specific preferences and circumstances of the countries involved.



PART I

In theory, Part I of the Subsidy Scheme will be able to cover projects encompassing all the themes of this Action Plan, bearing in mind the principle of a balanced distribution across countries and themes within the country groups.

PART II

Part II of the Subsidy Scheme is a separate facility open to international nature organisations established in the Netherlands, or to Dutch partner organisations of nature organisations established outside the Netherlands. It will be open to long-term, regional, cross-border programme-type activities in the candidate member states and the EU's eastern neighbours, geared to strengthening biological diversity. Part II is also geared to the abovementioned thematic approaches, some of which will, however, be emphasised. This emphasis will be made known at the opening of the Subsidy Scheme.

BILATERAL COOPERATION: MATRA SMALL NATURE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME (MATRA/KNIP)

The BBI-Matra Action Plan 2005–2008 contains one instrument for bilateral cooperation, the KNIP. The implementation of KNIP is delegated to the Dutch embassies in the Matra countries, with a coordinating role for the Agriculture Counsellors. Depending on the target country, the aim of this instrument is for NGOs to support the implementation of the projects and/or hold policy dialogue at government level. The use of this instrument will vary considerably from country to country.

DIFFERENTIATION ACCORDING TO COUNTRY GROUP

Cooperation between the Netherlands and Central and Eastern European countries is based on equality and mutual interest. Implementation is largely determined by the wishes and specific conditions of the countries concerned. This underlines the demand-driven approach of this Action Plan. In his Matra policy letter, the Minister for European Affairs presses for significant policy differentiation between the various Matra country groups.

The Action Plan therefore differentiates between four BBI-Matra country groups (specified on page 8):

- A. The new member states (A)
- B. The candidate member states (B)
- C. The EU's eastern neighbours (C)
- D. The EU's southern neighbours (D)

A. THE NEW MEMBER STATES

The aim of the cooperation with new member states under the BBI-Matra Action Plan 2005–2008 will be to further the strategic collaboration and the formation of coalitions with new member states in the enlarged European Union.



The letter of the Minister for European Affairs indicates that the Matra Programme is being discontinued in the new member states. This does not, however, mean that the bilateral cooperation will not continue. The Subsidy Scheme will no longer apply in these countries. The existing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with Poland and Hungary will no longer be supported by this Action Plan. The KNIP funds are highly regarded since they enable NGOs to start projects for the conservation or sustainable use of biological diversity which broaden awareness and support policy development. That is why, in consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it has been decided not to withdraw this instrument in the new member states upon accession, but to phase it out over a period of three years (2004–2007). It is expected that cooperation within Europe can then continue independently without KNIP funding. The cooperation with the new member states applies to all the themed approaches mentioned above, but the main emphasis will be on the implementation of the EU directives.

B. THE CANDIDATE MEMBER STATES

The candidate member states are an important target group for the new BBI-Matra Action Plan. Both the Subsidy Scheme and KNIP can be employed. In the collaboration with the candidate member states, all the thematic approaches apply, with the aim of preparing these countries for accession to the EU.

C. THE EU'S EASTERN NEIGHBOURS

The Netherlands has been collaborating for many years with the Ukraine and the Russian Federation on the basis of Memorandums of Understanding. The Dutch Ministries of, respectively, Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality; Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment; and Health, Welfare and Sport work closely together within the framework of these MOUs.

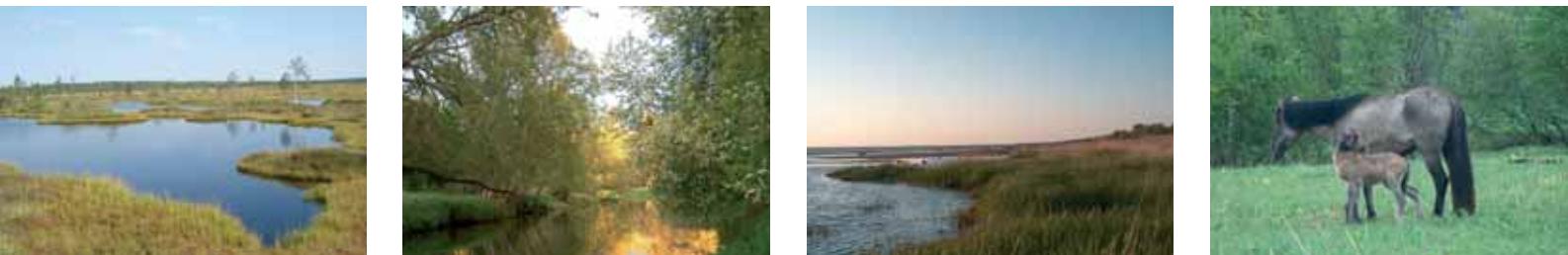
To emphasise the undesirability of creating new dividing lines in Europe, greater collaboration with the Ukraine and Russia is vital. In addition, Russia's historical position in the world as a whole, and in the Central and Eastern European region in particular, is such that it must not be ignored. An additional consideration for the Ukraine is that it is seeking a closer relationship with the EU and the Netherlands. There is also a close ecological relationship, especially with the Russian Federation. Russia is a breeding ground for most species of geese, ducks and other waterfowl that visit the Netherlands. It is the EU's largest timber supplier, and also a supplier of oil and gas. Both parts of the Subsidy Scheme as well as KNIP can be applied using all their thematic themes mentioned in Chapter 1. The use of BBI-Matra funding will be determined on the basis of the working plans that are drawn up every two years. This means that these plans serve as guidelines as to whether KNIP will be employed, but they are also used to test potential Subsidy Scheme projects. The aim of cooperation under the Action Plan is to carry out the bilateral working plans and align and harmonise pan-European activities in order to halt the loss of biodiversity.

Belarus has an exceptional position within the Matra Programme. One crucial extra criterion is that Belarus partners do not work together with the central government. This means that the emphasis placed on bilateral cooperation will remain limited to the civil society and local government. Both the Subsidy Scheme and KNIP can be applied using all thematic approaches. The aim of collaboration with Belarus is the construction and strengthening of civil society around the theme of nature.

D. THE EU'S SOUTHERN NEIGHBOURS

In the framework of the European Neighbour policy, the Netherlands offers the Arabian Mediterranean countries the opportunity to intensify their relationships with the EU as long as this does not lead to far-reaching EU expansion. Entering into relations with these southern neighbours demands special care, using the type of constructive cooperation that could be facilitated by Matra. For the time being only Morocco and Jordan would be eligible, because the possibility for change in these countries is relatively favourable.

At the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, KNIP budgets will be made available to Jordan and Morocco as a first step in the gradual inclusion of southern neighbours in BBI-Matra. These resources can be employed for all the themes, with the aim of strengthening bilateral cooperation with these countries.



SPECIFICATION OF BBI-MATRA COUNTRY GROUPS

- A. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia.
- B. Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, and Turkey. Serbia-Montenegro is formally a 'state with prospects of candidate membership', but for the purposes of the BBI-Matra Action Plan it is included in the group of candidate member states. (We would like to emphasise here that this has no bearing on the progress or otherwise of negotiations with the European Union on the status of Serbia-Montenegro as a potential candidate member state.)
- C. The Russian Federation, and the Ukraine. Belarus belongs to this group as well, but according to the Matra policy letter, collaboration to support transition in this country is not expected to be easy. This makes Belarus an exception to the principle of 'equal distribution of financial resources'.
- 8 D. North-African and Middle-Eastern countries. For the purposes of BBI-Matra, this refers primarily to Morocco and Jordan.

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

In this section, the BBI-Matra projects tell their own stories. They show a variety of activities, experiences and lessons learned. A complete overview of projects is available in the Proforis database; for more information, see page 22.



COUNTRY	Poland
AUTHOR	Carolina Pérez Valverde, summarised by Miranda Wien
DURATION	October 2002 – autumn 2005
SECTOR	Nature Conservation, Agriculture, Education, Water Management
SUBMITTED BY	The Coastal Union (EUCC), EUCC-Poland, Natuurmonumenten
IMPLEMENTED BY	EUCC-Poland

General

The objective of the Oder Delta project is the establishment of the Oder Delta Nature Park (ODNP) in autumn 2005. The Oder Delta is an extensive, biodiverse lagoon at the northern border between Germany and Poland, combining beautiful coastal beaches with an inland agrarian cultural landscape. The park would first cover lands owned by EUCC-Poland and, in future, surrounding private lands. Project components are: 1) improving the local socio-economic situation by enhancing sustainable agricultural practices, education, recreation and proper water management; 2) enhancing the operation and management skills of EUCC-Poland in areas such as development and implementation of mid-term and long-term management plans, communication and education, stakeholder involvement and fundraising. The park could thus become a demonstration area for Eastern Europe.

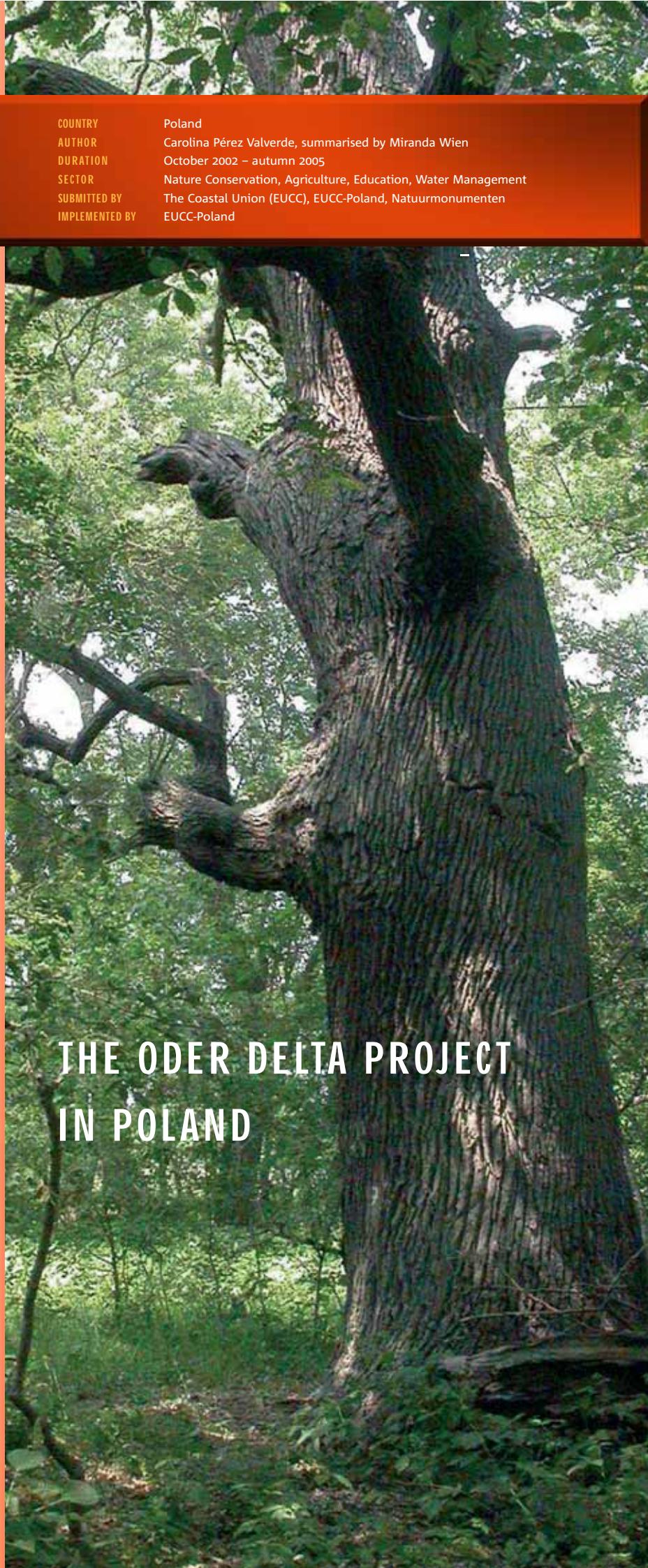
Project Implementation

The Oder Delta Nature Park being a private protected area to be launched and managed by a NGO is a unique initiative in a new EU member state. Few members of the management team had professional experience in nature conservation or ecological education. They were therefore sensitised to the project's aims and goals in regular meetings. They were also trained in involving local stakeholders in the implementation of the project.

The existing management plans for the area were revised with assistance from the project. Assessment of the different land uses, botanical features and water management aspects had priority in this exercise. The data used for the plans are continuously updated and extended. The land-use assessment was done as a Master's study for Szczecin University and resulted in valuable information on how agrarian production and nature values interacted during the last 75 years.

Impact and Perspectives

The Oder Delta Nature Park Action Plan 2005–2008 describes the most important issues and activities, such as the administration and field management inside the park, educational activities and public participation. It was also decided that the plan will be a separate initiative or working group under the EUCC-Poland umbrella.



THE ODER DELTA PROJECT IN POLAND

COUNTRY	Russian Federation
AUTHORS	Natalia Lopantseva, Nina Kalushnaya, Harald Leummens, Geert Menting
DURATION	15 September 2002 – 15 September 2005
SECTOR	Environmental Communication and Education, Management Enforcement and Research
SUBMITTED BY	Institute for Inland Water Management and Waste Water Treatment (RIZA)
IMPLEMENTED BY	Nature Park 'Volga-Akhtuba Floodplain'

NATURE PARK 'VOLGA-AKHTUBA FLOODPLAIN', RUSSIA

General

The project is part of a larger institutional support scheme for the prudent use of wetlands in the Volgograd region of the Russian Federation by improving management, study and expansion of the Volga-Akhtuba Nature Park (and the Lake Elton area). This component included promoting awareness among tourists, local inhabitants and schoolchildren.

Project Implementation

In order to attract tourists to the park, the Regional Centre for the Study and Conservation of Biodiversity, the Dutch Utrechts Landschap Foundation and the Nature Park Directorate devised a plan for the establishment of visitor centres. One visitor centre is located in a listed historic Land Registry Office building along the main road near a park entrance which also houses a history museum. It is intended to serve as an issuing point for fish licenses and to fulfil other administrative functions. Additional visitor centres will be established near the other main entrances to the Nature Park as well as in the park's interior to serve the local population.

The Regional Centre for the Study and Conservation of Biodiversity has had a long history of producing leaflets, booklets and presentations to promote the Nature Parks in the Volgograd Region. It possesses a wealth of scientific information as well as attractive graphical material about the region's ecological values. BBI-Matra support was used to make the presentations look and feel more professional and coherent and so make the Nature Park and its products recognisable among other publications. In addition, PowerPoint presentations were prepared, extra photo material was obtained during project field missions and video films were produced on the park's overwhelming nature and the threats it faces.

Ecological field courses proved to be highly popular among the local population and school children. In these courses, thematic specialists in flora, fauna, landscape and conservation work with small groups of students during 1-2 days.

Impact and Perspectives

The Russian project partners notice an increased interest in the existence and functioning of the participating Nature Parks. Various external stakeholders, from government officials to the directors of other Nature Parks, have expressed their interest in becoming further acquainted with the experiences of the Dutch partner organisations in research, management planning and implementation, and promoting awareness.



General

The agricultural biodiversity in Croatia is relatively rich because the country stretches across several climate zones and has a varied topography. Large parts of the soil are on limestone and there are valuable wetlands along the rivers and coast.

The project aimed to support the introduction of agri-environment programmes in Croatia. In co-operation with key actors working on agri-environmental issues in the country such as government representatives,

COUNTRY	Croatia
AUTHOR	Ank Beekhuizen
DURATION	November 2001 – February 2003
SECTOR	Agri-Environment
SUBMITTED BY	Avalon Foundation
IMPLEMENTED BY	Avalon, Ecologica, IEEP

scientists, farmers, environmental and nature conservation NGOs, proposals for national and pilot Agri-environmental programmes were developed.

Project Implementation

The National Agri-Environment Programme was designed to respond to two major problems that Croatia faces concerning agriculture and environmental and nature protection: a rapid decline in (grassland) biodiversity and environmental degradation caused by inappropriate agricultural practices. It consists of six schemes:

- Information and training;
- Clearance of abandoned land;
- Arable land scheme;
- Organic farming;
- Grassland rich in species;
- Biodiversity conservation.

In addition, a pilot scheme for Žumberak-Samoborsko Gorje Nature Park was developed. In this Nature Park, agriculture is essential to maintaining the basic park features: a man-made mosaic landscape and biodiversity depending on traditional land use. In this pilot scheme, the implementation of the National Agri-Environment Programme could be tested. The resulting Pilot Agri-Environment Programme is an excellent basis for a follow-up project, for which a financing partner is currently being sought.

Impact and Perspectives

As an EU candidate member state, Croatia has to develop a comprehensive set of agri-environmental policies. The project made an important contribution in this direction. The project provided a greater awareness of the relationship between agriculture and nature conservation among Croatian policy makers and other stakeholders and enhanced their mutual co-operation. The political support given by the Croatian President and the highest governmental representatives who attended the final project presentation offers a promising perspective for this subject in Croatia.

NATIONAL AGRI-ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME FOR CROATIA (INCLUDING PILOT AGRI-ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME IN ŽUMBERAK-SAMOBORSKO GORJE NATURE PARK)



IDENTIFYING THE PAN-EUROPEAN ECOLOGICAL NETWORK (PEEN) IN SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

COUNTRY/REGION	South-Eastern Europe
AUTHOR	Edina Biro
DURATION	1 July 2003 – 1 May 2006
SECTOR	Inventory and Mapping; Ecological Networks
SUBMITTED BY	European Centre for Nature Conservation (ECNC)
IMPLEMENTED BY	ECNC

General

At the 5th Environment for Europe Conference in 2003, an Indicative Map of the pan-European Ecological Network (PEEN) was presented (see illustration). This map covered Central and Eastern Europe. In the current project, a similar map is being developed for South-Eastern Europe.

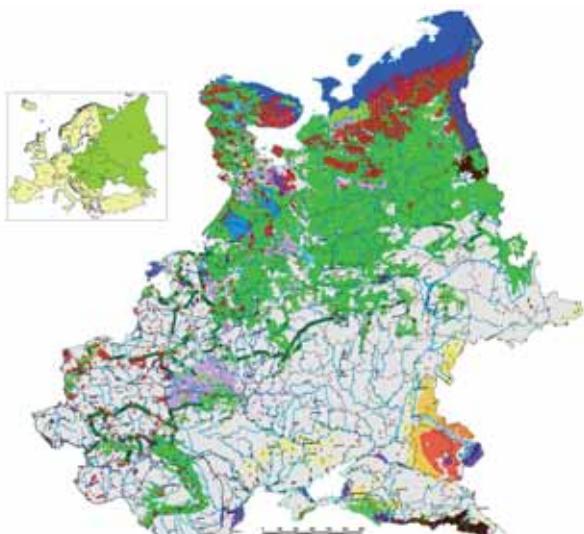
Project Implementation

Following the project in Central and Eastern Europe, ECNC started to prepare the regional map for the pan-European Ecological Network in South-Eastern Europe in 2003. This project was based on the same methodology as the previous project and took into account the lessons learned from it: indicating areas for further research, combining data from different sectors in one map and using the map for visualising different views in policy discussions. South-Eastern Europe is considered to include some of the most biodiverse areas in Europe. It therefore represents a priority region for developing nature conservation policies on a European scale.

The new map will be ready in the middle of 2006. Cooperation and partnership among the project partners in each of the countries involved has been excellent, underpinning the belief that nature does not allow itself to be limited by borders. It can be stated that the concept of an ecological network appeals to the national nature conservation stakeholders on the policy level, as well as to researchers, although the interpretation of the concept may vary from stakeholder to stakeholder.

Impact and Perspectives

An important aspect of the current project is that it provides an excellent opportunity for an exchange of views on issues related to nature conservation, and can promote synergy between national and international ecological network initiatives, especially for those countries that plan to join the EU in the coming years.



PEEN-map for Central and Eastern Europe



General

This project is focused on creating a Regional Ecological Network structure for the Romanian Carpathian Mountains in order to protect important nature values in view of the country's accession to the European Union in 2007. The Romanian Carpathians represent one large and in many ways consolidated ecological network, harbouring not only important source populations of Europe's large carnivores (Eurasian lynx, brown bear and wolf) but also highly biodiverse ecosystems such as fen meadows and old-growth forests. These ecosystems are threatened by land privatisation, intensification of forestry interventions and the expansion of transport infrastructure, buildings and mass tourism unchecked by spatial planning. To effectively achieve the integral conservation of biological and landscape diversity, a sound ecological network vision for the area incorporating landscape ecological principles was therefore required.

COUNTRY
AUTHOR
DURATION
SECTOR
SUBMITTED BY
IMPLEMENTED BY

Romania
Erwin van Maanen
1 November 2002 – 30 June 2005
Ecological Networks; Wildlife
Altenburg & Wymenga Ecological Consultants
Institute for Forestry Research and Management (ICAS), affiliated with the Carpathian Foundation (FC), Romania

The Southern Rockies Wildlands Network Vision developed in the USA provided inspiration. This vision centres on the concept of 'rewilding', i.e. conserving interconnected wilderness areas in which the conservation of landscape features and biological diversity is governed and maintained by the conservation of keystone species such as large carnivores. This approach makes sense in Romania, where conflicts between large carnivores and humans are on the rise due to encroaching human settlements.

Project Implementation

Using computer models, it was possible to identify nature areas which are essential for maintaining an adequate ecological infrastructure, as well as refuges (core areas and connecting linkages) for large carnivores and herbivores and other nature values within their range. Candidate network areas were investigated on the ground. A case study was done on the management of an important wildlife corridor through a rapidly developing area between two national parks. A brochure was made on important aspects of ecological networks and measures to combat habitat fragmentation.

Impact and Perspectives

In view of the EU accession, the project has advocated the incorporation of conservation ecology into spatial planning in Romania and promoted wildlife management according to modern standards, while also maintaining environmentally sound traditional management systems. Collaboration between relevant organisations within Romania and abroad has been fruitful. According to the recipients, wildlife conservation in Romania has received important impulses.



SAFEGUARDING THE ROMANIAN CARPATHIANS AS A REGIONAL ECOLOGICAL NETWORK MODELED ON LARGE CARNIVORES

CONSERVATION OF IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS IN RUSSIA AND UKRAINE: TOWARDS ECOLOGICAL NETWORKS AND ON-THE-GROUND SITE CONSERVATION ACTIONS

COUNTRY	Ukraine, Russia
AUTHOR	Vogelbescherming Nederland (BirdLife International in the Netherlands)
DURATION	1 April 2003 – 1 April 2005
SECTOR	Bird Area Conservation
SUBMITTED BY	Vogelbescherming Nederland
IMPLEMENTED BY	BirdLife International, Ukrainian Union for Bird Conservation (UTOP, now TOP), Russian Bird Conservation Union (RBCU)

General

In 1990, BirdLife International started its Wings Across Europe programme. In the Ukraine, local conservationists had already contacted BirdLife in the early 1990s, which resulted in: 1) a twinning arrangement with BirdLife International in the Netherlands from 1993 onwards, and 2) the start of the Ukrainian Union for Bird Conservation in 1994. Russia followed in 1995 with the Russian Bird Conservation Union (RBCU), with a focus on European Russia, later extending to West-Siberia as well. The BBI-Matra grant is therefore building on the results of earlier grants, and includes part of the 'next steps' in the programme.



Project Implementation

Initially, species and sites were inventoried and described in major in-country publications on e.g. formerly unknown Important Bird Areas in both the Ukraine and Russia. These publications present hundreds of priority sites for conservation. Field work was done by local amateurs and national scientists on an entirely voluntary basis. The results were successfully integrated in the public awareness activities.



The new species and site data gathered in the first phases of the programme are now being used by lobby organisations in the countries to improve national and regional conservation legislation and the national signing and ratification of international treaties. In Russia, the project is also focusing on the finalisation of the first-ever full-site West-Siberia inventory. This should result in the publication of Important Bird Areas in West-Siberia.



Impact and Perspectives

In both countries, the major focus of the project is on the further establishment and training of the local volunteer movement that helped so unexpectedly well in gathering the basic data for the species and site inventories. During the project period, this 'IBA caretakers network' will be expanded; caretakers were trained in proper maintenance processes and in setting up and implementing local site actions to help identify, prevent or remove threats.

The number of volunteers involved in local site actions through these networks recently grew to a few hundred people in the Ukraine and nearly 4.000 people in Russia. For countries with a history in which personal responsibility for one's own environment used to be – and often still is – about non-existing, these results are extremely promising.





General

The Abava River Valley in Latvia encompasses grasslands such as dry grasslands on lime-rich slopes. Many grasslands however are abandoned. They run the risk of being overgrown with bushes and trees and thus lose their rich biodiversity. The project aimed to find ways to restore and protect grasslands by strengthening the regional economy and so ensure continued grassland utilisation. Its long-term objectives were:

- Effective integration of botanical grassland management in dairy farming;
- Introduction of economic incentives for farming and grassland conservation;
- Providing 'tailored' information on conservation measures and financial options for conservation activities;
- Promoting active co-operation between farmers, conservationists and policy makers.

Project Implementation

In 2002, the Abava Rural Development and Information Centre (ARDIC) was established for regional co-ordination and information and education of local communities. Several colourful brochures were produced on the botanical values of the Abava grasslands, appropriate grasslands management, and possibilities of conservation payments. A botanical footpath was established along some of the typical and endangered grassland habitats on one of the participating farms. Seminars and courses were organised in order to make local farmers aware of values and threats of the grasslands and to educate them in botanical management, 'green behaviour' and 'green entrepreneurship'. In order to create extra grazing capacity, cattle were allowed to roam freely in the protected areas.



COUNTRY	Latvia
AUTHOR	Ank Beekhuizen
DURATION	July 2002 – June 2004
SECTOR	Nature Conservation; Subsustainable Rural Development
SUBMITTED BY	Avalon Foundation
IMPLEMENTED BY	Avalon Foundation, Latvian Fund for Nature

Impact and Perspectives

The Abava River Valley has been included as a pilot area in the National Rural Development Plan approved by the European Commission in June 2004. This decision is expected to generate economic albeit modest incentives for local farmers to implement specific measures.

Farmers are especially interested to further develop organic farming practices, aiming at marketing organic products as special 'Abava River Valley' products. These funding opportunities will most likely be intensively used. The Latvian National Rural Development Plan also offers opportunities to finance farm investments, education, rural tourism, etc. There is also a possibility that the Abava River Valley will be included in the Natura 2000 Network and thus become eligible for specific restoration and conservation funding.

GRASSLAND
CONSERVATION
IN THE ABAVA
RIVER VALLEY
IN LATVIA

THE UPPER MOSKVA RIVER BASIN SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT DEMONSTRATION PROJECT (RUSSIA)

General

The Moscow River attracts millions of holiday-makers from Moscow city. They enjoy the river for swimming, fishing, barbecueing, and camping in summer. Recreation has sharply increased since the 1990s, to more than 1000 people per km of riverbank per day. Negative effects are:

- The degradation of biodiversity of the riverine ecosystems;
- Littering on the riverbanks;
- Increased water sources pollution;
- Conflicts between visitors and locals.

The local administrations (rayons) lacked the institutional capacity and financial resources to regulate the visitors flow and create proper facilities. This was complicated by unbalanced distribution of budgeted funds between Moscow City and the affected rayons.

Project Implementation

The project attended to all the various aspects of the problem and formulated integrated solutions. Activities focused on: 1) gathering information on the natural values of the river and its environs, recreation pressures and recreational demands of visitors, and the ownership and legal aspects of the riverbanks; 2) developing regional Action Plans; 3) addressing economic aspects by drafting plans for organised recreational facilities in two pilot areas.

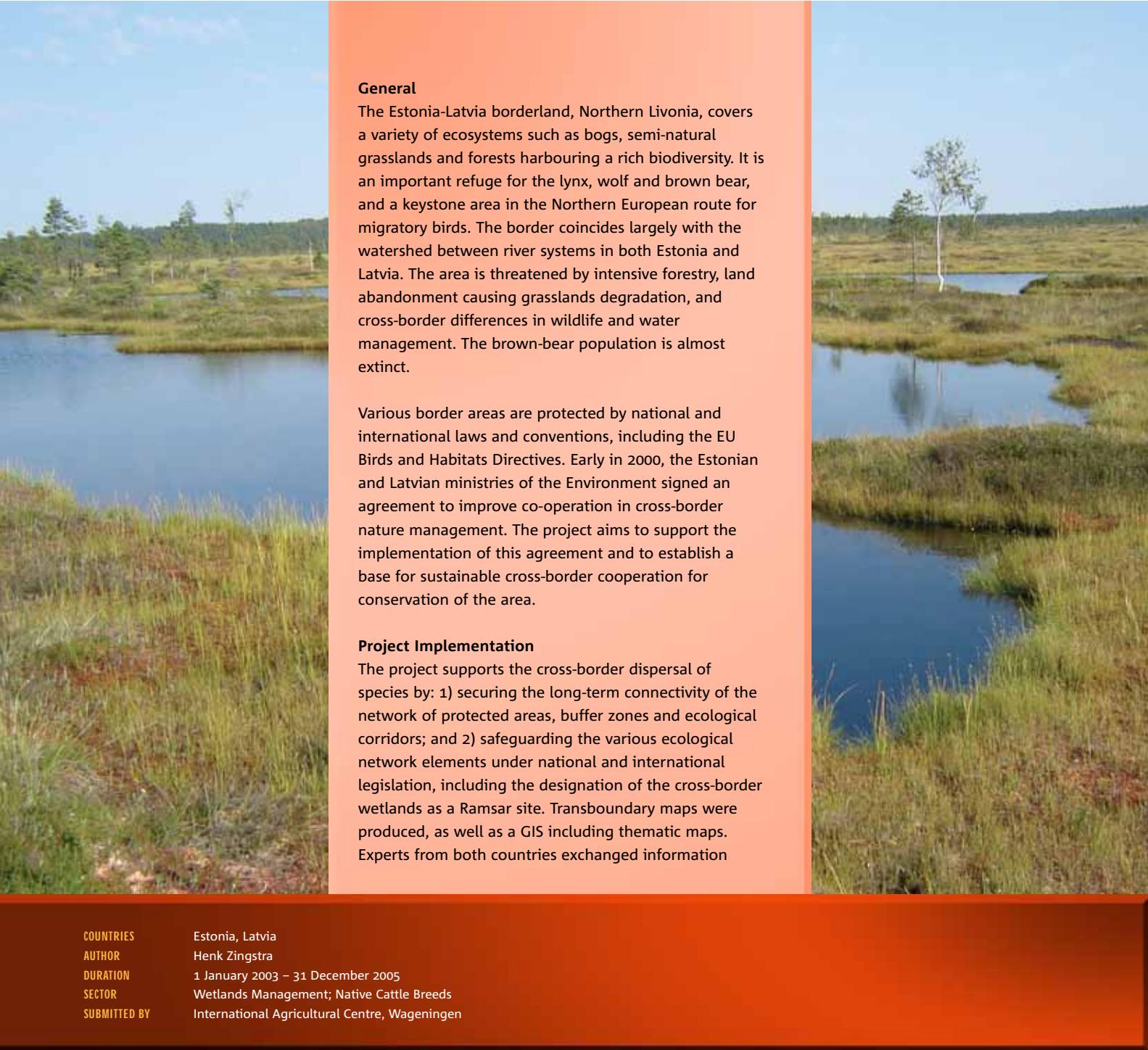
COUNTRY	Russian Federation
AUTHOR	Irene Bouwma
DURATION	1 January 2002 – 31 December 2004
SECTOR	Planning, Recreation, Nature Conservation
SUBMITTED BY	WUR-Alterra (Wageningen)
IMPLEMENTED BY	The Verkhovye Foundation (Moscow)

During the project period, good contacts were established with the local, regional and city administrations. The project provided them with detailed information on nature values, recreational pressures and recreational demands. This increased awareness of the problem amongst all involved stakeholders. Next, a regional plan for riverside recreation was developed together with stakeholders.

Impact and Perspectives

The contacts proved to be essential not only for the execution of the project but especially also for building support for the actual implementation of the regional plan. Although the commitment of local, regional and city administrations has so far been excellent, the financial constraints of the local and regional authorities as well as current administrative reorganisations pose threats for the required follow-up. Another important success factor was that in both pilot areas local stakeholder organisations were willing to actively participate in the project. Thirdly, due to the activities under the project a new Law of the Moscow District on Natural Areas of Preferential Protection was adopted in 2003. This Law prescribes a special zoning category – the riparian recreation zone – thus creating a legal base for regulating recreation activities along the banks of rivers and reservoirs.





General

The Estonia-Latvia borderland, Northern Livonia, covers a variety of ecosystems such as bogs, semi-natural grasslands and forests harbouring a rich biodiversity. It is an important refuge for the lynx, wolf and brown bear, and a keystone area in the Northern European route for migratory birds. The border coincides largely with the watershed between river systems in both Estonia and Latvia. The area is threatened by intensive forestry, land abandonment causing grasslands degradation, and cross-border differences in wildlife and water management. The brown-bear population is almost extinct.

Various border areas are protected by national and international laws and conventions, including the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. Early in 2000, the Estonian and Latvian ministries of the Environment signed an agreement to improve co-operation in cross-border nature management. The project aims to support the implementation of this agreement and to establish a base for sustainable cross-border cooperation for conservation of the area.

Project Implementation

The project supports the cross-border dispersal of species by: 1) securing the long-term connectivity of the network of protected areas, buffer zones and ecological corridors; and 2) safeguarding the various ecological network elements under national and international legislation, including the designation of the cross-border wetlands as a Ramsar site. Transboundary maps were produced, as well as a GIS including thematic maps. Experts from both countries exchanged information

COUNTRIES	Estonia, Latvia
AUTHOR	Henk Zingstra
DURATION	1 January 2003 – 31 December 2005
SECTOR	Wetlands Management; Native Cattle Breeds
SUBMITTED BY	International Agricultural Centre, Wageningen

through meetings and excursions.

The re-introduction of the native Estonian cow (see picture) was initiated in connection with grasslands maintenance and the development of nature-friendly agriculture. This breed is perfectly adapted to the boggy conditions in Northern Livonia. Replacement by more productive breeds reduced their numbers to below the minimum needed for survival. The project supports local institutions in strengthening the organisation, setting up a breeding programme and promoting the use of this cow by smallholders.

Impact and Perspectives

Significant insight was gained in the hydrology of the area. This provided a basis for the design of restoration and management. Arrangements were made to coordinate the identification and designation of Natura 2000 sites to secure cross-border connectivity. Follow-up funding for the restoration of lagg-zone and mire-edge habitats in the Northern Livonian bird area was provided by the European Rural Development Fund.

**INTEGRATED
WETLAND AND
FOREST
MANAGEMENT IN
THE CROSS-
BORDER AREA OF
NORTHERN
LIVONIA
(ESTONIA-LATVIA)**



ECONET KOSTROMA, INTERACTIVE DEVELOPMENT OF NATURE POLICY



General

The project is the second stage of an environmental program under which the Federal Strict Nature Reserve ‘Kologriv Virgin Forest’ (60,000 ha) was successfully ascertained at a federal level in 2005. It appeared that the existing system of Nature Protection Areas (NPAs) of the Kostroma region did not meet modern requirements and lacked adequate legislation. This project aimed at the development of a proper network of NPAs in the Kostroma region to protect the valuable landscapes and ecosystems from unsustainable developments in forestry and land use. These areas include forests, bogs, lakes, meadows and river ecosystems, forming habitats for endangered species such as the European mink, water mole, great spotted eagle, as well as unique stop-over sites for migratory birds. Key species for the network are the brown bear, otter, lynx and elk.

Project Implementation

Interdisciplinary field research in 2003–2004 incorporating active participation by local students, forest and game managers and supported by remote sensing data, GIS, and map analysis led to a proposal for an appropriate network of 87 NPAs: the Kostroma Econet, an integrated system of protected habitats connected by protected zones along rivers and wetlands. The proposal was successfully presented to the regional and

COUNTRY	Russian Federation
AUTHORS	Maxim G. Sinitsyn, G.B.M. Pedroli
DURATION	1 November 2003 – 31 December 2005
SECTOR	Biodiversity; Conservation; Legislation; Nature Assessment; Nature Management; Protected Areas; Training; Wetlands
SUBMITTED BY	WUR-Alterra (Wageningen)
IMPLEMENTED BY	WUR-Alterra; International Forest Institute, Moscow, Russia

federal authorities for approval. After months of intensive discussions with all stakeholders, especially on land ownership issues, NPA management and financing, and complicated by the permanently changing federal legislation, a regional Nature Protection Areas Act was ratified on 23 September 2004.

Impact and Perspectives

Substantial lobbying has also been started in the Kostroma Parliament on behalf of a good game management law. This is important, since federal hunting regulations are currently in conflict with more recent regional legal provisions.

Following from these developments, the Regional Administration decided to develop a Kostroma Regional Red Book; an official project for this purpose was launched on the initiative of the BBI-Matra project. In addition, also on the initiative of the project, the Kostroma Year of Nature Protection Areas was realised. It is sincerely hoped that these developments will prove to be the start of a more sustainable use of natural resources to the benefit of Kostroma, Russia and Europe as a whole.



CONSERVATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF SEAGRASS HABITATS ON THE LYCIAN COAST

General

The ancient Lycian Coast – the ‘Country of Light’ – lies on the southwestern coast of Turkey and hosts an outstanding cultural and biological diversity. Research during the past 5 years revealed marine resources of outstanding biological richness: marine habitats such as posidonia meadows, other seagrass habitats, and marine species such as groupers, noble pen shell, marine turtles and monk seal. Together with endemic marine plants listed under the Bern Convention, seagrass hosts more than 1000 species of algae, invertebrates and fish associated with these habitats. In economical terms, seagrass habitats help to improve the recovery of fish stocks.

These valuable seascapes are predominantly linked with marine tourism activities such as diving and yachting. The Lycian coastline encompasses one of the most important tourism development areas in Turkey. However, due to inadequate tourism management, destructive activities such as anchoring, coastal development and waste disposal go unchecked. The seagrass habitats in particular are threatened by anchoring, pollution and drag-net fishing. Some ecosystems and species have already been destroyed.

Project Implementation

In order to protect these valuable habitats from further deterioration, local governments and diving clubs started supporting the installation of mooring buoy systems in diving cities. The project supported the first system in Kas, one of the most important diving destinations in Turkey. In a multi-stakeholder selection process, diving clubs, local government officials, NGOs, researchers, etc., identified 10 threatened marine areas which were biologically and archaeologically important. Three locations were then selected for the installation of mooring buoys. Design and construction was done by an expert group. They decided to use the Manta Ray anchoring system, which would cause the least damage to the sea bottom. The buoys were anchored to the sea bottom with a pneumatic firing system guided by divers from Kas.

Impact and Perspectives

The mooring buoy system in Kas is the first attempt of its kind to conserve marine habitats in a diving location where the diving sector is aware of the importance of marine life and makes efforts to ensure its protection. With the support of local stakeholders and their willingness to participate, collaboration will continue to have the area declared as the first protected marine area in Turkey.

COUNTRY/REGION	Turkey (KNIP project)
AUTHOR	Başak Avcioğlu
DURATION	short-term
SECTOR	Marine Coastal Zone Protection
SUBMITTED BY	WWF Turkey
IMPLEMENTED BY	WWF Turkey

INVENTORY OF SEMI-NATURAL GRASSLANDS AND PRIMEVAL FORESTS IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE



General

Since 1997, the Royal Dutch Society for Study of Wildlife (KNNV) has conducted projects in Central and Eastern Europe within the framework of the PIN-MATRA programme that aim to record the biodiversity of extensively used grasslands and primeval forests in a national database. It is only possible to make an inventory of grasslands and forests on a national scale if a standard method is used, thus allowing the data to be collected in a consistent format.

Project Implementation

Per country, field guides are being drawn up that describe the typology of the ecosystems based on vegetation science and the method used to perform the inventory. The field researcher then ventures into the field with a set of maps and forms, including a grasslands map derived from satellite imagery.

The data collected in the field, supplemented by data from other sources, ultimately end up in the digital database. The field maps are scanned and saved in a digital format as well. Thousands of data records are entered and stored. The databases are used, for example, to design a vegetation typology, analyse the distribution of species, or research the influence of certain such activities as forms of recreation on primeval forests. The results are set out in a project report. This report also looks at the options for management and conservation of the grasslands and primeval forests. The policy of the European Commission includes good options for implementing these results. For example, the new member states were required upon accession to the EU to submit a list of potential Natura 2000 regions. The results of the grasslands and primeval forests projects were very useful in meeting this requirement.

Impact and Perspectives

The experiences gained in the field taught us various lessons. The most important lesson may well be that basic data are vital to shaping the conservation of biodiversity. The knowledge of ecosystems has turned out to be a weak link in this policy. It also proved very important for the data to be suitable for flexible use by the policy officials in the government ministries. Linking digital maps to a database worked exceptionally well and made a large quantity of information available. In addition, the use of the data in the privatisation process has been found of importance, as evidenced by the privatisation of the forests in Romania: the material collected turned out to be very useful in order to arrive at a sound division of the forests.

Talks with old farmers can offer a veritable font of information on the former customs and habits of the countryside. This knowledge should be recorded quickly before this generation dies out. In our experience, the younger generation is poorly informed about the previous practices. It is therefore very important that activities to promote public awareness of biodiversity in Central and Eastern Europe are accelerated soon.

COUNTRY/REGION	Central & Eastern Europe
AUTHOR	Peter Veen
DURATION	1997 – present (various projects)
SECTOR	Research (Botanical Inventories)
SUBMITTED BY	Royal Dutch Society for Study of Wildlife (KNNV)
IMPLEMENTED BY	KNNV & local partners

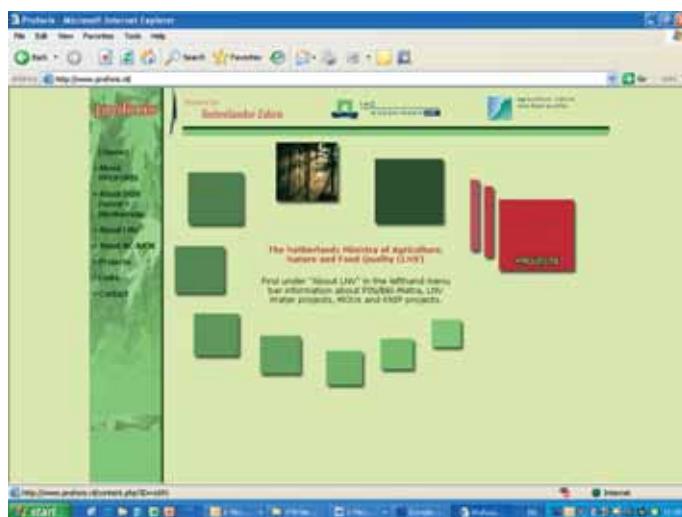
WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE BBI-MATRA PROJECTS? ...GO PROFORIS!

Want to know more about the BBI-Matra projects? Or about other Dutch-funded projects in Europe and worldwide? Go to www.proforis.nl. Proforis provides information to help you obtain an overview, assist in planning, co-ordinate actions, access contacts or learn from experiences.

The Proforis database contains detailed information on programmes and projects funded by the government of the Netherlands in the areas of development cooperation and international nature, as well as forest, water and biological diversity management. The Proforis website informs the general public on the Dutch government's worldwide support in these areas. Out of a total of about 3000 projects (as of July 2005), nearly 1150 projects include detailed information. The BBI-Matra projects are listed in a separate section of the database and can be accessed easily.

The information is the property of the Netherlands Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. The contents may be used by anyone for legitimate purposes. Proforis is updated every three months by the International Agricultural Centre, which is part of the Wageningen University and Research Centre. *Project managers can send updates to the contact page of the website.*

In addition to Proforis, information about the Netherlands' initiatives in forestry, biodiversity and nature management can also be found through the Netherlands Clearing-House Mechanism for Biodiversity (website <http://netherlands.biodiv-chm.org/>). This site serves as a gateway for the Clearing-House Mechanism for the Convention on Biological Diversity and provides links to a large number of organisations in the Netherlands and abroad involved in biodiversity conservation at all levels.



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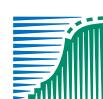
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Publication: December 2005



agriculture, nature
and food quality

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