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Report of the International Workshop "Opportunities of EU Agricultural Policy Instruments for Biodiversity Conservation and Integrated Rural Development in Protected Areas of the New Member States"

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Opportunities of EU Agricultural Policy Instruments for Biodiversity Conservation and Integrated Rural Development in Protected Areas of the New Member States

Report of the workshop convened by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation at the International Academy for Nature Conservation, Isle of Vilm October 27 - 30, 2004

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Contents

1 Introduction 7

2 Workshop Results

- Points for discussion 9
- Recommendations and Suggestions 10

3 EU Agricultural Policy – Background and Interlinkages

- Ongoing Developments in the Agricultural Sector of the Central and Eastern European New Member States and their Impact on Nature and the Environment
  CORDULA EPPLE 13
- Introduction to EU Agricultural Policy – Current Situation and Future Perspectives
  TANJA DRÄGER DE TERAN 17
- Possibilities to Support the Tasks of Protected Areas under EU Agricultural and Structural Policy
  OLAF OSTERMANN 22
- Agriculture - An Essential Part of Nature Conservation
  MARIJA MARKEŠ 36

4 Case Studies from Central and Eastern European Countries

- What does the CAP Mean for Protected Areas in the New Member States? Results of a Situation Analysis in Selected Regions
  JÖRG HOFFMANN 39
- Perspectives of Agri-Environmental Programme Implementation for Biodiversity Conservation of Biebrza National Park
  HELENA BARTOSZUK 43
- The Conservation of Agricultural Biodiversity in Wigry National Park
  JOANNA GÓRECKA 46

- A National Agri-Environmental Scheme in Practice in the Kiskunság National Park, 2002-2003
ANDRÁS BANKOVICS 49

- Biodiversity Protection and its Practical Realization Including Agricultural Areas in the Protected Landscape Area - Biosphere Reserve Pol'ana
MARTINA PILÁTOVÁ 51

- Calcareous Grassland of the Slovenian Sub-Mediterranean Region – its Biodiversity and Conservation
KLEMEN ELER 56

5 Case Studies from Germany

- Cooperation Between Conservation and Agriculture in the Müritz National Park
VOLKER SPICHER 59

- Experiences in Integrated Rural Development and the German Pilot Programme „REGIONEN AKTIV"
ARNO TODT 63

- Nature Conservation Advisory Service for Farmers - A New Approach to Integrate Nature Conservation on Farm Level
THOMAS VAN ELSEN 65

- LEADER+-Projects and their Potential to Contribute to Conservation - Experiences from the Model Region Rügen
JOCHEN LAMP 70

6 Short Statements by Participants on the State of Implementation of Measures from the Rural Development Plan in their Regions

- Czech Republic
VACLAV TREML 73

- Poland
HELENA BARTOSZUK 77

- Hungary
ANDRÁS BANKOVICS 79

Glossary of Acronyms 83

List of Participants 85

Workshop Programme 88

1 Introduction

The natural wealth which has been preserved in the protected areas of the new EU member states in Central and Eastern Europe is often regarded as one of the major assets brought into the EU on enlargement. However, some of the changes connected with accession have far-reaching consequences for nature conservation, posing new challenges to protected area management. This is true also with regard to the introduction of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The financial instruments of the CAP are likely to reinforce the intensification and concentration of agricultural production and the abandonment of marginal lands. On the other hand, experience with pre-accession funds has shown that in many cases the existing opportunities of these instruments for the achievement of conservation aims are not fully used due to organisational constraints and a lack of experience and awareness. Large-scale protected areas, with their particular need to balance conservation requirements with the interests of local populations and society at large, have a high potential to serve as pilot regions for the development of integrated approaches leading to mutual benefits.

The aim of the international workshop „Opportunities of EU Agricultural Policy Instruments for Biodiversity Conservation and Integrated Rural Development in Protected Areas of the New Member States“ was to examine the implications of the changing framework conditions in agriculture for conservation, to highlight existing opportunities for implementing the CAP in a way which supports the goals of protected areas, and to discuss examples of good practice and experiences made in integrated rural development. The workshop was set up as an informal scientific meeting and brought together 23 participants from 6 European countries, who attended in their personal capacity as experts in biodiversity conservation, protected area management, agricultural policy and other related fields. It was organized by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation at its conference centre, the “International Academy for Nature Conservation” on the Isle of Vilm, from October 27-30, 2004. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Horst Korn.

This report contains the results of discussions in the working groups as well as abstracts of the presentations made by participants. The recommendations and suggestions which were elaborated are intended to help individuals and organizations working in this field and to contribute to further discussion on the issue.

2 Workshop Results

1. Points for discussion

In order to prepare the ground for discussions in the working groups, a list of problem areas addressed in the presentations made by participants during the first part of the workshop was compiled. The compilation was subdivided into three thematic blocks:

a) Information problems (from the perspective of conservation actors):

- Getting information about available funding opportunities for activities supporting conservation and integrated rural development
- Providing information about funding opportunities to farmers, helping farmers to find ways to comply with regulations (e.g. cross-compliance requirements, land tenure requirements etc.)

b) Communication problems:

- Communicating conservation interests to farm advisory services and farmers
- Convincing farmers to make use of funding opportunities for activities supporting conservation and integrated rural development
- Communication and cooperation between agricultural and conservation administration
- Communicating protected area needs to EU and national policy makers
- Creating public awareness

c) Problems concerning the design of measures which will be eligible for funding:

1. Compatibility of different measures and policy instruments with each other
2. Compatibility of measures with the local farm structures (private/state ownership, parcelling)
3. Compatibility of measures which would be desirable from the point of view of conservation practice with EU funding policy (e.g. payments for keeping up current management, compensation for compulsory/voluntary 'income losses')
4. Necessity to find practically viable compromises between conservation needs resulting from the biology of species, interests of farmers, available money, adaptation to local conditions, feasibility of controls, administrative complexity etc.

The participants were asked to consider these problems under the aspect of how to move the integration of nature conservation and agricultural policy forward in practice. The following chapter summarises the results of the working groups.

2. Recommendations and Suggestions

The urgent need for an adequate advisory service informing farmers about possible ways to integrate conservation concerns in their work was frequently mentioned throughout the presentations and discussions. It was therefore considered as an important topic in the working groups. The participants also discussed further recommendations for protected area managers on the use of existing instruments and opportunities as well as recommendations for policy makers.

Recommendations concerning advisory systems on the integration of nature conservation needs into agricultural practice

Introductory remark:
The transfer of information and expertise is essential for the success of measures for agro-environmental development.

Problems with existing advisory systems:

- Advisors have mostly agricultural background, knowledge of nature conservation is often lacking
- Lack of easy-to-understand publications and other means of communication

Suggestions:

- Provide more information to advisors on existing programmes (contents of the measures)
- Provide more information to advisors on nature conservation issues; in a longer perspective, ensure that advisors have qualifications in both farm management and nature conservation
- Ensure knowledge of advisors about the particular conditions of the region in which they work
- Ensure that the advisory service is a free service to farmers
- Ensure timely service, inform farmers as soon as possible so that they will be able to keep application deadlines
- Understand advisory service as a chance for raising awareness, not just for assisting the farmers to apply for money
- Design the advisory system as an on-farm service
- Negotiate with farmers and explain different possibilities for the area in question, emphasising the most appropriate solution; provide the ground for decision-making by the farmers themselves
- Train farmers about sources of additional income, e.g. agro-tourism etc.
- Put more money into the dissemination of information; use all available media to provide easy-to-understand information, e. g. publications, radio, TV, internet (only useful for larger farming enterprises); if possible, direct contact to farmers should be preferred (through public meetings, face-to-face talks etc.)
- Train farmers to be advisors to other farmers (they can be a better promoter of the ideas and give hands-on experience; advisory function can be used as an additional source of income)

- Cooperation of nature conservationists with the agricultural advisory system is particularly important in protected areas and NATURA 2000 sites; nature conservation should give direct input and/or create own information services (e.g. own publications)
- It depends on the local relationship between farmers and the involved institutions, whether it is more useful to have the advisory system separate from other agricultural advice
- Consider possibilities of co-financing the advisory system by EU funds from the 2nd pillar; from 2007 onwards there will be measures to support the advisory systems and the farmers who make use of advisory services; include these options timely in the development of the rural development programmes of each member state

Vision:

With the help and support of agricultural and nature conservation advisory systems (on farm), long-term management plans should be set up for all farms, integrating all aspects of ecologically sound and economically viable measures, based on the given natural conditions and the ideas/wishes of the farmers.

Recommendations to practitioners in protected areas

- Take a three-step approach: protect the most valuable areas, buffer and extend
- Start with small things, which will be successful: start with short-term objectives and proceed to long-term projects
- Improve communication with farmers (through meetings etc.)
- Establish a member of staff in protected areas who will serve as a contact person for EU-funds/applications, liaise with advisory services, take care of agri-environmental measures etc.
- Monitor results of measures (e.g. agri-environmental measures), give feedback to farmers on the results
- Take a farmer's perspective; give thought to concepts to improve their economic viability (regional marketing, agrotourism etc.)
- Focus on young people (e.g. by offering special programmes for job creation in the agricultural sector) in order to prevent depopulation of rural areas and loss of traditional knowledge
- Use all kinds of EU or national funds, for example agricultural funds, structural funds, funds for education (e.g. the Leonardo da Vinci-Programme)
- Use possible funding for projects on agro-tourism, e.g. from LEADER+, post-accession structural funds, RDP
- Cooperate with other stakeholders as in the future more EU funds for cooperation will be available; establish networks to ensure more successful application for funds and lower costs
- Promote local products by creating a "chain of businesses" in order to add value to products, to improve their promotion as well as their quality and quantity
- Promote exhibitions, fairs etc. on local products
- Get your message to the decision makers! Gather support for your initiatives by showing working examples but also talking about problems; bring them to active people "on the ground", organise public relation initiatives, publish and distribute positive results

- Be actively involved in RDP discussion, provide feedback to politicians (e.g. Ministry of Agriculture)
- Promote the exchange of best practice and experiences made with the EU funds (e.g. regular seminars, internet fora)

Recommendations for policy makers

- Intensify intersectoral communication, including exchange of data and information
- Intensify communication between administration and practice
- Collaborate with protected area management when setting up measures for rural development plans and agri-environmental measures
- Distribute information on financial opportunities more actively
- Design RDP measures to be transparent, attractive, easy to access and flexible enough to be adapted to local conditions
- Ensure long-term perspectives of funding for RDP measures
- Establish a coordinating person in the ministry of environment or other appropriate institution, who is dealing with all aspects of rural development funding and other EU funds in protected areas
- Pay attention to the need for an adequate advisory service, keeping in mind that investment in education pays off!
- Ensure that accreditation courses for advisors include more environmental issues
- Finance special advisory systems for rural development in protected areas in order to take protected area needs better into account
- Promote interlinkages and consultation between agricultural agencies and nature conservation agencies at the regional and local level
- Enhance information exchange between the agricultural agencies and nature conservation agencies in protected areas with regard to the number and types of applications received from farmers
- Ensure that agricultural extension services take nature conservation aspects into account from the very beginning when they support farmers in the application process for EU and national funds
- Support management and development plans
- Promote regional products, e.g. by supporting regional certification schemes
- Promote tax reduction for locally produced organic products and for renewable energy production on a local scale
- Promote small-scale extensive farming
- Promote the establishment of local farmers' associations
- Include conservation management and information about supporting systems/funds into the curricula from the grammar school on

3 EU Agricultural Policy – Background and Interlinkages

Ongoing Developments in the Agricultural Sector of the Central and Eastern European New Member States and their Impact on Nature and the Environment

CORDULA EPPLE[1]

The framework conditions for agriculture in the newly acceded Central and Eastern European member states of the EU have changed significantly over the last 15 years, causing both positive and negative effects for the environment.

In spite of considerable variation in farm structures and management systems both within and between the Central and Eastern European countries, some common characteristics in their agricultural sectors as compared with the 'old' EU can be identified.

Historical Background – Developments During the Communist Era

In most CEE countries, after 1950 a period of collectivisation led to the formation of large collective and state farms. At the same time, depending on the political and economic situation and the potential of the respective regions for agriculture, small (semi-)subsistence farms and household plots remained common in many (especially remote or environmentally disadvantaged) areas and provided a significant share of agricultural production.

The increasing mechanisation and rationalisation of agricultural production since the 1950s had similar effects in both eastern and western European countries. Among these are the enlargement of fields, the specialisation of farms towards fewer crops, the loss of landscape elements, the increase of chemical inputs and the drainage of wet soils. However, the degree and coverage of these processes varied considerably within the CEE region and was on the whole lower than in western Europe, particularly in those regions where small-scale, traditional farming structures survived.

As a consequence, in spite of serious environmental problems in intensively farmed areas (e. g. soil erosion and pollution of air and water), the overall decline of the biodiversity associated with agricultural lands was less severe in Central and Eastern Europe than in the EU countries. Large areas of valuable semi-natural habitats, such as wet and dry grasslands, remained and still constitute a major resource for nature conservation today. One indicator for this high nature value are the populations of breeding bird

[1] The information presented in this chapter is based mainly on the Environmental Issue Report No. 37 "Agriculture and the environment in the EU accession countries" published in 2004 by the European Environment Agency.

species characteristic of extensive farmland, such as the corn crake (*Crex crex*) and the white stork (*Ciconia ciconia*), whose European population is nowadays predominantly situated in the East.

The decrease of employment rates in agriculture in the course of rationalisation did not go as far in Central and Eastern Europe as in the old EU member states, although again there is a broad variation between countries. In 1990, about one quarter of the working population in Poland and Romania was employed in farming, whereas for Slovenia and the Czech Republic the share of agricultural employment was between 5% and 10% (DIW 2004).

Developments During the 1990s

Like other economic sectors, agricultural activity was strongly influenced by the transformation of socio-economic conditions which occurred as a consequence of the new political situation in the beginning of the 1990s. In the course of privatisation the size, structure and form of organisation of agricultural enterprises went through substantial changes, with co-operative farms, joint stock holdings and private farms taking the place of collective and state farms. Because of a tendency towards the break-up of large-scale enterprises and an increase in the number and size of private holdings, the contrasts in the size of farms are generally becoming less pronounced.

The economic crisis during the first stages of the transformation process resulted in lower consumer demand, reductions in state support and decreasing farm incomes. In addition, many of the newly privatised enterprises did not have enough running capital to invest in farm infrastructure and chemical fertilisers or pesticides, which caused a decline in agricultural productivity. The drop in production was especially marked in the livestock sector, where high investment costs and the low demand for relatively expensive food such as meat and dairy products led to a decline of the cattle and sheep numbers from the level of 1990 by about 50% in most CEE countries.

Despite the general trend towards low overall investment in farming during the 1990s, some intensification of farming has also occurred, especially in areas of potentially high productivity.

From an environmental perspective, the reduction of chemical inputs and stocking densities had a number of positive effects, especially with regard to air and water quality. However, pollution problems resulting from inadequate management of fertilizers and pesticides continue to exist at the local scale. With regard to biodiversity, a major reason for concern is the abandonment of agricultural land in marginal areas. The trend towards abandonment has been particularly strong in extensive grassland systems in the Baltic states and the central European mountain ranges (for example in Estonia, about 25% of arable land and more than 50% of permanent grasslands have been abandoned between 1991 and 2000). As the traditional management of these areas is no longer economically viable, large tracts of highly structured and biodiversity-rich cultural landscapes are being overgrown by forest or converted to other land uses.

Expected Trends Following EU Accession

As economic conditions and market opportunities in the CEE countries improve, a renewed intensification and a concentration of agricultural production is expected. This process will be reinforced by the introduction of the financial instruments of the Common Agricultural Policy, leading to increasing agricultural incomes which can be invested into modernisation and expansion of production. However, in accordance with the prognoses of the Directorate General for Agriculture of the European Commission it is expected that overall agricultural intensity will not reach the same high level as at the end of the 1980s. Significant increases in the number of livestock are considered unlikely, especially with respect to sheep and goats, which means that many low-input grazing systems will probably not be restored.

When making predictions about possible developments in agriculture, it has to be kept in mind that management decisions also depend on the structure and economic situation of farming enterprises. In regions where large, market-oriented holdings under professional management dominate, the use of CAP payments for investments in intensification will be an attractive option. On the other hand, the owners of traditional, small to medium-size farms with a low profit margin may need all of the limited support available to them in order achieve a sufficient income, without being able or willing to take major steps towards modernisation.

Over the past decades, a number of features have been introduced to the Common Agricultural Policy in order to mitigate the negative environmental impacts of current production patterns (see also contributions by DRÄGER DE TERAN and OSTERMANN in this volume). The success of these policy elements in preserving the environmental values of farmland will depend to a large degree on national implementation.

Experts predict that the negative effects for soil and water resources which might be caused by intensification processes after accession will be compensated to some extent as a consequence of improved management. More reason for concern is seen with regard to the preservation of biodiversity and traditional landscapes, which will suffer both from intensification in productive areas and from abandonment in marginal regions. Although the use of environmental instruments under the CAP may help to slow down structural change and maintain extensive farming practices, it seems likely that additional measures will be necessary if the loss of biodiversity on agricultural lands is to be reversed.

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Introduction to EU Agricultural Policy – Current Situation and Future Perspectives

TANJA DRÄGER DE TERAN

Introduction

Agriculture and forestry cover over three-quarters of the territory of the EU having therefore a great influence on nature and environment with negative as well as positive impacts.

In the last forty years, intensification, concentration, greater specialisation and abandonment of agricultural production has occurred in the EU caused by a variety of driving forces, including technical change, international market developments and policies. As a result, the pressures on the environment have increased significantly, e.g. pollution of surface waters and groundwater, loss of biodiversity, soil degradation and erosion. However, agriculture also plays an important role concerning the maintenance of cultural landscapes and semi-natural habitats, including high nature value farming systems.

One driving force, which will be discussed here, is the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) taking into account the latest CAP reform in June 2003 and the EU-Enlargement, which took place in May 2004 and integrates 10 new Member States within the European Union.

The Common Agricultural Policy, established in 1962, is regarded as one of the European Union's most important policy areas, representing one of the highest developed forms of EU supranational decision-making. The CAP is financed by the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) and accounts for a substantial part of the Community budget.

The latest CAP reform took place in the light of various internal and external pressures such as the WTO negotiations, the EU enlargement process, the increased awareness about environmental protection and nature conservation, numerous crises in the food chain security and last but not least the increased expectations regarding food quality and safety.

Due to these pressures, the EU ministers of agriculture adopted in June 2003 the most fundamental and far reaching reform since the CAP was founded in 1962.

Decoupled Payments

One of the key elements of the reform is the introduction of Decoupled Payments – the single farm payment scheme.[2] From 2005 onwards, the vast majority of direct payments will be paid to the farmers

[2] European Commission 2003: Council Regulation establishing common rules for direct support schemes under the common agricultural policy and establishing certain support schemes for farmers (2003/1782/EC), Official Journal L 270, 21.10.2003

independently from the volume of production severing therefore significantly the link between subsidies and production. In the past, farmers received most of the direct payments per tonne of a specific product or per head of cattle, thus the more farmers produced the more subsidy payments they received. With the reform, a further step has been undertaken to shift more funds from direct subsidy payments to direct income support. However, the single farm payment scheme will be based on historical entitlements (reference period 2000-2002) maintaining therefore the unequal distribution of subsidies (80% of the payments go to ca. 20% of the farmers). Alternatively, Member States can introduce regionalised payments calculated as a flat payment per hectare for a whole region or country. The application of the regionalised payment scheme will lead to a major redistribution of funds. However, decoupled payments as such do not encourage environmental farming. Farmers will produce in a more market-oriented way which does not necessarily mean more environmentally friendly production. Due to a more market-oriented production and a higher exposure to international competition a further intensification of production might happen in fertile regions whereas the payments might encourage land abandonment in unfavourable regions. In order to enhance a more environmentally friendly production, all payments will be conditional upon certain environmental requirements (see section cross-compliance).

Application of the Decoupled Payments in the New Member States

Direct Payments will be introduced progressively in the new Member States starting at 25% of the EU level in 2004 until 100% in 2013. The new Member States can choose to apply the above-mentioned regionalised option or the Single Area Payment Scheme (SAPS), which is only applicable for the new Member States. The SAPS will be introduced in 2005 for a transitional period (max. until 2008). The basis for calculation is the total national envelope of direct aids and utilised agricultural area and it will be paid as a flat amount of payment per hectare of farmland in the whole country. Implementation and control of this scheme will be simpler than the application of the rather complicated single farm payment. Another advantage for the new Member States is that small farms can be included. This is important taking into account that farms smaller than 5 ha account for 82% of all farms in the new Member States.[3] Due to these advantages, eight out of ten new Member States will apply this scheme. From an environmental point of view, it has to be considered that the payments provided by SAPS to the farmers might lead to intensification of production as farmers have more finances for buying e.g. fertilisers and pesticides whereas these payments are not as strongly linked to the cross-compliance scheme as the single farm payment (see section below). On the other hand, these funds might be used for green investments - e.g. more efficient spraying equipment or management of waste.

[3] Friends of the Earth Europe 2004: EU Enlargement and Agriculture: Risks and Opportunities.

Cross-Compliance

To enhance a more environmentally friendly production, the cross-compliance scheme was introduced. From 2005 onwards, all payments will be conditional upon compliance with a number of European statutory requirements[4] related to the environment, food safety, animal and plant health and animal welfare as well as the framework requirements for keeping all farmland in good agricultural and environmental condition[5] (to be defined by the Member States). Cross-Compliance will be compulsory for all Member States and progressively introduced. Therefore, every farmer throughout the EU receiving payments has to fulfil cross-compliance on the whole farm. In case of non-compliance, the total amount of direct payments will be reduced or cancelled. So far, five statutory requirements related to nature conservation and environmental protection have been included into the cross-compliance scheme, e.g. the Habitats and Birds Directives as well as the Nitrate Directive. Regarding the framework for Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition of the cross-compliance scheme, only few standards are related to nature conservation and environmental protection, e.g. the protection of permanent pasture or the retention of landscape features. Due to the introduction of the cross-compliance scheme, the adaptation to environmental standards will be enforced as well as the integration of environmental concerns on used and unused agricultural land because of the whole farm approach. However, it has to be taken into account that small farmers are probably not able to fulfil the requirements, which might lead to the abandonment of farmland, especially in the new Member States.

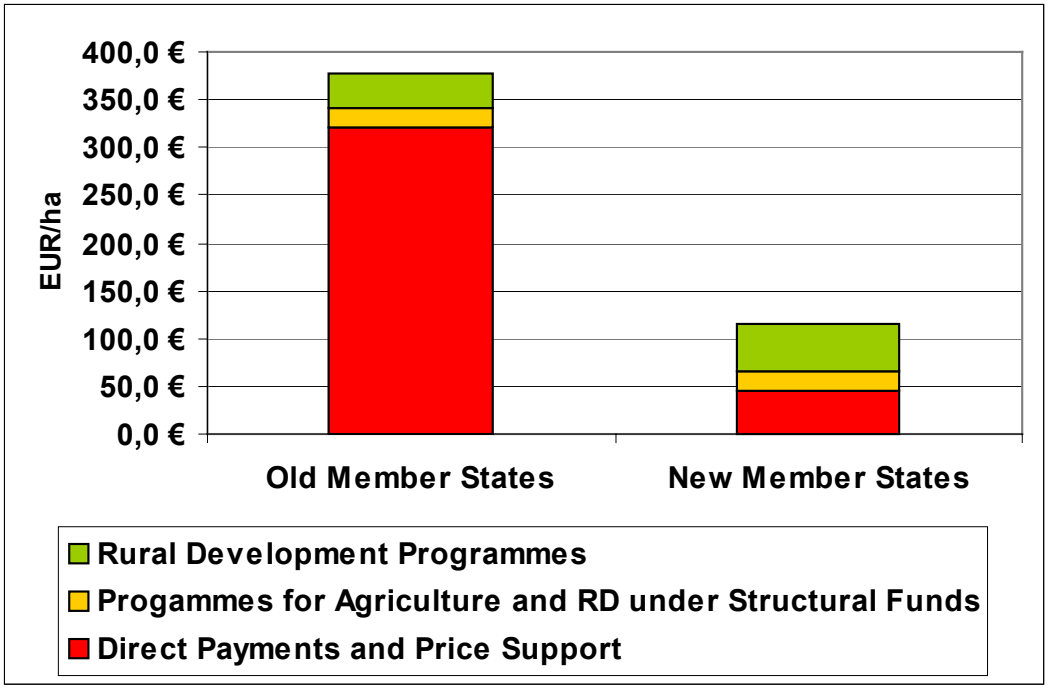

Fig. 1: CAP subsidies in old and new Member States per hectare of farmland in 2004-2006 (source: FOEEurope 2004)

[4] According to Annex III of the Regulation (2003/1782/EC), farmers have to comply with 19 legal instruments until 2007

[5] According to Annex IV of the Regulation (2003/1782/EC)

Application of the Cross-Compliance Scheme in the New Member States

Under SAPS, the European statutory requirements of the cross-compliance scheme will be optional, whereas farmers have to comply with the requirements to keep farmland in good agricultural and environmental condition. As eight out of ten new Member States will apply SAPS, the impact of the cross-compliance scheme will be significantly weaker than for the old Member States, as the farmers in these countries only have to comply with the good agricultural and environmental conditions.

Rural Development Programmes

The Rural Development Regulation brings together a number of policy measures in one single instrument[6] and aims to put in place a consistent and lasting framework for guaranteeing the future of rural areas and promoting the maintenance and creation of employment. With the CAP reform in 2003, the Rural Development Programmes (Regulation 2003/1783/EC) have been strengthened by increasing the funds through the introduction of modulation[7] (around 1.2 billion € per year) and by establishing new measures addressing food safety and animal welfare. Furthermore, the Rural Development Programmes provide new support to farmers for compliance with demanding newly introduced Community standards, such as for the implementation of the Natura 2000 network. The most important measures of the Rural Development Programmes from an environmental point of view are the agri-environmental measures, support for less favoured areas, certain forestry measures and the farm advisory measure.

Application of the Rural Development Programmes in the New Member States

The new Member States will receive a higher co-financing rate (up to 85%) than the old Member States (up to 75%). Moreover, special measures addressing the needs of the new Member States have been introduced such as the special measure for semi-subsistence farms and the possibility for topping-up of direct payments. As regards the topping-up of direct payments, the new Member States can shift up to 20% of the funds dedicated to the rural development programmes to the national envelope for direct payments. Except Hungary and the Czech Republic, all new Member States have applied for this opportunity. This transfer of funds will significantly reduce the funds available for measures which would be most important to enhance a more environmentally friendly agricultural production, such as the agri-environmental programmes, support to less favoured areas or provision of extension and advisory services.

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[6] The new regulation includes the 'accompanying' measures of the 1992 reform (early retirement, agri-environment, afforestation and support for less-favoured areas) and measures to modernise and diversify agricultural holdings (farm investment, setting-up of young farmers, training, investment aid for processing and marketing facilities, additional assistance for forestry and the promotion and conversion of agriculture).

[7] Modulation has been introduced as a compulsory scheme for all Member States. The objective of Modulation is to shift funds from direct payments to rural development measures. Direct Payments will be reduced progressively (not more than 5%) from farms receiving more than 5000 Euro per year. The new Member States do not have to apply modulation until the direct payments will reach EU levels (2013).

As the agri-environmental programmes (AEPs) are the most important instrument of the Rural Development Programme addressing directly nature conservation and environmental protection issues, a short overview will be provided. The objective of AEPs is to promote environmentally friendly farming practices. From all the measures of the European Rural Development Regulation, the AEPs are the only compulsory one for Member States. However, the application of an agri-environmental measure is voluntary for farmers. Farmers who take part in such a scheme have to deliver environmental services going beyond the good farming practice. At present, agri-environmental programmes cover around 27% of the farmland of the EU (ranging from less than 10% in Greece or Spain to over 75% in Finland, Austria and Sweden).

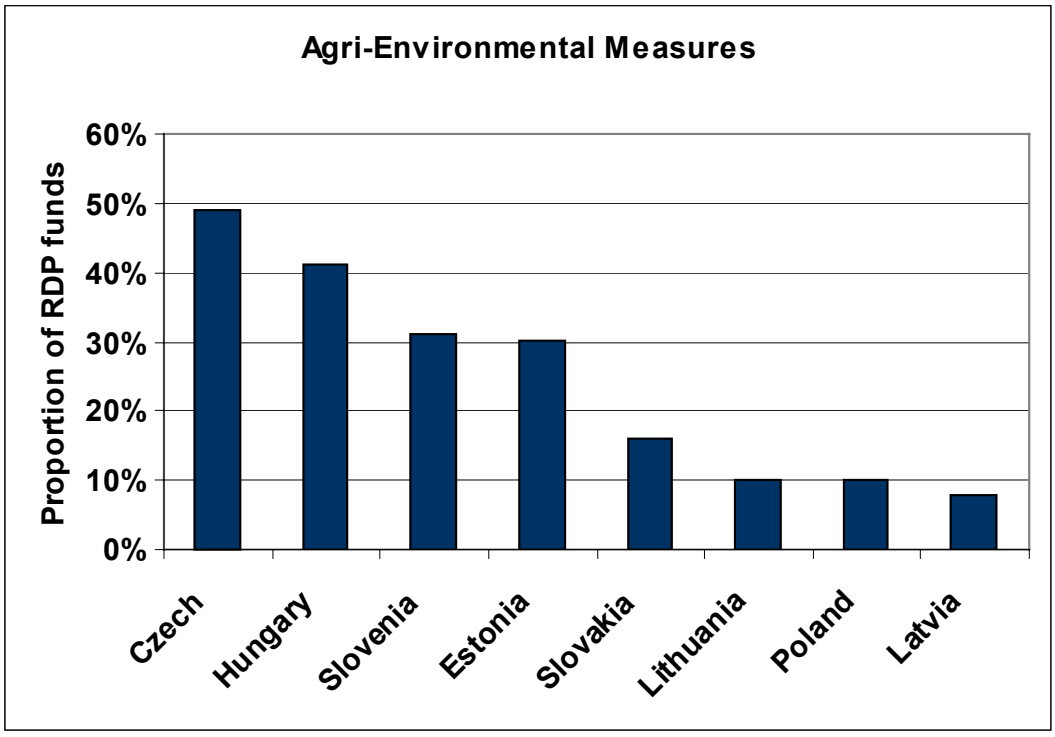

Fig. 2: Allocation of RDP funds to Agri-Environmental Programmes in eight new Member States in 2004 – 2006 (source: FOEEurope 2004)

The proportion of funds dedicated to AEPs varies significantly within the new Member States ranging from almost 50% in the Czech Republic down to under 10% in Latvia. From an environmental point of view, agri-environmental programmes could contribute significantly to the maintenance of high nature value farmland in the new Member States and thus help to address the crucial problem of land abandonment in some new Member States. Moreover, more funds are available to promote organic farming and to enhance training and advisory services in order to improve the environmental knowledge and awareness among farmers in the new Member States.

Possibilities to Support the Tasks of Protected Areas under EU Agricultural and Structural Policy

OLAF OSTERMANN

1 Introduction

This background paper, which is based on materials prepared in connection with the 2004 EUROPARC Conference, mainly looks at present and future opportunities of financing for Natura 2000-sites. Assuming that protected areas of national categories inside the EU contain a large share of Natura 2000-sites, the related funds are for the benefit of both national protected areas and Natura 2000-sites.

In this paper Natura 2000-sites / Protected Areas are understood as tools for nature conservation under a modern approach: In order to be successful in the long term regarding their core objectives, protected areas have to be well integrated into and become living elements of their surrounding region and its sustainable development. Benefits of protected areas beyond their boundaries for local communities, enterprises and other regional stakeholders, should strengthen the network of reliable partnerships. Following this approach means that a wide range of values, goods and services are to be produced or maintained by or in connection with protected areas requiring adequate financial resources.

2 Diagnosis

2.1 Qualitative Requirements of Natura 2000-sites / Protected Areas

The following table gives an overview of the most common requirements in the form of a check-list (first column), whereas the other columns refer to sections following later in this background-paper.

Nr	Action that requires funding	Possible EU financing source – present	Possible EU financing source –future*
1.	Nature Conservation – core objectives		
	Management planning	(partly) LIFE-N	EAFRD (Art 53)
	Investments (e.g. for Nature conservation, Natura 2000, Species diversity)	ERDF	ERDF (Art. 4 Nr. 3; Art. 5Nr.2a) EFF (Art.37 Nr.1+2) EAFRD (Art. 38+46)
	Special conservation concepts, studies, expertises, etc	(partly) LIFE-N, Leader+, EAGGF (RDR)	EAFRD? LIFE+, EFF (Art3 Nr2b I)
	Purchase of land	(partly) LIFE-N, EAGGF (RDR)	EAFRD (Art. 28, 38, 46, 62)
	Purchase of land-use rights	EAGGF (RDR)	EAFRD (Art. 28, 38, 46, 62)
	Re-establishment of biotopes, non-recurring	LIFE-Nature, EAGGF (RDR)	EAFRD (Art. 28, 38, 46, 62)

Nr	Action that requires funding	Possible EU financing source – present	Possible EU financing source –future*
	Controlling activities, ranger service	ERDF?	ERDF?
	Monitoring	(partly) LIFE-N	LIFE+; EFF (Art 45Nr1b+f)
	Research	RTD Framework Programmes	RTD Framework Programmes?
	Reintroduction of species	LIFE-N, EAGGF (RDR)?	EAFRD?
2.	Agriculture		
	Farming within good agricultural / environmental condition (cross compliance)	Non-obligatory EAGGF-G	obligatory EAGF/ (EC) 1782/2003
	Recurring compensation for Natura 2000 restrictions	EAGGF (Art 16 RDR)	EAFRD (Art 36)
	Recurring compensation for voluntary farming schemes beyond good agricultural practice: “Agri-Environment “	EAGGF (Art 22 RDR)	EAFRD (Art 37)
	Diversification of agriculture	EAGGF (Art.25,33RDR)	EAFRD (Art 49-52)
	Development of regional brands, marketing of regional products	EAGGF (Art.25,33RDR), ERDF	EAFRD (Art 33) ERDF?
	Organic farming	EAGGF (RDR)	EAFRD?
	Further qualification for conservation friendly agriculture	EAGGF (Art. 9 RDR), LIFE-N	EAFRD (Art 20, 23), LIFE+
	Measures linked to environmental standards / Natura 2000 in agriculture		EAFRD (Art 19, 38)
3.	Forestry		
	Recurring compensation for voluntary farming schemes beyond good agricultural practice: “Agri-Environment “	EAGGF (RDR)	EAFRD (Art 44)
	Recurring Compensation for Natura 2000 restrictions		EAFRD (Art 43)
	Marketing of regional forestry products	EAGGF (Art 30 RDR), ERDF	EAFRD? ERDF?
	Further qualification for conservation friendly forestry	EAGGF (Art. 9 RDR)	EAFRD (Art 20, 23a) LIFE+
	Fire protection systems	ERDF	EAFRD (Art45), ERDF?
	Measures linked to environmental standards		EAFRD (Art 46)
4.	Fishery		
	Compensation for fishing schemes	FIFG	EFF (Art.31)
	Environmentally sound fishing equipment	FIFG	EFF (Art 27)
	Marketing of regional fishery products	FIFG (Art 2(3))	EFF (Art 27aNr4; Art.39 Nr 3; Art.43; Nr1c)
	Measures for mitigating the influence of fishery on the environment	FIFG	EFF(Art27aNr4; Art29Nr2, Art30; Art 31 Nr.2; Art 37 Nr 1+2)
	Further qualification / training for conservation friendly fishery	FIFG	EFF (Art.3Nr 2 b ii), LIFE+
	Monitoring, management	FIFG	EFF (Art40 Nr 2b; Art 45Nr 1b+f), LIFE+
	Aspects of marine protected areas	FIFG	EFF (Art.40Nr2b)

Nr	Action that requires funding	Possible EU financing source – present	Possible EU financing source –future*
5.	Water resources		
	Maintaining water resources, incl. wetlands etc.	ERDF	ERDF (Art. 6 Nr.2a); EAFRD (Art. 28)
5.	Technical measures to protect the environment		
	Larger Environment Projects	Cohesion Fund	ERDF, Cohesion Fund
	Decentralised sewage treatment	ERDF, LIFE-E	ERDF(Art.4Nr.3)
	Saving energy, utilisation of renewable energy sources	ERDF (Art.2, 2e)	ERDF(Art.4Nr.7; Art.5 Nr2b)
	Technical environment projects	LIFE-E	ERDF (Art. 4)
6.	Tourism		
	Nature / Rural Tourism		EAFRD (Art. 52,53), ERDF (Art.4 Nr.5) EFF (Art 43 Nr1)
	Visitor centres	ERDF, (Leader+)	EAFRD (Art 52) ERDF
	Observation towers and platforms, walking trails, other visitor infrastructure	ERDF, EAGGF, (Leader+)	EAFRD (Art 52) ERDF,
	Qualification/training of rangers, guides	ESF	ESF, LIFE+
7.	Regional development		
	Innovative projects on regional level (incl. Sustainable regional development strategies)	EAGGF, ERDF (Art.4), Leader+	EAFRD (Art 53, 57); EAFRD (Art 62aff=LEADER) EFF (Art 44 Nr.3); ERDF
	Local employment initiatives	ESF	ESF
	Environment-friendly traffic systems	ERDF	ERDF (Art. 4 Nr.6)
	Conservation and maintenance of cultural heritage, village restoration	EAGGF (Art.33 RDR), ERDF	EAFRD (Art 55)
	Initiatives for basic services and provisions for the rural population	EAGGF (Art. 33), ERDF	EAFRD (Art 54)
	Maintenance, re-use or removal of significant buildings in rural environment	EAGGF	EAFRD (Art 55)
8.	Public relations		
	Creating offer-packages, marketing, etc	ERDF	EAFRD (Art 53, 52c)
	Public relations campaigns etc.	ERDF, FIFG	LIFE+, EAFRD (Art.53); EFF (Art45 Nr1c)
	Information and communication activities/events		LIFE+
9.	Environmental education, training, advisory services		
	School projects	ESF, Leader+	ESF, EAFRD (Art 62 ff = LEADER), LIFE+
	Professional education	ESF	ESF
	Out-of-school education, training	ESF, Leader+	LIFE+, ESF, EAFRD Art 57c,d; EAFRD (Art 62 ff = LEADER); EFF (Art.3Nr 2 b ii)

Nr	Action that requires funding	Possible EU financing source – present	Possible EU financing source –future*
	Advisory services, capacity building		EAFRD (Art 24), LIFE+
10.	Networking, cooperation		
	Cooperation, incl. international Cooperation	ERDF (Art.3), Interreg	EAFRD (Art 62b, 64 = LEADER) ERDF Art 3+6b), EFF (Art.45Nr1g); LIFE+
	NGO's	NGO-funding	LIFE+
	Networking, incl. exchange of experience		LIFE+, EAFRD (Art 68,69) EFF (Art.45Nr1g);
	Moderation/Facilitation	EAGGF (RDR)? ERDF, URBAN	LIFE+, EAFRD (Art 62c ff = LEADER)

* future means in the coming EU-funding period (2007-2013)

The third column in the above table shows that, according to the respective EU regulations, in general all major requirements of Natura 2000-sites / Protected areas could have been paid for within the current EU-funding system. However, the table does not show the quantity of financial resources necessary or available. Moreover, the national / regional governments of the EU Member States made quite different use of the given funds, so that for protected area managers or their partners it was often difficult or even impossible to get access.

Finally, a high proportion of overlap between the different funds can be seen from the table, which complicates access to the EU funding system e.g. for protected area managers.

2.2 Quantitative Requirements for Natura 2000

In order to bring some clarification regarding Art. 8 (on financing) of the Habitats Directive, the EU Commission established a working group. In its final report (2002), this working group came to an estimate of between 2.8 and 8.8 billon € per year for the financial requirements for the management of Natura 2000-sites in the EU-15.

In addition, the Member States and the then accession countries were asked by a questionnaire to estimate the costs for the "post-designation" management of Natura-2000, which included management planning, recurring management activities (such as compensation), non-recurring restoration, public awareness activities etc. As a result, 6.1 billion € per year for the EU-25 has been taken as the most reliable estimate by the EU Commission.

3 Issues regarding various funding sources

3.1 The Present EU Funding System

3.1.1 The First Pillar

EU funding policies over-emphasised intensive agricultural production for a long period by high market-price subsidies, being harmful to biodiversity and the environment in large areas. Maintaining a good conservation status on agricultural lands is crucial for reaching the 2010 biodiversity conservation target. Case studies indicated that farmland of high nature value still makes up about 20% of the utilised agricultural area in Europe and is seriously declining. The main threats are intensification and abandonment.

Only with the Agenda 2000 the EU started to promote major changes to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Core elements have been the options for Member States to shift funds from the first to the second pillar (modulation) and to link a minimum of environmental criteria to the subsidies still provided under the first pillar (cross compliance). But only very few Member States made use of these opportunities.

Another core element of the Agenda 2000 has been to encourage farmers to a wider range of activities, including environmental services, through the Rural Development Regulation (see below).

3.1.2 The Second Pillar

The rural development funding as the "second pillar" of the EU funding system is mainly ruled by the Rural Development Regulation (RDR 1257/1999) and, for the ten former accession countries, by SAPARD (1268/1999). The RDR has a share of app. 10% of the total agricultural budget of the EU and its main components are:

- ⇨ agri-environmental measures (appr. 55 % of RDR)
- ⇨ Less-Favoured Area payments (LFA) (appr. 16 %)
- ⇨ forestry (appr. 13 %)
- ⇨ early retirement (appr. 6%)
- ⇨ promoting the adaptation and development of rural areas (appr. 6 %).

The conservation of high nature value farmland depends mainly on LFA support and agri-environment schemes (see below). These instruments, however, do not appear to be well targeted at those areas.
In general, the use of the funds is not directed according to nature conservation priorities nor according to the potential damage done by agricultural activities.

In some cases, even extensive agricultural land use systems (e.g. on mountain slopes, in bogs or along the banks of rivers or lakes) can not meet specific needs for the protection of soil or water resources, or they are not compatible with certain conservation objectives (e.g. protection of natural processes in some types

of protected areas). In these cases it may be necessary to use grants to buy property or remove land use rights.

Protected areas have already achieved a high level of integration between agriculture, recreation, tourism and conservation and have been innovative in developing sustainable forms of energy production, sustainable transport systems and small-scale factory development. A number of areas have been recognised as pilot areas for demonstrating 'best practice' in implementing the philosophy of the RDR. However, protected areas as a whole are fragile and especially sensitive to change, particularly changes in the agricultural land use, which needs to be clearly recognised in EU policy.

There are marked differences in the application of the RDR between countries: Some perceive the RDR as *a tool to promote environmental land management*, for others it is essential for *the modernisation of agriculture*. It seems that the wealthier regions of the EU tend to prioritise agri-environment and LFA payments, whilst the less developed regions prioritise agricultural development.

It can also be observed that the new RDR is used either for the preservation of cultural landscapes or for the management of land use change. At the 'preservation' end of the scale are Austria, Scotland and southern Germany, where programmes are dominated by agri-environment and/or LFA aids, which may help to protect environmental and social assets through continuing public subsidy. At the 'change' end of the scale would be Poland, Hungary and Spain, where the pattern and/or the scale of change risk damaging the natural and cultural assets of rural areas.

France, Sweden, northern Germany and the rest of the UK combine a strong focus on the environment with active promotion of new forms of development and diversification.

Many RDR programmes continue to strongly refer to agriculture, while nature in some European rural areas is no longer of primarily agricultural origin. This applies to less developed economies where tourism dominates large areas, as well as to post-industrial economies where new kinds of rural business and/or commuting have developed strongly. Particularly in the most marginal areas, a broader approach to rural development is already recognised as essential.

On participation, the rural development programmes nowadays show more partnership in the *process of plan development* than generally occurred in the past. However, this is often not followed through into delivery, with many examples of relatively weak consultative arrangements for implementation.

Generally, the success of the Programmes has been restricted by three main constraints:

1. Budgetary constraints
2. Institutional constraints upon programme formulation and capacity building needs in the administrations of old and new Member States
3. Practical constraints upon implementation as the low capacities for co-financing have led to minimal use of many measures by resource-poor Member States.

The RDR is both much more complex and much less integrated than it first appears.

The programmes are too much dominated by agricultural measures and they are almost inevitably administered by agricultural administrations with limited experience in delivering such a multi-faceted instrument.

The annual budgeting and other constraints are inappropriate for the development of integrated projects, complex multi-annual initiatives and partnership projects.

The funds available for the different measures including Art. 4 RDR (investment in agricultural holdings), Agri-environment, Article 16 (1) (compensation in areas with environmental restrictions) and Article 33 (promoting the adaptation and development of rural areas) together with Article 8 of the Habitats Directive, under the existing provisions, are not calculated sufficiently high to support the Natura 2000 network. At present, only a few Member States find Article 16 sufficiently attractive to make use of it for this purpose.

Less-Favoured Areas

Farmers in LFAs are eligible for payments per hectare as a supplement to conventional CAP support. These compensatory payments have a combination of social and environmental objectives and are one part of the 'second pillar' of the CAP. They will generally increase profitability of farming in marginal areas under natural constraints. As such they are potentially a powerful tool for preventing abandonment of High Nature Value (HNV) farmland, provided that there are no other (investment) incentives for intensification and particularly overgrazing in the area.

Member States have considerable administrative discretion both in the level of expenditure they commit and in the precise design of the area payments system. LFA payments cover more than half of the Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA) in the EU, including all the higher and more mountainous regions. Some HNV farmland, such as salt marshes, lowland heaths and hay meadows, is outside the LFAs within the more productive areas. However, the great majority of HNV farmland falls within the LFAs.

Despite this large spatial overlap there is no clear relationship between the share of HNV farmland and actual LFA expenditure. This suggests that the potential of LFA support for preventing abandonment of HNV farmland is not fully utilised.

Agri-environment measures

Agri-environment measures are a core element of the RDR for Natura 2000 / Protected areas. They contribute to the solution of economic difficulties facing sustainable farming schemes as a result of structural and economic change. With their wide spectrum of different programmes set up by national and regional governments, the agri-environment measures do not only contribute to the conservation of the various types of agricultural habitats, but they also form a basis for a long-term partnership between nature conservation and agriculture in Europe's protected areas.

There is, however, a need to provide more environmental value added from agri-environment schemes. Many of these are seen as being designed for "easy compliance", requiring very little action and simply

rewarding farmers for activities which might be considered compulsory once the new cross-compliance rules are in place.
The Agri-environment Regulation is a flexible instrument allowing Member States to design tailor-made schemes for regional environmental issues. As a consequence, agri-environmental schemes are highly variable. The targeting of agri-environmental measures at a European level seems however far from optimal from a biodiversity conservation perspective. They are generally not targeted at distinct geographical areas on the basis of commonly agreed criteria.

3.1.3 The Third Pillar

Structural Funds
The Structural Funds (EAGGF-Guidance, ERDF, ESF FIFG), especially the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), are mostly used for a small number of large-scale projects. In some cases, their impacts can even be counterproductive to the objectives of other funded projects. This applies even more to the Cohesion Fund, which supports large infrastructure projects without having the same environmental safeguards as the Structural Funds.
The debate since 2000 has in general led to calls for a greater simplification and subsidiarity in the operation of these Funds.
For protected areas, it is imperative to ensure that adequate portions of these funds are used in relation to their special qualities and needs. The protected area administrations are in a good position to ensure this and they should be given a stronger role.

Out of the four Community Initiatives funded under the Structural Funds in the current Agenda 2000 package, LEADER+ and INTERREG III are of particular relevance for protected areas. In many Protected Landscapes, links have been strengthened by LEADER+ (see also contribution by LAMP in this volume).

3.1.4 Other EU Programmes

LIFE *Nature*, the financial instrument for nature conservation in the EU, is the only fund specifically aimed at the conservation of natural habitats and wildlife.

The EU Research and Technology Development (RTD) Programme is the main instrument for research funding in Europe. A certain share of the money is allocated to “Global change and ecosystems”.

3.2 Possible Future EU Funding System

A first step in the further development from Agenda 2000 to Agenda 2007 has been taken by the Midterm-Evaluation with some decisions coming into force already from 2005 onwards. Main results from the Midterm evaluation are:

- ⇨ Full or partial decoupling of subsidies from production, and the introduction of a single farm payment from 2005,
- ⇨ Options for this form of payments to be regionalized,
- ⇨ 'National envelopes' of up to 10% of decoupled payments to provide support for e.g. environmentally-sensitive farming practices,
- ⇨ Compulsory cross-compliance relating to the single farm payment, and farm audits to be introduced progressively;
- ⇨ Continuation of set-aside,
- ⇨ Direct payments over 5,000 € to be subject to cuts (modulation) from 2005 to make more money available for rural development (Pillar II),
- ⇨ Some new Pillar II measures including temporary support for farmers in complying with forthcoming EU standards, including those relating to the environment,
- ⇨ increased rates of aid for farmers facing environmental restrictions e.g. in Natura 2000 areas.

The EU decision to decouple subsidies from production and to increase funding for the Rural Development Programme (Modulation) is generally a positive news for Natura 2000 / Protected Areas, because it includes the chance for farmers in the less favoured areas with traditional and sustainable forms of agriculture to survive in unsupported markets.

For those funds remaining in the first pillar, the introduction of cross-compliance as an obligatory element from 2005 is an important step.

For most Member States this will be the first time to implement cross-compliance, as only a few chose to implement voluntary cross-compliance after the Agenda 2000 reforms. Although most Member States will only require farmers to meet the minimum standards set out in the Regulation (1782/2003), some plan to use this as an opportunity to raise standards of good farming practice, which would automatically give the opportunity for more conservation effectiveness of subsidies above this level (e.g. agri-environment measures).

Following the EU Commission's new proposals (July 2004) for regulations for the next funding period, there will be two distinct funds:

- The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the
- European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF).

The EAFRD provides the framework for rural development in the funding period from 2007 until 2013. It regroups the main existing measures under a single funding and programming instrument making them

more coherent and easier to implement. Transparency is increased by a strengthened system for monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

The trend is clearly towards putting agriculture (and forestry) into a broader context (multifunctionality) of their rural areas, including the protection of the environment.

The three main objectives of the EAFRD are laid down in:
Axis 1 - Improving the competitiveness of farming and forestry
Axis 2 - Environment and land management
Axis 3 - Wider rural development.
Under Axis 2, Natura 2000 is directly targeted under Art. 36 for agriculture (derived from former Art. 16 RDR) and Art. 43 for forestry, providing payments in order to compensate restrictions by Natura 2000, as well as Art. 38 for NATURA 2000-related investments. Agri-environment payments (for voluntary measures) are provided for in Art. 37 (agriculture) and Art. 44 (forestry).

However, Natura 2000-sites / Protected Areas can profit from numerous other Articles as well (see table in chapter 2.1 above). Examples for funded measures are: training, information, advisory services, management, setting up producer groups, forest fire protection, agri-environmental investments, tourism activities, management of natural or rural heritage and studies.

LEADER is now integrated as a fourth implementation axis into the EAFRD: A minimum of 7% of the programme funding under EAFRD is earmarked for the LEADER-axis in order to finance local development strategies by a bottom-up approach through local action groups, which are already known from the current LEADER initiative. The local development strategies shall be in line with the three thematic axes mentioned above.

Like in the current funding period, there is also a significant contribution from the EU Structural Funds, namely the ERDF and ESF to nature conservation (see table in chapter 2.1 above). For the fishery sector, there are a number of funding options aiming at environmental issues, some of them are especially dedicated to nature conservation and even at the creation of protected areas (Art 40 2 b).
Getting access to these funds appeared often difficult for protected area managers in the past; but the relevant articles listed in the table show clearly that there are financial resources also for Natura 2000 / Protected Areas.

Following the proposals of July 2004, those Community Initiatives most relevant for Natura 2000 / Protected Areas will be integrated into the main funds: LEADER and INTERREG will continue under Art. 60 ff EAFRD and Art 6 ERDF respectively.

The Integrated Approach for Natura 2000 / Protected Areas
In connection with the outcome of the Natura-2000 Financing Report (see section 2.2), there have been proposals to secure a part of rural development money for the management of Natura 2000-sites by budget earmarking. But now the situation seems to remain with a completely integrated approach.

Environment, as one of the main topics of the Lisbon/Gothenburg strategy, is a cross-cutting issue. The Communication "Building our common future – Policy changes and budgetary means of the enlarged Union, 2007-2013" includes the pursuit of sustainable development as an overarching aim and refers to the environment in each of the priority areas. Thus, environmental considerations are to be integrated into the sectoral policies and into funds such as those for agriculture and infrastructure.
This means that Natura 2000 / Protected Areas managers and their national or regional ministries respectively will have to look and apply for different parts of different funds in order to get access to the financial resources they need for their daily work. However, national and regional governments often assign the different funds to different departments thus lacking a common strategy and therefore failing to achieve integration.
Thus, the challenge is to establish and demonstrate effective systems and ways in practice, rather than getting bogged down in administrative bureaucracy.

The new Financial Instrument for the Environment
As explained above, environment issues will be integrated into the priority policy areas (cohesion, agriculture and rural development, research, pre-accession etc.) and will be funded primarily through their associated programmes. However, these programmes cannot cover all environmental requirements and this is why a new Financial Instrument for the Environment (LIFE+) has been proposed by the EU Commission in September 2004. It groups all those current budget lines in the field of environment into one instrument that are not integrated into the above-mentioned mainstream funds. So, the new LIFE+ might be designed to be complementary to the main instruments mentioned in section 3.2.3, and its accessibility might be improved.
The following main types of activities are proposed: studies, surveys, modelling, scenario building, monitoring, capacity-building assistance, training, workshops and meetings, networking, best-practice platforms, awareness-raising campaigns, information and communication actions, demonstration projects.

3.3 Private Funding

Nature conservation including its financial requirements is clearly to be seen as a public responsibility. However, it has to be recognised that public budgets decrease due to economical restrictions. At the same time, EU funds often require private co-financing or responsibility for projects. Therefore, an increasing number of protected areas (and indirectly Natura 2000-sites) look for or make use of private support. Public-private-partnerships (PPP) between protected areas and private foundations, enterprises, or NGOs should be seen as an additional funding source. At the moment, PPPs are growing fast especially in Eastern European countries. However, there is obviously still a lack of information and knowledge among protected area managers on how to find, to select and to work with private donors more systematically.

In the case of foundations (but this applies also to other types of private funds), it is important to have an understanding of what the foundation is about and what their specific interests are so that the proposals of the protected area management reflect the mission, goals and objectives of the foundation. In general, foundations (and other private funds) are mostly interested in activity- or project-based financing.

Foundations usually are not suitable as a source for recurrent or core costs. They are also often interested to see that the projects or activities which they support become self-supporting or -financing. Thus they may be a source for start-up costs or one-off-projects, such as infrastructure development.

Private companies with a sense for social and ecological responsibility for the local environment also finance protected area management. There are a number of examples throughout Europe. In the box below there is an example that is regarded as positive by the responsible nature conservation authorities:

Mobitel, a Slovenian telecommunication company, as a part of their 10-year marketing and communication strategy based on birds, takes care and manages a Natura 2000-site "Sečoveljske soline". This is a Mediterranean wetland that is a Ramsar and NATURA 2000-site (both SPA and pSCI) and that enjoys the status of a national protected area. It is being managed in a traditional non-profit-oriented way supporting biodiversity.

The protected area managers need to recognise and clearly state the core mission, objectives and measures that are necessary for the maintenance of the protected area. This should be included in the protected area management plan. On this basis a business plan / financial plan should set out the financial needs on a yearly or multi-yearly basis and identify, which of the needs should be covered by sources outside the regular budget (e.g. by using funds or private sponsorship).

4 Information Resources

- Communication of the Commission to the Council and the Parliament on Financing Natura 2000, KOM (2004) 431 (15.7.2004)
- Financing Protected Areas – Guideline for Protected Areas Managers, IUCN / WCPA, Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 5 (2000)
- The Nature of Rural Development: Towards a Sustainable Integrated Rural Policy in Europe - A Ten-Nation Scoping Study WWF, IEEP, 2001
- Future Developments in European Regional Policy, IEEP, 2003
- Europe's Rural Futures: The Nature of Rural Development II, Rural Development in an Enlarging European Union, IEEP, 2002 (revised 2003)
- FIFG and the Environment: Guidance for Potential Beneficiaries, IEEP, December 2003
- A EUROPARC POLICY STATEMENT, The Europarc Federation, October 2002
- Brussels in Brief, A Guide to the European Union Environment Policy – regular feature to the IUCN Newsletter, IUCN, IEEP, 2004
- Final Report on Financing Natura 2000 - working group on Art. 8 Habitats Directive ("Markland-report"), 2002
- Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on a European Community biodiversity strategy, EU Commission (COM/98/0042 final), 1998
- EU Sustainable Development Strategy, European Commission, 2001
- Report of the Commission on the Habitats Directive, European Commission, KOM (2003) 845

- Building our common future: Financial and political outlook for the enlarged Union 2007-2013, European Commission, 2004
- Proposals for the new Structural Funds Regulations (ERDF, ESF, Cohesion Fund), the European Fisheries Fund (EFF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) for the period 2007-2013 (European Commission, July 2004)
- Proposal for a Regulation concerning the Financial Instrument for the Environment (LIFE+), presented by the Commission on 29.9.2004 (COM (2004) 621 final)

5 Recommendations

To the European Parliament and Council:

- Funding opportunities from agricultural or structural funds should be more clearly secured for Natura 2000 / biodiversity. This should be achieved by earmarking a significant share of Rural & Structural Funds dedicated to the implementation of Natura 2000 or by giving it a high priority when Rural / Regional Development Plans of the Member States are to be agreed on by the Commission. Additionally, a higher EU co-financing rate could be offered for all measures promoting Natura 2000 / Protected Areas / biodiversity goals.
- The ELER is an innovative and ambitious instrument. Using it wisely requires skill and imagination. It is essential that the EU and the Member States recognise the importance of supporting technical assistance, capacity building and facilitation in the effective development and delivery of programmes. An exchange of information and promoting of best practice seems necessary on the European level.

To the National / Regional Governments:

- Natura 2000 / Protected Areas should become a major focus for the further development of the Rural Development Regulation and other EU Funds. This could even increase their effectiveness at the same time, in view of the EU enlargement without a rising budget at the same rate
- Special attention should be paid to the important role of farmers in securing protected landscapes through sustainable forms of land use.
- Protected areas with a high share of Natura 2000-sites should be strongly promoted as model areas to provide ‘best practice’ for sustainable rural development. Thus, the role of protected areas as mediators for Natura 2000-sites in their regions should be supported.
- In the case of those natural habitat types which are not depending on any kind of land use (coastal areas, streams, virgin forests, etc.) it should be possible to support the transfer of property or of land use rights from farmers to appropriate nature protection bodies, in order to resolve conflicts.
- A greater share of the structural funds (esp. of ERDF, ESF and the Cohesion Fund) should be used for smaller scale, sustainable and integrated projects generated locally to ensure a proper and sustainable balance especially in relation to social and environmental needs. A mechanism similar to that of LEADER+ could be an appropriate vehicle for achieving this goal.
- At national and regional levels there is an urgent need to set up ongoing feedback and controlling mechanisms, which will enable the tracking of scheme outcomes and identification of obstacles, and

thus generate ideas to enhance effective delivery. Agri-environment measures should be better monitored to assess their effectiveness in achieving conservation objectives.

To Natura 2000 / Protected Area Managers:

- Protected area managers should go on building strong partnerships on local, regional, national and global level, because they will need these partners (and vice-versa) to make best use of the widespread opportunities in the different Funds.
- Protected area managers or their authorities should be encouraged to work out a business plan / financial plan for their protected area in order to make best use of the various public and private financial sources.

Agriculture - An Essential Part of Nature Conservation

MARIJA MARKEŠ

A successful development of protected areas is inseparable from the conscious choice of an integral approach in relation to both, development issues and nature.

The underlying principle of development activities should therefore be the search for models of efficient, premeditated and nature-friendly use of regional natural and economic resources.

Regarding the relationship between conservation and agriculture, one should keep in mind that the better part of natural resources is in the farmer's hands. Agriculture plays a multiple role. The functions of agriculture are not limited merely to production and economic purposes. On the contrary – agriculture is highly important also because of its social and cultural value and the impact it has on settlement culture and nature conservation.

In Slovenia, forests cover 1.1 million hectares or 56% of the country's total area, agricultural land has a 42% share. 65% of the agricultural land is grassland, 28% is arable land, the rest are orchards and vineyards.

The average size of an agricultural holding in Slovenia is 5 ha. According to official statistics 785,000 ha of agricultural land is used. Some 110,000 ha of agricultural land are not exploited for agricultural use any more. 80% of Slovenian territory are mountain and less favoured areas.

Agriculture is undoubtedly interested in having a transparent and long-term system of agricultural and rural development policies as well as clear positions of ministries and their offices on rural areas. This will enable farm men and farm women to plan the development of their farms in the long run, and give them reliable conditions for agricultural activities over a longer period.

Special rural programmes are needed in protected areas:

- they can help to make the transition from sector-oriented development programmes to integral programmes;
- both the ecological and the economic component of development can be taken into account;
- special local resources and needs can be identified;
- priorities of development can be appointed;
- nature conservation should be introduced with a positive connotation into the concept of development;

A rural development plan for protected areas should:

- provide and maintain job positions in country areas;
- encourage ecologically appropriate methods of agricultural production and processing – agri-environmental programmes
- develop trade marks for mountain and hill areas and regional trade marks;

- consider the socio-cultural diversity and ecological potential of the territory together with the quality of life;
- contribute to the maintenance of biodiversity.

Possibilities to support the provision of jobs for local people exist for example in the protected areas' authorities (park management, INFO centres, rangers), by developing agricultural and supplementary activities and by developing direct co-operation with local people in services, tourism or agriculture.

Possibilities to support the development of additional activities on farm include planning and advising (for example on rural development, organic farming, food processing), the development of markets (for example by promoting trade marks or agro-tourism), providing financial support (for example to the continued use of high mountains pastures or the renewal of dairies), educational measures (for example on management, quality control, hygiene standards, processing and marketing), exchanges and study tours.

The future of agriculture and rural development depends on the capability of rural areas and their agricultural sector to prepare good programmes and take part in the run for European financial funds.

4 Case Studies from Central and Eastern European Countries

What does the CAP Mean for Protected Areas in the New Member States? Results of a Situation Analysis in Selected Regions

JÖRG HOFFMANN

In order to deepen the understanding of the complex interactions of the instruments of the Common Agricultural Policy, with special regard to the anticipated effects in the New Member States which since 1 May 2004 are a vital part of the enlarged European Union, and in order to enhance the development of sustainable agricultural policy, as required by the Treaty of Amsterdam, the IUCN Office for Central Europe together with a network of experts in the region made an initial inquiry about the impacts of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) on protected areas in chosen EU-acceding countries: Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia"[8].

The study, commissioned to IUCN – The World Conservation Union by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, concentrates on the connections between agricultural land use and nature values and on likely changes in agriculture as a result of applying the CAP. It weighs the effects of different CAP instruments and looks into anticipated consequences in the medium and long term for rural areas in the New Member States. A notable share of the study is dedicated to detecting gaps and limitations of various kinds that might hamper effective application of the CAP instruments. The study thus also deals with the question how different Acceding States have prepared for using the opportunities of the so-called *Pillar II* of the Common Agricultural Policy, as set forth by the Rural Development Regulation (EC No.1257/99) and the Horizontal Regulation (EC No.1783/2003).

The following protected areas formed the empirical basis for the study:

- Poland – Biebrza National Park, Bieszczady National Park and Landscape Parks (Wetlinski and San Landscape Parks), Wigry National Park
- Slovakia – Mala Fatra National Park, Slovensky Raj National Park
- Lithuania – Aukstaitija National Park, Zuvintas Biosphere Reserve.

They were selected for the purpose of the study according to a set of criteria (i.e. high impact of agriculture on the protected area, agriculture creating substantial income for the rural population, the protected area itself being representative for the country's protection regime, bearing important geographical and biological landscape features).

[8] The full publication "Study on the Impacts of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) on Protected Areas in chosen EU-Acceding Countries: Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia", BfN-Skripten 100, Bonn, Germany 2004, can be downloaded as a PDF-file from http://www.bfn.de/09/skript100.pdf (2.8 MB).

With ongoing reforms of the CAP and the Member States' administrations, and with the study having been carried out fairly before Accession Day, the study and its findings must be considered preliminary. There is a need of updating and widening the empirical basis soon to fully cover the new Member States.

However, the observations on the two important changes of universal character to agriculture in the new Member States, which present a threat to nature conservation, can be expected to have long-lasting validity: Firstly, intensification of agriculture can be observed both within protected areas and in the surrounding areas with shared ecosystems, and secondly, the abandonment of agricultural production and letting arable lands become fallow occurs as a regular feature on less-productive soils. The low profitability of agricultural production has a significant influence driving both these changes.

The study attaches great importance to integrated rural development strategies, as they are perceived as viable tools which not only prevent depopulation and land abandonment in rural areas – both are relevant causes for the deterioration and loss of species-rich habitats – but are furthermore of vital interest for the social situation in the new Member States, potentially leading also to less migration, both at domestic and international level.

Key Findings

It is considered that threats to nature conservation, caused on the one hand by intensification of agricultural production on productive soils and by the abandonment of less-productive agricultural lands on the other, will become more acute in the coming years, due to an expected polarisation of agricultural production.

The introduction of area payments, in the form adopted at the Copenhagen Summit in 2002, could clearly have positive impacts in this context, since they are expected to allow slow progress towards sustainable land use: only those farmers who have maintained their land "in good agricultural condition" (= who have cultivated their land) for the recent two years are eligible for decoupled area payments.

All activities undertaken within the scope of the Rural Development Plans (CAP financing documents of the new Member States for the years 2004-2006) have some significance for conservation: positive influences are to be expected from Agri-Environmental Programmes (AEP), from activities supporting Less-Favoured Areas (LFA), and from compensation payments in areas with environmental restrictions. Negative impacts can arise especially from land consolidation, but also from Early Retirement schemes and the mechanism labelled as support for young farmers, since these financial instruments are likely to be used for promoting the intensification of agricultural production.

The introduction of agri-environmental programmes and assurance of their long-term positive effects in protected areas depend mainly on: 1) successful engagement of farmers in their implementation; 2) active promotion of the programmes by the public administration, including support of farmers through

communication support and a well-equipped advisory system; and 3) the methods and amounts of proposed payments.

The design of agri-environmental programmes should show better integration with the requirements of the planned 'Natura 2000' network of European nature conservation sites. Payment levels of specially targeted AEP sub-measures should be of such a kind as to compete with increasing economic yields, in order to prevent a degradation of high nature-value sites due to increased intensity of agricultural activities or other potentially harmful types of land development (e.g. extension of ski resorts in Slovakia).

In implementation of agri-environmental programmes in the EU-15, the notion of restoring biodiversity dominated over the conservation of existing biodiversity. Since in the new Member States a high level of biodiversity exists as a result of applying extensive agricultural methods, the focus therefore has to shift. The new Member States should put a stronger emphasis on preserving those still applied methods of agricultural production which conserve a rich biodiversity. This could effectively be done by means of a well-developed agri-environmental programme.

Besides the necessary integration of environmental policy with other key economic sectors – primarily agriculture – there needs to be a greater engagement of local stakeholders: nature conservation employees, local agricultural organisations, local administrations and interested individuals should be involved in the course of various planning processes. Capacity building measures such as information and education campaigns are essential and should be an integral part of every planning process.

For rural localities, nature conservation can provide a viable source of income. However, participatory approaches often remain an illusion: A clear lack of participation by both governmental as well as non-governmental nature conservation stakeholders was stated by the rural development experts of the study. The reasons for this are multifaceted. It becomes clear, however, that agricultural administrations, as the "owners" of the rural development portfolio, hold the key to improve co-operation.

Recommendations

In order to guarantee that the instruments of the Common Agricultural Policy will be implemented with the greatest benefits for agriculture, the local population and nature conservation, investments into raising the environmental awareness of farmers are needed. To maintain and/or achieve a sustainable land use that is adapted to the specific regional conditions, a thorough training of agricultural advisors is particularly required. The advisory training should incorporate the promotion of appropriate environmentally friendly farming techniques.

Secondly, participatory approaches should ensure full stakeholder involvement: through involving farmers and groups of interested individuals at all stages of the decision-making process, a broadly shared "vision for rural development" can be shaped thus leading to a better targeting of CAP instruments.

Thirdly, as a general pre-requisite, the communication and co-operation between different authorities, in particular between agricultural and environmental administrations, should be improved, to come up with truly integrated rural development strategies, making best use of already available CAP funding opportunities.

Administrative bodies of protected areas should more strongly perceive themselves as stakeholders of the Common Agricultural Policy and engage more actively in the development of financial measures for agriculture. Thus it can be achieved that CAP measures are better targeted towards the protected areas' management aims.

Perspectives of Agri-Environmental Programme Implementation for Biodiversity Conservation of Biebrza National Park

HELENA BARTOSZUK

The Biebrza National Park is situated in the north-eastern part of Poland. The park was established in 1993. The Biebrza National Park protects the last almost intact extensively used valley peatlands in Central and Western Europe with a unique diversity of habitats, communities, and plant and animal species.

Several types of wetlands can be found in the Biebrza valley. The dominant types are fens, marshes, swamp forests and riverine floodplains. Within the park borders, meadows (natural, semi-natural and cultivated) and pastures occupy 69%, forests 26%, waters 2%, arable land 1%, roads and settlements 2% of the area.

Many of the plant communities occurring in the Biebrza National Park are listed on Annex I of the Habitats Directive (14 habitat types, occupying 13,369 ha). The most important among them are: transition mires, *Molinion* meadows, northern boreal alluvial meadows, bog woodlands and oak-hornbeam forests.

921 species of vascular plants and many species of mosses have been registered in the Biebrza National Park. Many rare and protected species declining in Poland and Europe occur in the Biebrza valley. 79 of the vascular plants occurring in the Biebrza National Park are protected by law, 29 species of them are in the Polish Red Data Book, 45 are on the Red List of Threatened Plants in Poland and 5 species of vascular plants and one moss species are listed on Annex II of the Habitats Directive (*Cypripedium calceolus, Liparis loeselii, Saxifraga hirculus, Pulsatilla patens, Thesium ebracteatum* and *Drepanocladus vernicosus).*

The Biebrza valley is a refuge for a rich and varied wildlife, both resident and migrant. Many rare and protected species declining in Poland and Europe depend on the valley for their survival.

So far, 275 bird species (about 191 breeding), 48 mammals, 5 reptiles, 12 amphibians, 36 fish species, over 750 species of moths and butterflies, 500 species of beetles, 450 spider species, 42 species of caddis-fly and 19 of leeches have been registered here. The Biebrza valley's value for birds, rich both in numbers and variety, is unique. The long list of nesting birds includes such rare species as the aquatic warbler, black grouse, black stork, corncrake, great snipe, white-winged black tern and many more. Moreover, the Biebrza valley plays an outstanding role as feeding ground and stopover for migratory birds, especially during the spring migration. Regarding the number of migrating flocks and the diversity of bird species, the Biebrza stands out among other Polish river valleys. In 1995, the Biebrza National Park was inscribed in the Ramsar list. The Biebrza wetlands are also an important breeding habitat in Europe for birds of prey like: *Aquila clanga, A. pomarina, Cyrcus pygargus* and *Haliaeetus albicilla.* 79 bird species (38 breeding) that have been registered in the Biebrza valley are on Annex I of the Birds Directive. For many

of the birds, the Biebrza valley is an important refuge, e.g.: the Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* (about 79% of the Polish and 14 % of the global population), the Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* (100% of the Polish population), the Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (60% of the Polish population, main breeding site in Central Europe), the Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* (17% of the Polish population) etc.

Among the species mentioned on Annex II of the Habitats Directive, seven mammal species (*Barbastella barbastellus, Myosotis dasycneme, M. myosotis, Castor fiber* (c. 1,600 individuals)*, Canis lupus* (16 individuals) and *Lutra lutra)*, one species of *Reptilia* –(*Lacerta agilis*)*,* and two amphibian species (*Bombina bombina* and *Triturus cristatus*) occur in the Biebrza valley, and five fish species (*Cobitis taenia, Misgurnus fossilis, Aspius aspius, Rhodeus sericeus* and the lamprey species *Eudontomyzon mariae*) live in the Biebrza river.

The Biebrza National Park owns its unique values because of the natural character of the Biebrza river and the extensive management of the valley for hay-making in the past. 42% of the park area is private property, including more than 37% meadows, pastures and so-called waste land (low classified meadows). During the last decades, the agricultural use of the Biebrza valley has been decreasing and is recently limited to the area where machinery can be used. Farmers managed about 5,000 ha in the park in a wet year (2001) and about 11,000 ha in an extremely dry one (2003).

One of the main threats to the Biebrza National Park nature values is the plant succession, caused mostly by the abandonment of wetlands. About 15,000 ha are threatened by willow, birch and reed encroachment. According to the Draft Management Plan for the Biebrza National Park, there is an area of 32,000 ha that should be mowed, and an area of 8,000 ha, where bushes should be removed. A few projects are undertaken to restrain the plant succession in the Biebrza National Park. They have covered an area of about 2,500 ha until now.

There are 17,278 private landowners in the Biebrza National Park, who can be considered potential beneficiaries of Rural Development Programme instruments. Almost all of the RDP instruments can have positive effects for the park. The most recommended are: Agri-environment, Less-Favoured Areas, improving processing and marketing, and promoting the adaptation and development of rural areas. In particular, the agri-environmental programme that promotes extensive agriculture may help to maintain the unique biodiversity of the flora and fauna species and their habitats in the Biebrza National Park. Seven packages are proposed by the Polish Agri-environmental Programme to be applied in 2004-2006: sustainable farming, organic farming, maintenance of extensive meadows, maintenance of extensive pastures, erosion and water pollution control, buffer zones and protection of genetic resources of traditional animal breeds. Farmers can implement three of them on one farm. The most important for the Biebrza National Park is the implementation of the package for the maintenance of extensive meadows, variant – single swath swamped meadows (it can be implemented in an area of more than 20,000 ha), followed by variant – double swath meadows (about 700 ha) and the package for the maintenance of extensive pastures (about 1,000 ha).

There are high potentials for the implementation of agri-environmental measures in the Biebrza National Park: More than 20,000 ha of swamped and wet meadows, a high number of private landowners, and a quite attractive proposal for financial compensation for extensive agricultural use.

The following difficulties or limitations exist for the implementation of RDP measures in the Biebrza National Park:

- ⇨ small number of advisors (field officers) working with farmers (six advisors working in the region and two co-ordinators),
- ⇨ the dispersed property structure (more than 17,000 private landowners, more than 12,000 parcels smaller than 1 ha, which for effective bird habitat protection need integration of agri-environmental measures on neighbouring parcels),
- ⇨ the majority of landowners live outside the Biebrza National Park and many of them live far away from the valley - the distance from the meadows to the owners' places of residence is on average 10-20 km (based on data for 66% of meadows in the southern and more than 30% in the middle and northern Biebrza valley),
- ⇨ the difficulty of access to the meadows and pastures on swamped hydrogenic habitats that substantially limits the possibilities of machine use, especially in wet years;
- ⇨ in majority low quality of the hay and decreasing demand for bedding;
- ⇨ about 10,000 ha of abandoned fens overgrown by bushes and birch must be cleared before the implementation of agri-environmental measures;
- ⇨ gradual decrease in the number of farms in the BNP area.

The state of implementation of RDP measures in the region is as follows: farmers have submitted applications for production subsidies and direct payments, for LFA payments, for early retirement incentives and for organic farming. The first applicants received payments for production subsidies and direct payments, for LFA payments and for organic farming. Several training courses were organised for advisors, park workers, and farmers. Applications for the rest of the agri-environmental packages can be submitted from the beginning of 2005. Supported by professional advisors, farmers have started to prepare agri-environmental plans for their farms and to apply for the respective environmental packages.

The Conservation of Agricultural Biodiversity in Wigry National Park

JOANNA GÓRECKA

Restitution of Local Breeds of Farm Animals and Restoration of Old Apple Cultivars

The Wigry National Park is located in the north-eastern part of Poland. This part of Poland is called the 'Green Lungs' of Poland and is rich in pristine nature. Characteristic for the area of the Wigry National Park is the high diversity of ecosystems. Within the borders of the Park around Wigry Lake there are other, smaller lakes, rivers, swamps, forests and rural areas. The total area of the Park is 15,086 ha with 2,228.8 ha of agricultural lands. The farms in the region are usually extensively managed. Their average size is small (8 ha). The regional conditions for agricultural production are difficult due to the climate, the poor quality of the soils and the topography.

To support nature conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources in the region, the Association Conference of the Services for Protection of Nature of the Green Lungs of Poland (Stowarzyszenie Konferencja Służb Ochrony Przyrody Zielonych Płuc Polski), the Wigry National Park, the Global Environment Facility with its Small Grant Programme (GEF/SGP), UNDP, and the Foundation EkoFundusz established a concerted project for the 'Conservation of Agricultural Biodiversity in the Wigry National Park'.

The objectives of the project are the conservation of the existing agro-biodiversity through an increased population of local breeds which are at risk of extinction, and the conservation of the traditional regional apple orchards. In the long term, the project is aiming at the sustainable development of the region by improving the ecological knowledge of the local society. The desired result from these efforts is an agricultural production which is consistent with the natural environment in the Wigry National Park. The effect of the project will be an enhanced development co-operation among the services of the Park and the local farmers, increased earnings of the farmers through the development of agro-tourism, and the promotion of local agricultural products from the area of the Wigry National Park.

From the 76 different breeds, types or lines among the Polish genetic resources of domestic animals that are at risk of loss, five breeds have been chosen: Polish Horse (Konik polski), Polish Red Cattle (Bydło polskie czerwone), Pied Zlotnicka Pig (Świnia złotnicka pstra), Green-Legged Hen (Kura zielononóżka), and Suwalska Goose (Gęś suwalska).
The local breeds are characterised by:

- ⇨ adaptation to the local conditions (e.g. climatic conditions)
- ⇨ good disease resistance
- ⇨ easy care
- ⇨ sometimes unique traits, which distinguish them from all other species
- ⇨ high fertility
- ⇨ high feeding efficiency
- ⇨ basis for specific regional products

The Polish Horse is a cousin of the Tarpan Bilgoraj Forest Horse. It has a gentle, calm and pleasant character and is strong and durable in work. The Polish Horse is suitable for horseback riding or for use in carts. The Polish Red Cattle is characterised through its red colour of the fur. It is a local dairy cattle that has earlier been raised in the north-eastern part of Poland. The milk from this cow is of high quality with a high content of fat and protein. The Zlotnicka Pig is suitable for the production of meat and lard. Earlier it was bred in the region of Wilenszczyzna (Vilnius region) in Lithuania. The meat from the Zlotnicka Pig is very appetising, has a large share of internal grease and is very good for the production of durable pork. Females of the Zlotnicka Pig fit to cross-breeding with other breeds. The Suwalska Goose comes from Suwalszczyzna in the north-eastern part of Poland. This breed has good traits of meat and the geese may be used for cross-breeding. The Green-Legged Hen is very independent and characterised by the ability to find the majority of its fodder on its own in the grass. Its meat is of excellent taste with lower levels of cholesterol in the yolk of its eggs.

The realisation of the project consists of four parts: During the initial stage, an inquiry among farmers within the area of the Wigry National Park had been carried out, accompanied by a consultation with the National Focal Point for the Management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources. Through this, more than thirty different subspecies of apples could be identified in the old orchards of the Wigry National Park.

The second important part of the project is the training for farmers. From May 2003 until today, already ten meetings with farmers were held. During the trainings, farmers are provided with information about local breeds and the management of old orchards and of apple tree species. Two excursions to places with similar projects were organised: to Kurpie, where the institute "Społeczny Instytut Ekologiczny" realised a model project on agro-biodiversity, and to the lower Wisla Valley, where cultivars of old fruit trees were re-established. A package of seven folders was published for the education of the farmers. These folders include information on different breeds of farm animals, about old apple tree species and basic information about the National Agri-Environmental Programme.

The core of the project is the re-production of young trees of a traditional apple tree species as well as the preservation of apple trees, the purchase of animals and their restitution to the farms in the region, and finally the breeding of animals. The cultivation of young apple trees is situated in Tartak at the Wigry Lake. In April 2004, 300 trees were planted, which were inoculated in the following August. Remaining tasks soon to be realised are the transplantation of the young apple trees to the traditional orchards of the farmers, and the purchase of animals: ten Polish Horses, nine Polish Red Cattle, eight Zlotnicka Pigs, 100 Green-Legged Hens, and 100 Suwalska Geese. The animals will be bought in 2005.

The final stage of the project will concentrate on the promotion of the farms which take part in the programme, and on the promotion of the products from their animals and orchards. Advertisements in publications, the participation of the farmers in local fairs, tourist events etc. will help to achieve this goal.

The expected effect of the project and its development perspectives is that the animals and the orchards will be attractions for tourists. The products (eggs, pork, meat) will stand out for their specific value of taste and for their high quality. A regional ‘brand’ will be created for the commercialisation of the products to stand out from other products of this type. Furthermore, the farmers who keep the horses and

cows will have the possibility to take part in the National Agricultural Programme – packet G01 that is concerned with the conservation of animal genetic resources.

A National Agri-Environmental Scheme in Practice in the Kiskunság National Park, 2002-2003

ANDRÁS BANKOVICS

In 2002, a National Agri-Environmental Programme (NAEP) was launched in Hungary to promote an environmentally friendly agriculture and sustainable land use. Horizontal and zonal schemes were identified and the management of grasslands, fishponds, the cultivation of vegetables, fruits, grapes, and certain cultures on arable fields were subsidised. The participation in the programme was voluntary, payments varied between 32-200 Euro per hectare. Payments of zonal schemes were higher as there are more restrictions through Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs).

The network of ESAs has been created by a team that includes researchers, decision makers and national park experts. It is based upon the agropotential, the environmental sensitivity and the features of surface cover in the respective area. Naturally, nature conservation values and traditional agricultural practices were also taken into consideration. By the help of three categories (very important, important and potential areas), very important areas were identified, where a considerable amount of environmental values of international significance occur and where the mid-term (5-10 years) existence would be threatened without establishing an environmentally friendly management. In 2002, in eleven pilot areas covering 441,000 hectares of these very important areas, zonal subsidies were paid for farmers.

In the Kiskunság National Park administrative region, seven target programmes have been set up in the Dunavölgyi-sík ESA. Three of them are targeting arable fields (alfalfa cultivation, rape and autumn corn, rape and spring corn rotation), the other four have been established for the management of grasslands (alkaline wet meadows and turján land) by grazing or mowing. These programmes were especially created for the protection of two globally threatened vertebrate species: the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) and the Meadow Viper (*Vipera ursinii*).

At the end of the second year of the programme, the total of financially supported areas almost reached 8,000 hectares. Half of them were pastures, while hayfields and arable land were one quarter each. The subsidies paid per hectare reached between 90-150 Euro. In the first year, 54 contracts have been signed with 33 farmers, and in the following year another 38 contracts have been signed. A distinct contract was needed to be signed for each target programme, thus a farmer could have signed more than one and get the respective payments.

Main restrictions on arable fields included the ban of herbicides and on melioration, drainage or irrigation measures. Mechanical agricultural operations were not allowed in the breeding season (1st May – 1st July), and harvesting and mowing had to be started from the middle of the fields heading outside using a chain row for alarming wild animals. In the case of a nest found, immediate contact with nature conservation staff is obligatory.

In the target programmes of grassland management by grazing, the use of livestock species is restricted. Traditional, Hungarian-bred beef cattle species were preferred, such as the Hungarian Grey Cattle. The density of grazing animals (0.3-0.5 cattle/ha) and the period of grazing (usually after mid-April till end of October) are also restricted. The use of fertilizers, chemicals and pesticides is strictly forbidden. As a result of these actions and restrictions, it has been experienced that moderate cattle grazing had positive effects on the structure of the grass, on the diversity of insects and on the reproduction rate of *Otis tarda*. Former hay fields were used as pastures, thus increasing the biodiversity level of the grassland habitats.

Like in every programme, experiences show that the NAEP had both strong and weak parts. The latter is mainly due to the limited availability of support. In the second year of the programme, when farmers had enough information on the programme, the number of applications was twice as much as that of the signed contracts. This and late payments have caused misunderstandings between nature conservation experts and farmers and did not help the general aim to promote best agricultural practices in protected areas. Fortunately, the positive effects have been more numerous. In the Kiskunság National Park, another 8,000 hectares have been managed in an ecologically suitable way, and with the payments the farmers' attitude also changed. They are willing to take nature conservation seriously, so no forcing instruments were needed anymore.

The subsidies were paid to the land users, the ones who actually did the management of a certain area, and not to the landowners. The result was an increased willingness to voluntarily participate in the programme. Another attraction was that in many cases people only had to do what they had been doing for centuries as the traditional land use.

Finally, it can be said that the NAEP has more or less reached its goal, as it was a preliminary national programme prior to accession to the EU, and helped the farmers to prepare for the increased administrative duties they will have to cope with to get EU subsidies.

Biodiversity Protection and its Practical Realization Including Agricultural Areas in the Protected Landscape Area - Biosphere Reserve Pol'ana

MARTINA PILÁTOVÁ

The Protected Landscape Area – the Biosphere Reserve Poľana

The Poľana Mountain is one of the greatest former volcanoes in Europe and it is the highest volcanic mountain range in Slovakia. The area was developed in four periods of volcanic activity 13 – 15 million years ago.

Since 1981 it has been a Protected Landscape Area. In 1990, Poľana was declared as a Biosphere Reserve. The Poľana Biosphere Reserve comprises an area of 203.6 km^2. Agricultural land presents 15%, forest occurs on 84% of the area and 1% are buildings and water areas. The whole area is assigned to the European network of protected areas, Natura 2000.

IUCN Project "Biodiversity Protection in the Protected Landscape Area – Biosphere Reserve Poľana and Management of its Grasslands"

In the period 1996 – 1999, the Poľana grasslands were analyzed and evaluated by the agricultural project "Biodiversity protection in the Protected Landscape Area – Biosphere Reserve Poľana and management of its grasslands" in cooperation with IUCN - The World Conservation Union.

The final result of the IUCN project is the proposal for a strategy for the sustainable development of grassland agriculture, which is based on the integration of nature conservation with the agricultural use of these grasslands considering the results of the work of botanists and zoologists. Thus, this strategy takes into account the floristic composition of the grasslands, the nesting conditions for bird species and the migration of animal populations, and it aims for the application of natural management systems which do not require high energy inputs.

A total of 3,270 ha of meadows and pastures were evaluated during the project period – 2,566.7 ha of these are part of the Poľana Biosphere Reserve. Grassland communities cover up to 10 % of the total area of the Poľana Biosphere Reserve (2,400 ha) and they are owned by agricultural cooperatives and companies as well as by private farmers.

History of Agriculture in the Poľana Mountain Region

Originally, the Poľana Mountain was covered by forests. After the arrival of the first settlers, the forests were cut down and the colonized land was used for agricultural purposes. Mountain meadows were

regularly cleared, no fertilizers were used. Grasslands were regularly mowed, once or twice a year, and then grazed by cattle or sheep. The land was necessary for making a living, so people honoured it and had a highly positive connection to the land.

In the 1950s, the agricultural production in Slovakia was collectivized. This process was connected with the creation of big agricultural cooperatives, who became owners and managers of all agricultural land. Agricultural cooperatives were focused on intensive agriculture. In the following time, parts of the meadows were converted into pastures. Step by step, old and approved practices of traditional farming disappeared and the number and diversity of livestock decreased. The extent of agricultural land was reduced, which was accompanied by a decreasing quality of the land.

It was apparent that this trend had to be stopped. With state assistance, re-cultivations were carried out with the aim to increase the quality of the meadows and to intensify their utilization. However, agricultural cooperatives were motivated by economic incomes only. Therefore, less suitable grasslands were insufficiently used and thus degraded through the encroachment of trees, bushes, and less valuable plants.

After 1990, further changes affected the agricultural system. They were characterised by a decline of the agricultural production and by the abandonment of agricultural lands, even previously re-cultivated ones. Agricultural cooperatives were broken up and agricultural lands were returned to the original owners.

Therefore, the overgrowing of unused and abandoned grasslands is the most important problem on the Poľana Mountain nowadays. It takes only 10 – 30 years until unused meadows or pastures are totally overgrown. Today, 30.5% of the grasslands in the Poľana Biosphere Reserve are overgrown and influenced by the succession process.

Table 1:Production potential of permanent grassland project in PLA – BR Poľana

Project	Total area (ha)	Reduced area (ha)	Dry matter ($t.ha^{-1}$)	Dry matter production ($t.ha^{-1}$)
part 1	1,327.7	839.1	2.57	2,158.5
part 2	1,235.0	997.3	2.36	2,362.8
Total	2,566.7	1,836.4	2.46	4,521.3

Table 2:Mean dry matter production of permanent grassland and feasible stocking rate as livestock unit (LU)

Project	Meadows			Pastures			
	Area (ha)	Dry matter production (t)	for LU in winter	Area (ha)	Dry matter production (t)	for LU in summer	LU/ha of grasslands
part 1	222.8	540.8	231.9	616.3	1,617.7	862.4	1.02
part 2	444.6	973.2	406.1	552.7	1,397.4	731.4	0.73
Total	667.4	1,514.0	638.0	1,169.0	3,015.1	1,593.8	0.86

Proposal of a Sustainable Development Strategy for the Poľana Biosphere Reserve

The proposal recommends technological parameters and procedures for the use of grasslands in the particular areas.

Sustainable development of meadow and pasture communities

1) Preservation of specific wetland and spring communities requires:
   - protection against trampling by grazing animals through fencing by locally available wooden material;
   - mowing by light machinery in one or two-year intervals, during time of the soil drying (August), seeding and drying of copse and use of hay as litter in livestock stables;
   - informing herdsmen about the marked gene pool areas, which should be protected against devastation.
2) The first mowing of the alluvial meadows should be shifted to the time of decreasing underground water levels and increased mechanical carrying capacity of the soil. The second cut should be done no later than six weeks after the first one. Alternative autumn grazing is possible in case of dry weather. Hurdling is not recommended.
3) The following management is appropriate for mesophilous meadows to preserve both their productivity and biodiversity:
   - hurdling in intervals of 6 – 7 years; in early spring and summer the hurdled areas are mowed and the grass is used as a green fodder; careful grazing under dry conditions;
   - in the following spring, mowing of the sward in the phase of the appearance of the dominant grasses and, if possible, second cut 5 – 6 weeks after the first one;
   - additional careful autumn grazing of aftermath;
   - in the second till fifth year after hurdling: first mowing in the phase of full earing till the beginning of flowering; aftermath grazing in two grazing cycles;
   - one to two years before new hurdling: shift mowing to seed production time (in order to use the hay for game feeding) and graze aftermath in autumn;
   - preservation of nutrient-poorer wildflower meadows by selecting the most typical sites, in which hurdling will not be used, and fertilize some of them periodically with manure from permanent pens.
4) It is recommended to manage the prevailing grassland communities in the area the following way:
   - enlarge the harvested areas in all parts that are accessible for machinery by thinning thick swards and collecting the rocks;
   - include the prepared harvested parts of the fields into the cycle of regular hurdling – use similar management as for meadows with the difference that they will be mowed just once and grazed in summer and in the autumn;
   - one to two years after hurdling, the mowing should be done in the phase of earing of the dominant grass species and clovers, summer and autumn aftermath will be grazed;
   - in the following years, mowing can be postponed to the phase of flowering without a significant loss in quality;

- the last year before hurdling, at least one part of the swards should be left to over-ripen, the low quality hay should be used for game mangers and the aftermath left for wild animals;
- in areas inaccessible to machinery, but suitable for hurdling, the sufficiency of nutrients should be utilized for repeated grazing, which will be started at the beginning of the grazing season (the same management can be applied in the second year after hurdling).

5) It is recommended to manage the degraded areas with high grown grass species (such as *Brachypodium pinnatum, Calamagrostis epigeios, C arundinacea* and *Deschampsia caespitosa*), which are less valuable from the fodder production point of view, in the following way:
   - on the places, where at least light machinery can be used, the swards should be cut in the phase of earing, using the lowest stubble height - a higher effect can be expected when using rotation mowers – swath should be removed from the area and used as litter;
   - graze the aftermath by herds of goats or horses;
   - the above process should be repeated at least three to four years (according to current experience, however, it is very hard to remove the swath).
6) After excessive hurdling, nitrophilous and ruderal communities are very persistent and their change into valuable, more diverse grass phytocoenoses is lengthy. The following precautions will help:
   - mowing swards before flowering of the ruderal species, if possible twice a year;
   - intensive grazing of aftermath to utilize the effect of heavy trampling, which is not in favour of ruderal species;
   - to exclude regular hurdling and to replace it by keeping livestock at one place – in a permanent pen, where a special layer, not allowing leakages, should be created on a fenced area (from plastic foil, asphalt) and the outflow of liquid waste into a waterproof cesspool should be safeguarded;
   - each year, a low quality hay-stack is prepared for each pen, which is used as a bedding throughout the following year; in this way the manure is produced, which can be used for autumn manuring of non-eutrophised swards – the effect is lower but the swards are more diverse;
   - the change can be speeded up through the liquidation of the growth by herbicides and by a subsequent direct drilling of clover-grass mixture;
   - the synanthropic species *Cirsium vulgare* and *Urtica dioica* are also found on heaps of stones and soil after reclamation; to get rid of these growths is only possible by patient mowing by hand.

Sustainable Development of Fauna Communities

Apart from interventions in swards, the following other biodiversity measures are important:

1) For insect feeding on pollen, nectar and seeds, grassland enclaves in the forests are important as well as ungrazed remnants in pastures, especially sheep pastures (due to higher selectivity of sheep), also aftermath with the occurrence of richly flowering leguminous plants and some other herb species as well as ungrazed steeper parts of pastures.
2) Preventing hurdling in poor parts of pastures with low vegetation for protection of the habitats of epigeic insects.
3) Gradual mowing of grassland and alternate grazing of the fields can provide enough food for insectivorous birds, and also possibilities of retreat for birds that are nesting on the ground.

4) Left-over shrub and tree growths and tree solitaires can provide a good nesting or feeding habitat for specific fauna species, e.g. birds and vertebrates.
5) Heaps and little walls, heaps of stones and soil from reclamation but also from the clearing of new areas provide good refuges for several groups of animals.
6) It is recommended to preserve existing hay-sheds and to build new ones and huts from the existing wooden materials to provide alternate hurdling in the individual pasture units – these huts do not only improve the scenic beauty of the territory but provide conditions for nesting of birds and serve as refuges for other groups of animals.
7) Sites with the occurrence of specific rare animal species can be protected by fencing and by means of ecological management of these areas.

Prerequisites for the Realisation of the Proposed Measures – Actual Problems in the Evaluated Areas

The IUCN project offers basic measures to reach both, sustainable development of agricultural use and biodiversity conservation. It should serve as the base for other agricultural projects in the area and for the practical cultivation of agricultural land as well as for the protection of nature values. However, first there must be resolved some actual human problems such as:

- Lack of private farmers in the Poľana Mountain region. Agricultural cooperatives still dominate.
- The willingness of the local people to live in the area and to work on the land is affected by an uncertain and limited market demand for animal products.
- Traditional agricultural products do not meet new requirements and norms of the EU.
- State subsidies are insufficient.
- The complicated land ownership restrains decision-making on ways of grassland utilization.
- Economic and social limitations, resulting in a lack of motivation for involved people.

Calcareous Grassland of the Slovenian Sub-Mediterranean Region – its Biodiversity and Conservation

KLEMEN ELER

In the process of the pre-accession negotiations to join the European Union, Slovenia had the right to propose habitat types and species to be included into the Annexes of either Birds or Habitats Directive. Out of 14 proposed plant species, 14 animal species and four habitat types, 20 proposals were accepted by the Commission. The huge majority of the accepted species and habitats has its origin in the Slovenian sub-Mediterranean region, which is an indicator of the high biological value of this area. Limestone basis, climate characteristics and past agricultural use of the region (which is called Kras or Karst in English) formed a special habitat type – the east-Mediterranean Illyrian calcareous grasslands or Karst grasslands for short. The major part of these grasslands were included in the Slovenian proposal for the Natura 2000 network. However, the low production capacity of these grasslands and changing socio-economic conditions have caused large-scale abandonment and afforestation of the area in the last decades. Fortunately, the thin soil layer coupled with a poor nutrient availability, strong winds and regular droughts during the vegetation period suppress quick bush- and tree-encroachment (pseudo-steppe), otherwise the majority of the area would already be covered with forest today. However, immediate actions to stop the abandonment of agricultural lands and the decline in rural population in the area are needed.

In the past, two different management systems of grassland use determined the characteristics of the regional Karst landscape. Those were uncontrolled grazing by small ruminants and the cutting of grassland for hay for the purpose of indoor livestock feeding (VIDRIH & LOBNIK 2003). The former system was carried out in the form of transhumance – annual seasonal movement of livestock (mainly sheep and goats, to a smaller degree also horses and cattle) from winter grazing on the lowland pastures of Istria to summer grazing in mountainous regions of the so-called high Karst. These long-distance movements of herds caused a genetic flow of plant and animal (insect) species (zoochory), which is essential for the viability of natural populations (KALIGARIČ 1997). The extent to which the viability of these populations will be affected by the lack of transhumant grazing is not clear.

For the maintenance of Karst grasslands, the following instruments of the Slovenian Agri-Environmental Programme (2001, 2004) are available:

- Suppression of bush-encroachment (removing overgrowth) (not available in 2004)
- Ecological farming
- Sustainable breeding of domestic animals
- Maintenance of cultivated land and rural population density on the protected areas
- Maintenance of extensively used grasslands
- Conservation of special grassland habitats
- Restructuring of the breeding of domestic animals in the area of occurrence of large carnivores (partially).

These instruments are quite general and not site-specific. In certain habitat types, they may also cause a decrease of biodiversity. For the refinement of these instruments and for the design of new, site-specific measures for the Karst region, additional case studies are needed. Within the framework of an ongoing LIFE-Nature project, which has started in 2002, special attention is devoted to the clearance of bushes and trees and to the re-establishment of grazing schemes in the area of the so-called Karst edge (transition between limestone and flysh area), where biodiversity is particularly high. Preliminary results of this project show some weaknesses in the measures designed for the suppression of bush encroachment. According to the existing regulations, the clearance of bush overgrowth must be completed within a single year, which means that it needs to be done by hand (very laborious) or by using heavy machinery. After clearance, intensive and controlled grazing should be established to suppress newly emerging shoots. However, such a grazing regime can cause a lot of damage to the vulnerable vegetation of the area. An alternative technique could be the use of goats, which can successfully stop bush invasion with their browsing capability, but they need a longer period of time (a couple of years) to exhaust bush overgrowth.

According to the Slovenian Agri-Environmental Programme, the primary objectives of conservation of Karst grasslands are the prevention of afforestation and the maintenance of the rural population density. Not only because of limited financial resources, it is quite clear that the area is simply too large to be maintained in full extent. The quality of the managed habitats is of secondary importance according to the current programme, however, it will need to become significant in the newly designed Natura 2000 sites and in other types of protected areas. For the preparation of regional management plans, a list of agri-environmental measures specific for Karst grasslands will be needed that will answer the following questions:

1. Which combination of grazing animals is the most efficient to maintain target plant communities and habitat types (goat and sheep, goat and horse, sheep and horse, cattle and sheep)?
2. What is an optimum stocking rate for a certain combination of grazing animals?
3. What is an optimum grazing duration on a certain pasture?
4. What are the eutrophication effects of all-year long grazing (the need for supplement feeding)?
5. Are vulnerable habitat types of the Karst region appropriate for sheep milk production?
6. Should we promote controlled grazing systems, where the pasture is divided into many paddocks, or should we promote large-scale grazing and forming of so called semi-open pasture landscapes (FINCK et al., 2002)?
7. For Karst meadows: how important is the time of mowing and how often should it be carried out (every year, once in 2-3 years)?
8. Could mowing be replaced with a grazing regime?
9. How to protect domestic animals from attacks of large carnivores (fences, type of grazing animal, compensations for lost animals, use of sheepdogs, donkeys, etc.)?
10. What to do with non-indigenous black pine trees (*Pinus nigra*) - should we promote eradication or should we incorporate them in Karst grasslands to form some sort of dehesa (i.e. a patchy type of savannah landscape that connects natural with agricultural flora and fauna)?

Until now, nature conservation in Slovenia was almost exclusively a domain of biologists, and the majority of these questions remained unanswered. The lack of communication between biologists and agronomists must be eliminated and a close collaboration in the following case-studies in the Slovenian Karst and other regions will be indispensable. If we focus on the endangered plants, animals and habitat types only, but forget about the people, who should live and prosper in the countryside, then the whole effort of maintaining biodiversity in the Slovenian agri-environment and of promoting rural development will be in vain.

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5 Case Studies from Germany

Cooperation Between Conservation and Agriculture in the Müritz National Park

VOLKER SPICHER

Müritz National Park – An Introduction

The Müritz National Park (total area 322 km²) is situated in the north east of Germany half way between Berlin and Rostock. It represents a typical part of the forest and lakeland district of Mecklenburg. 17 municipalities and the Mecklenburg-Strelitz and Müritz districts neighbour the National Park. With 53 inhabitants per square kilometre, the region is sparsely populated.

The Müritz National Park was established in September 1990 and designated as an SPA in 1993. In 2003, the park attracted 584,000 visitors and employed 120 people of staff. With 117 km² in size, the lake Müritz is the biggest lake in the north of Germany, famous for its clear water and an enchanting landscape. A 500 m wide strip of the shore belongs to the National Park. There are well over a hundred lakes with a size of more than one hectare in the Müritz National Park. The larger part of the National Park (260 km²), situated on the east shore, is characterized by extensive pine forests and big moors. In the smaller part near Serrahn (62 km²) you will find old beech woods in a hilly landscape with many small lakes and bogs.

The 'Nationalparkamt Müritz' is the park authority for the Müritz National Park. Under the aegis of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Nature Conservation of the Mecklenburg-Western Pomeranian state, it is responsible for the administration and management of the park.

Typical habitats are woods and forests (72%), lakes (13%), bogs 8%, pastures (5%) and cultivated areas (2%). Agricultural land within the borders of the park has a total size of 2,262 ha. In the active management zone (34%), the use of fertilizer is limited, whereas unrestricted conventional agriculture is allowed in the developing zone (66%).

Before the establishment of the Müritz National Park, several attempts had been made to develop the humid fen lowlands, in which the lakes are set, as productive farmland. Right up to 1980, these peaty basins were drained to colonise the fens for agriculture. In the following last two decades of the 20th century, the peat mass was lost due to mineralization, which led to a collapse of the soil structures and to falling ground water levels.

One important task of the National Park administration is to transform the exploitative bog utilisation into a sustainable management scheme.

The following aims for the agricultural development within the Müritz National Park were formulated:
- Safeguard specially protected species and habitats (orchids/gentians/*Crassulaceae*)
- Safeguard the landscape scenery near the villages
- Consider the socio-economic situation of the people in the region

To mitigate the negative impacts of standard agricultural management, the following guidelines for agricultural practice in the Müritz National Park were adopted:
- Avoid the input of pesticides and fertilizer into soils, groundwater, lakes and rivers
- Safeguard and develop the typical biodiversity of pastures and meadows
- Use the bogs sustainably
- Consider the historical aspects of the landscape scenery

Experiences with the European Agricultural Guarantee and Guidance Fund – Agri-Environmental Programmes

The European Agricultural Guarantee and Guidance Fund (EAGGF) promotes *inter alia* the nature-near use of pastures and meadows. The aims of the financial programme within the Müritz National Park are the protection of species and landscape scenery as well as of regional natural resources. The support through the EU programme co-finances the project in the Müritz National Park with 50%.

Between the farmers and the park authority, a voluntary agreement was negotiated that formulates the following regulations for agricultural management within the borders of the Müritz National Park:
- No fertilizer or pesticides should be used
- No ploughing of land or re-seeding is allowed
- The high level of groundwater should be maintained
- Fixed date for mowing of meadows
- Fixed number of livestock for the pastures

Within the frame of the project, 20 partners are contracted with an area of 1,114 ha involved. The contract term is 5 years and the annual support is 204 € per hectare. However, there are some critical points to the programme:
- administration expenditures (regulations/application/local controlling) are high for both the farmers and the park authority; this trend is increasing
- the sanctions after a violation of the contract are comparably strong
- the contract term is too short, which makes planning more difficult (for both partners)
- the quality and quantity of feed decreases

Experience with the EU LIFE-Nature II Fund - Environmental Programme for Biodiversity

Launched in 1992, LIFE co-finances environmental initiatives in the European Union and certain third countries bordering on the Mediterranean and the Baltic Sea and in the Central and Eastern European accession candidate countries that have decided to participate in LIFE.

The specific objective of LIFE-Nature is to contribute to the implementation of Community nature conservation legislation: the "Birds" Directive (79/409/EEC) and the "Habitats" Directive (92/43/EEC), and in particular the establishment of the Natura 2000 network for the in situ management and conservation of Europe's most remarkable fauna and flora species and habitats.

Nature conservation projects which contribute to maintaining or restoring natural habitats and/or species populations to a favourable conservation status in the sense of the Habitats Directive are eligible for LIFE-Nature. Projects must concern Special Protection Areas or Sites of Community Importance and the species listed in these Directives.

The European Union has allocated approximately 300 million Euros for LIFE-Nature for the period 2000-2004. The rate of Community co-financing may be up to 50% of the costs. By way of exception, for projects concerning priority natural habitats or priority species defined in the Habitats Directive, the Commission can finance up to 75% of the eligible costs (for further details see LIFE homepage: http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/life/home.htm).

The purpose of the LIFE-project in the Müritz National Park is to end the agricultural exploitation of the bogs inside the park. To re-establish the specific, peat-forming vegetation in degraded bogs, the groundwater level will be raised. A further objective of this measure is the stabilisation of the existing vegetation in the adjoining nutrient-poor and acid bogs. A stretch of 4.5 km of natural streamlet including moist forests which are still existing from the time before drainage will be recreated. The project intends to extend the existing calcareous swamps and the reeds, a habitat of the bittern. Finally the project intends to offer a new tourism attraction.

The following measures are financed by the LIFE-project:

- ⇨ Purchase of land
- ⇨ Compensation for yield loss
- ⇨ Planning by engineers/expert report/consulting
- ⇨ Measures to protect the infrastructure
- ⇨ Hydraulic engineering
- ⇨ Facilities for visitors (visitors' tower)
- ⇨ Public relations activities (flyer/events)
- ⇨ coordinator (plus seminar/travelling costs)

There are some critical points to the EU LIFE-Nature Programme from the point of view of the park authority:

- The application procedure is quite extensive and not co-financed
- There is no guarantee to get a positive answer
- The reporting duty transforms the receiving organisation into a „glass receiver“
- An expansion of the budget- is not possible
- A close fitting deadline
- Only one additional agreement as a „joker“ is possible

In sum, the flexibility of the programme is low.

Summary

The EU LIFE-Nature and EAGGF funds are important financial instruments to translate conservation of natural habitats and sustainable use of natural resources in protected areas into action.

The EU programmes promote the partnership between land users and park management. The programmes function as a stepping-stone for supporting rural development. Despite the above-mentioned criticism, there are a lot of good reasons to take the hurdle of bureaucracy and to apply for the programmes.

Experiences in Integrated Rural Development and the German Pilot Programme „REGIONEN AKTIV"

ARNO TODT

Integrated rural development is based upon three main principles: integration, regionalisation and partnership. Integration means the consideration of economic progress, ecological stability and social needs at the different stages of planning and implementation. Regionalisation: the scale for development planning and project realisation is the regional dimension. Further, decisions on development objectives and the support of measures are shifted to the regional level. Partnership: a fundamental element of the bottom-up approach in integrated rural development is the co-operation and decision-making by stakeholder partnerships. Important instruments for the implementation are integrated regional development concepts and regional management. The German pilot programme REGIONEN AKTIV and the European Community initiative LEADER+ follow this integrated rural development approach.

„REGIONEN AKTIV – Land gestaltet Zukunft" (Active Regions - Country Shapes Future) is a pilot programme of the Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture. 18 model regions were selected by an independent jury for the development of best practice examples in integrated rural development. From 2002 until 2005 the ministry supports the implementation of the 18 regional development concepts. Concepts and projects have to focus on:

- Strengthening of rural areas and creation of income
- Nature-friendly land use
- Consumer-oriented food production
- Intensified links between rural and municipal areas

REGIONEN AKTIV offers important experiences for the national implementation and regional realisation of the new EU rural development policy in the period of 2007 – 2013.

On the regional level, there are two main approaches for the participation of stakeholders, e.g. nature conservation, in the regional development processes. They could take part in the regional partnership institution that is responsible for the main decisions and the regional process control. In this core institution all important regional interest groups should be represented. Besides, the realisation of projects that match the goals of the development concepts offers good opportunities for participation on the implementation level. The experiences with integrated regional development processes show that there are key factors for a successful participation:

- Sufficient manpower
- Co-operation and networking ability
- Win-win objectives and win-win project ideas
- Know-how in project design and project management.

At the mid-term of REGIONEN AKTIV there are important soft effects regarding the development processes in the 18 model regions:

1. Identification of opportunities and difficulties: The development concepts have provided a targeted analysis of regional strengths and weaknesses. Difficulties and their solutions were discussed by all regional sectors.
2. Mobilisation and motivation: People are able to participate in the development activities directly. They are proud of their common results and their region.
3. Gaining new regional actors: In the „Nordlichter-Initiative" for example, about 80 public and private institutions are engaged. It is a new positive experience to engage directly in rural development decisions.
4. Creation of new co-operations: REGIONEN AKTIV created an atmosphere of taking a fresh start. Traditional differences between groups were overcome.

At mid-term, October 2004, the 18 model regions have realised about 450 projects in the following six fields: regional marketing, rural tourism, education and qualification, renewable resources, renewable energies, agri-environmental measures. The most important topics are regional marketing and rural tourism. The regions implemented many projects that can be used as best practice examples for the integration of economic and ecological interests in rural development.

More information is available at the website of the programme (www.modellregionen.de).

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Nature Conservation Advisory Service for Farmers - A New Approach to Integrate Nature Conservation on Farm Level

THOMAS VAN ELSEN

The Impact of Agriculture on Landscape Development and Biodiversity in Europe

From a historical point of view, it is obvious that agriculture is responsible for building the cultural landscapes of Europe. In a process of hundreds of years, the natural landscapes had been replaced by cultural ones. Of course, agriculture led to extinction of at least some mammal species, but replacing the forests by settlements with pastures, meadows, orchards, arable fields and structural elements increased the number of plant and animal species in the landscape. Several species were introduced from other continents.

Since the introduction of mineral fertilisers and pesticides, the role of agriculture has changed. Nowadays modern farming techniques are accused of being responsible for the decrease of species numbers and a decay of the cultural landscapes in Europe. Two different tendencies affect biodiversity quite strongly: the high input of chemicals and fertilisers in regions with good soils and high yields, and the abandonment of farmed land in marginal regions with shallow soils and difficult climatic conditions (such as mountain areas). Both tendencies lead to a decline of biodiversity. In highly productive areas only few species survive the regular spraying of herbicides, insecticides and fungicides, and in marginal regions species disappear that depend on agricultural measures like ploughing, mowing of the grassland and other agricultural operations. In the course of succession, shrubs and trees take over, and farmers themselves become species of the red list data books.

The Contribution of Sustainable Farming to Biodiversity Conservation

The conversion from conventional to organic farming means to stop using pesticides and mineral fertilisers, mostly wider crop rotations and – if conversion is aiming for cycles of energy and nutrient flows – mixed farms with both plant and animal production. Many investigations have proven that nature benefits a lot from organic farming. More wild arable field plants and insect species on the fields, more birds on the farmland, a higher diversity of organisms under the surface of the soil and populations of micro-organisms being more active have been found in a lot of investigations (cf. WEIGER & WILLER 1997, VAN ELSEN 2000, SOIL ASSOCIATION 2000). Organic farming can integrate contributions to biodiversity conservation in its farming system, whereas former approaches of the nature conservation movement often tried to preserve biodiversity separated from the area where intensive production takes place. For example the field margin programmes, which are implemented in Germany, Great Britain and Denmark, compensate the farmers for not using pesticides along the edges of their conventionally managed fields. In the unsprayed field margins, arable field plants and wildlife are allowed to develop, whereas the rest of the field is managed by using chemicals. Within the nature conservation movement

such approaches are more and more replaced by a demand for extensification of land use in general: a shift from "separation" to "integration" is taking place (cf. the campaign "Landschaft schmeckt" [landscape's tasty] of the German NGO "Naturschutzbund").

Does organic farming fulfil the expectations of the nature conservation movement? A closer look at the situation of organic farms shows that there are still problems to be solved, that improvement of organic farming techniques is needed to preserve and develop biodiversity on the organically managed land. For example the biodiversity of many grassland communities depends on extensive mowing or grazing systems, which normally cannot be reached just by converting to organic farming. The cutting regime and frequency does not differ that much from management on conventional farms. Frequent cutting of field fodder (clover grass) keeps sky larks from successful breeding, and cutting grassland for silage in May prevents most plants from flowering and producing seeds; the number of plant species decreases. – Few organic farmers grow old varieties or crops or use old breeds of livestock. The tendency towards large fields without special biotopes and with only few structural elements does not differ that much from conventional farms – nowadays cultural landscapes do not develop just by conversion to an environmentally friendly management system. Also the abandonment of marginal land cannot be stopped by conversion.

Despite these points, where improvement is still needed, organic farmers already contribute a lot to the preservation of biodiversity. In a project about the optimisation of organic farming under the aspect of preserving biodiversity, which was supported by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation with funds of the Federal Environment Ministry, different examples of farms were investigated, whose farmers have different approaches to integrate nature conservation goals into their management system. On most of the farms, the planting of hedgerows has been an important issue. Hedges prevent soil erosion and attract birds and insects, including beneficial organisms for the health of the crop. At least some of the farmers are also interested to use leaves and branches as winter fodder for their livestock. Especially in regions with large fields and before having converted to organic management schemes, some farmers have made big efforts to structure their land by planting hedgerows and trees and creating biotopes like ponds and walls of stones collected on the arable fields. If it is not possible to build perennial structures like hedges, a strip of spontaneous or sown flowers can easily be introduced to attract beneficial insects and to contribute to an aesthetic and diverse structure of the landscape.

Quo Vadis, Organic Farming? – Landscape Development by Organic Farming: A Challenge for the Future?

Despite many examples of farmers contributing to landscape and nature conservation as a consequence of the growing support for conversion, more and more farmers decide to undertake conversion more for economical than for idealistic reasons. Will it be possible to combine the quantitative growth of organic farming with the aim to preserve and even increase biodiversity by organic farming?

Modern landscape development on organic farms needs:

- a participatory approach (bottom-up instead of top-down planning),
- a qualified advisory service for farmers who are willing to improve their impact on biodiversity,
- support for farmers by better agri-environmental schemes, which help farmers to realise locally adapted concepts,
- better education at agricultural schools and universities.

There is a growing demand to improve the guidelines of organic farming and to integrate the task of nature development and the "production of biodiversity" into the regulations. However, the better landscape is not produced by better regulations but by farmers who are willing to improve their land, who are convinced of this task, and who change their attitude towards nature. This needs advice and education; it needs a participatory approach and cooperation between landscape planners, farmers and experts from the nature conservation movement. The integration of nature preservation is not only a question of natural or environmental sciences, but a social question, how people with different professions and backgrounds can work together: the farmers with their unique experience in managing the land, the environmentalists and biologists, who know the species, and customers and friends of the farm, who practically give hands to support the farmer to improve the landscape, and who care for biotopes. Landscape development can become an added value of multifunctional farming, being the starting point of a new culture of the European landscape.

Approaches to Improve the Positive Impact of Organic Farming on Nature and Landscape

The conversion to organic farming already means a contribution to nature conservation. However, organic farming also shows a tendency towards intensification and specialisation, which reduces these positive effects. Do organic farms show the interest and the will to integrate certain measures of nature conservation (such as planting of structural elements) in their farm? By acting this way they could push forward the leading role of organic farming towards a multifunctional and environmentally friendly type of agriculture (VAN ELSEN & DANIEL 2000).

In order to help and to support farmers, an advisory service for organic farming was implemented at the "Competence Centre for Organic Farming" in the German state of Lower Saxony in November 2001, after a test-period of four months. The intention of this offer is to support farmers with an on-farm-advice service to put more means of nature protection into practice on their farms.

The advice for single farms is provided directly on the farms, but often help via telephone communications can also solve a lot of problems. The advisory service is an "all-round service" including support on the following issues that often consists of more than only advisory talks:

- Development of ideas and practical actions that can be implemented on the farm.
- Practical realisation of these actions.
- Advice for financial support activities.
- Communication-support if there are problems with nature conservationists.

- Organizing actions together with nature conservationists and other groups.

The advisory service is based upon the needs and the interests of the farmers. They are supported in realizing their own ideas and to optimise approaches under the aspect of nature conservation. Many farmers have taken advice and a lot of measures have been implemented successfully on their farms. The interest in the service shows the good will of farmers to integrate aims of nature conservation. On the other hand qualified support is needed to find the right means for each farm and for the special landscape concerned. It helps a lot that the advisory service in Lower Saxony is linked to an agricultural advisory institution. The service is a model being unique in Germany and supporting the development of organic farming towards a faming system that also develops nature.

Besides implementing such advisory services all over the country it is still necessary to improve the concept, especially by developing model farms, using participatory concepts to develop nature and landscapes on farm level as good examples (evaluation report: VAN ELSEN et al. 2003). To support these aims and to build up a network for nature conservation advisory services on farm level, a new project has started in Germany at the German Research Institute for Organic Farming (Forschungsinstitut für Biologischen Landbau, FiBL).

What Motivates the Farmer to Integrate Aims and Objectives of Nature Conservation?

During the project "Optimising nature conservation on organic farms" (see above), farms were investigated which integrate approaches of nature conservation into their practice (VAN ELSEN et al. 2002). What is the motivation of these farmers to deal with questions of nature conservation and landscape development, and − furthermore − to create and develop their landscape actively? Which circumstances allow such initiatives? What are the motives behind them?

The following hypotheses were the starting point of the investigation:

- There are organic farms that are exceptional among organic farms concerning their engagement in nature conservation and landscape development.
- There are different motives that lead to actions.
- There are different ways of acting and different systems of knowledge applied in order to find ideas and realise means of landscape development.

Due to the lack of previous investigations an explorative approach was chosen. In different regions of Germany, 13 interviews were carried out on organic farms belonging to different certifying organisations. A wide spectrum of farms with respect to size, geographical location, structure, social structure and assumed intentions of the farmers were chosen. The interviews were carried out using methods of qualitative social analysis (MAYRING 1988, STRAUß & CORBIN 1996).

The results show that the motives of the farmers are exceptionally intrinsic in nature. Especially their relationship to nature is very important. Two types can be discerned, one of which is an "intimate"

relation to nature, which is characterized by a close connection to nature and landscape including feelings and the ability of "living within". The other type is characterized by a "more distant" relationship to nature.

With respect to the reasons for acting, again two types can be found: On the one hand the protection of endangered plant and animal species and biotopes, and on the other hand a phenomenological approach with a strong connection and reflection of own experiences. Such farmers rather have the whole farm in their mind. The measures implemented on the farms are more similar than the approaches of the farmers.

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LEADER+-Projects and their Potential to Contribute to Conservation - Experiences from the Model Region Rügen

JOCHEN LAMP

LEADER+ is a European Community initiative for assisting rural communities in improving the quality of life and economic prosperity in their local area. It runs from 2000 to 2006, plus two years to finish all other projects. It is the third LEADER Programme, and was preceded by LEADER I and II.

The programme is designed to encourage enhancement of the natural and cultural heritage, to reinforce the economic environment in order to foster job creation, and to improve the organisation abilities of local communities. Important underlying concepts are the use of regional structures, the donation of identity, sustainability in the strong sense (i.e. economical, ecological and social), a bottom-up approach and the promotion of networking and integrated approaches as well as innovation and gaining transferable experiences in projects with a pioneer character.

The island of Rügen with its approximately 75.000 inhabitants is well suited as a LEADER Region both because it is governed by a single administration and because of its rich natural values: two national parks, a biosphere reserve, several SACs and SPAs.

The administrative district of Rügen participated in LEADER II until 1999. The participation in a competition for further funding under LEADER+ in Germany was successful with an approach of valorisation of natural/cultural heritage (which is one of the four Strategy options set out by the EU).

In 2001, four preparation meetings were held with all interested parties. These meetings led to the formation of a LAG (Local Action Group), which was approved by the district parliament, as well as the matching funds budget.

After participation in the final competition on the level of the federal state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, the LEADER+-Strategy for Rügen was prepared, and management of projects started at the end of 2002.

The focus of the LEADER Strategy for Rügen lies on the rural part of the island. The Strategy aims to re-develop a common identity for the region, to balance the tourism development boom with nature conservation and to promote networking within sectors and between sectors. Under the main heading "valorisation of natural and cultural potentials", the Strategy lays down four fields of work:

- identification with cultural heritage,
- enhancement of natural and cultural resources,
- establishment of effective networks of quality, and
- sustainable agriculture and regional flows of resources.

The LAG for the model region Rügen consists of 17 members active in different sectors on the island (e. g. the tourism board, the farmers' association, the labour agency, the finance sector, public transport, the youth and education sector, nature conservation NGOs, the National Park administration, the forestry administration and the head of the district administration). In addition to this, there are three speakers and a professional LEADER management unit consisting of a manager and an assistant.

The LAG is responsible for establishing the Programme Strategy and the terms of reference for project design and local conditions (co-financing), as well as for the approval of projects. The financial volume of the whole programme is 2.5 Mio € until 2006, while an average project has a budget of about 60.000 €. The final approval of projects rests with the funds manager in the ministry for agriculture and forestry of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

The tasks of the LEADER management unit include consultation for project applicants, the organisation of qualification workshops, public relations work, project administration, the preparation of LAG-meetings and reporting.

Some examples of projects supported under the LEADER programme are:

Enhancement of re-colonisation of rural settlements with endangered birds and bats (under the programme element "enhancement of natural and cultural resources"): this project aims to improve the supply of nesting facilities for endangered animals at and close to buildings and to sensitize private house owners for taking responsibility for endangered species.

Quality standards for nature tourism (also under the programme element "enhancement of natural and cultural resources"): this project is intended to define a quality standard for touristic outdoor activities in protected areas (e.g. respect for nature and protected area regulations, good performance and safety) through a cooperative effort involving nature conservationists, tourist operators and tourist organisations, and to secure implementation of the standard and its transfer into the Quality Brand “Rügen“.

Independent Primary School „Freie Schule Rügen“ (under the programme element "identification with cultural heritage"): the project encompassed the establishment of an independent school with a special educational approach (e.g. Montessori teaching methods, ecological education, one-world-aspects), which was opened in August 2004. The necessary reconstruction of the school building was conducted in line with the principles of ecological building.

Experiences of the LEADER process on Rügen can be summed up as follows: Although LEADER is a time-consuming process and restrictions posed by the EU and the responsible German federal states can make processes even slower and frustrate active group members, the introduction of a bottom-up approach is possible. The LEADER programme offers opportunities for capacity-building of actors and for the development of a common understanding among stakeholders, which grows during the joint decision-making processes. The financial commitment of project applicants enhances responsibility and

performance. For the success of the process, transparent and clear rules/terms of reference and the existence of a professional management are important.

The degree to which links between conservation and development can be established successfully depends on the composition of the LAG, the level of trust established during the process and the participation of creative activists with good project ideas. A characteristic feature on Rügen is the linking of conservation with the mainstream economy (e.g. tourism); conservation is introduced rather as a crosscutting issue than an explicit working field. The well-balanced composition of the LAG and the speaker board have created reliability and enhanced a good climate for conservation projects. It can be hoped that the structures created by the LEADER Process and the evolving know-how constitute a good basis for future work beyond the LEADER+ period.

6 Short Statements by Participants on the State of Implementation of Measures from the Rural Development Plan in their Regions

EU Rural Development Instruments in the Czech Republic

BOHUMIL FIŠER, VACLAV TREML, ŠÁRKA KOZUBÍKOVÁ

Basic Settings in Nature Conservation and Agriculture

Specially Protected Areas comprise 16% of the territory of the Czech Republic and include four National Parks, 24 Protected Landscape Areas (PLAs) and 2,142 Small-size Specially Protected Areas (SSPAs). For the establishment of the Natura 2000 Network, so far six Special Protection Areas (SPAs) have been validated under the Birds Directive, 35 SPAs have been proposed, and 883 sites have been proposed as Sites of Community Importance (pSCI) under the Habitats Directive.

60% of the Specially Protected Areas of the Czech Republic are covered by forests, 20% are used as arable land, and 15% are used as permanent grassland.

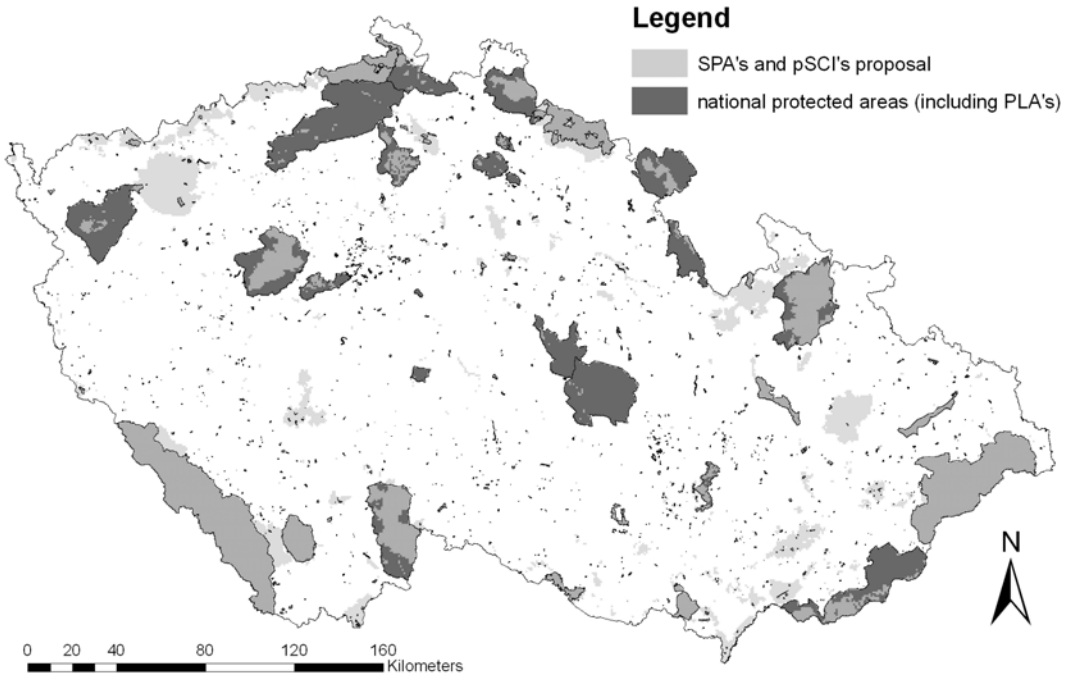

Fig. 1: National Protected Areas and the Proposal of NATURA 2000 Sites

Agriculture in the Czech Republic is characterised by large holdings: the majority of farms (managing 66% of total agricultural land and 76% of the cultivated area) is larger than 500 ha. 90% of farmers in the Czech Republic work on the basis of rented land. There is a significant trend of land abandonment (in 2002: 7% of total agricultural land).

Funding instruments

Funding for environmentally friendly management of agricultural lands can be provided by EU funding instruments such as environmental less-favoured area payments (E-LFA), agri-environmental measures and the LIFE-Programme. In addition, specially targeted national funding is available from the State Environmental Fund under the Ministry of Environment within the so-called Landscape Management Programmes, which provide support to focused measures in the form of subsidies for the establishment of conditions for securing significant habitats and for other biodiversity conservation measures.

The introduction of environmental less-favoured area payments is proposed in the Czech Horizontal Rural Development Plan and is expected to begin in 2005. The territorial scope will include the core zones of National Parks and Protected Landscape Areas and overlap with NATURA 2000 sites. Payments will be made as compensation for the ban of using fertilizers on permanent grasslands and will amount to 90 € / hectare.

Agri-Environmental Schemes in the Czech Republic

The following agri-environmental schemes are available:

Horizontal programmes

- ⇨ Organic farming
- ⇨ Introduction of food stripes on arable land (using a wildlife seed mixture)
- ⇨ Reduction of fertilizer use on meadows (whole farm approach)
- ⇨ Reduction of livestock density (whole farm approach)
- ⇨ Conversion of arable land to grassland (grassing or re-grassing) / establishment of grass belts on sloping plots
- ⇨ Growing of intercrops (catch crop)

Special programmes for Protected Areas

a) Extensive meadows:

- ⇨ No nutrient fertilization
- ⇨ Mowing of meadows
- ⇨ 90 €/hectare

b) Extensive pastures:
⇨ Livestock density – 0.4 – 0.8 LU/ha
⇨ No nutrient fertilization
⇨ Mowing of residue of plants after pasturing
⇨ 140 €/hectare

c) Late mowing of meadows:
⇨ First mowing after 15th July
⇨ No nutrient fertilization
⇨ 165 €/hectare

d) Leaving unmowed belts
⇨ 5 – 10 % of the area of meadows to be kept in shape strips (6 – 12 m) without mowing until the second mowing
⇨ Limitation of nutrient fertilization to 40 kg N/ha –> 75 €/ha; no nutrient fertilization –> 101 €/ha

Programmes for Specially Designated Areas
a) Maintenance and enhancing of breeding sites of endangered bird species:
⇨ Maintenance of breeding sites of Corncrake and waders (Redshank, Lapwing, Black-tailed Godwit and Common Snipe)
⇨ First mowing after 15th August
⇨ No nutrient fertilization
⇨ For corncrake– mowing from the centre towards the edges of plots
⇨ For waders - rolling or chain harrowing in spring prohibited, one more mowing of meadows after 30th September
⇨ 167 €/hectare for corncrake, 179 EUR/hectare for the others

b) Permanently waterlogged meadows and peatland meadows:
⇨ No nutrient fertilization
⇨ Hand mowing of meadows (exact period of mowing)
⇨ 390 €/hectare
⇨ Only at specific habitats (from the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC):
  - Wet *Cirsium* meadows (NO)
  - Continental inundated meadows (YES)
  - Intermittently wet *Molinia* meadows (YES)
  - Calcareous meadow springs (YES, priority)
  - Non-calcareous meadow springs (NO)
  - Calcareous and acidic moss-rich fens (YES)

Zonal Programmes
a) Crop rotation in cave protection zones:

⇨ On arable land areas designated by a nature conservation authority, maize shall be excluded from crop rotation and the share of cereals shall be reduced to a maximum of 50% of the areas concerned
⇨ 16.98 €/ha

b) Conversion of arable land into grassland using regional grass seed mixture

Tab. 1: Area (in ha) covered by the programmes (according to the number of submitted applications in 2004, Source: Czech Ministry of Agriculture)

Organic Farming	213,000
Reduction of fertilizers use on meadows (whole farm)	311,000
Reduction of livestock density (whole farm)	277,000
Grassing of arable land (re-grassing), establishment of grass belts on sloping plots	5,800
Growing of intercrops (catch crop)	196,000
Food strips on arable land	264
Extensive meadows	22,000
Extensive pastures	56,000
Late mowing of extensive meadows	23
Maintenance and enhancing of breeding sites of endangered bird species	6,280
Permanently waterlogged meadows and peatland meadows	175
Crop rotation in cave protection zones	50
Conversion of arable land into grassland using regional grass seed mixture	8

On the whole, there is quite a good acceptance, especially of the horizontal programmes.

Positive Aspects of the Situation in the Czech Republic

⇨ Good cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Environment
⇨ Several programmes for special needs of protected areas
⇨ Favouring of farmers in protected areas

Negative Aspects of the Situation in the Czech Republic

⇨ Low level of farmers' awareness about programmes
⇨ Obligatory farm wide approach of programme grassland maintenance
⇨ Compatibility of programmes (also national and EU)
⇨ Problems with administration on land parcels
⇨ Regional differences are insufficiently incorporated
⇨ Land abandoning is not solved

Poland

HELENA BARTOSZUK

In Poland, the Rural Development Plan (RDP) for 2004-2006 includes the following nine measures:

1. Early retirement
2. Support for semi-subsistence farms undergoing restructuring
3. Support for less-favoured areas (LFA)
4. Support for agri-environmental measures and animal welfare (AEP)
5. Afforestation of agricultural land
6. Meeting EU standards
7. Support for agricultural producers' groups
8. Technical assistance
9. Complements to direct payments.

Most of these measures are horizontal - for the whole territory of Poland - and two of them are zonal: LFA (the share of LFAs in Poland is 54% of the farmland) and some packages of AEP which are for Priority Zones (PZ). There are 169 PZ (some of them are Environmentally Sensitive Areas) and they cover 32% of the country. The most important measure for nature conservation within the RDP is measure 4 - support for agri-environmental measures and animal welfare (AEP). The Polish Agri-Environmental Programme proposes the following packages:

S01 – Sustainable farming

S02 – Organic farming

P01 – Maintenance of extensive meadows with three variants:

P01a – semi-natural single-swath meadows – hand mowing,

P01a02 – semi-natural single-swath meadows – mechanical mowing,

P01b – semi-natural double-swath meadows

P02 – Maintenance of extensive pastures with three variants:

P02a – pastures on xerothermic grasslands,

P02b – lowland pastures,

P02c - mountain pastures (P02c01- mountain pastures at 350-500 m asl, and P02c02 – mountain pastures above 500 m asl.)

K01 – Soil and water protection with three variants:

K01a – Catch crop as undergrowth

K01b – Winter intercrop

K01c – Stubble intercrop

K02 - Buffer zones: 2 meters and 5 meters buffer zones on poor soils, 2 meters and 5 meters buffer zones on rich soils

G01 – Maintenance of local animal breeds (11 breeds of cattle, horses and sheep are mentioned).

It is a pre-condition for the application of AEP and LFA measures to fulfil Good Agricultural Practice on the whole farm. Agri-environmental payments are increased by 20% of the basic payment when the packages (at least one) are being implemented within a NATURA 2000 area.

Some remarks on the implementation of measures from the Rural Development Plan in Poland:

1. Less-Favoured Areas: in 2004 a lot of farmers applied, because application was combined with application for direct payments.
2. Early retirement: in 2004 there were more applications than could be accepted because of the budgetary limit for this measure.
3. Afforestation of agricultural land was started in 2003 from the national budget, which was limited. In 2004 the regulation concerning afforestation in Poland was changed and from 2005 the measure will continue with RDP funds.
4. Until 2005 organic farming was paid from a limited national budget. In 2004, the number of participating farmers increased from 2,200 up to 3,200. In the Biebrza valley, until 2004 there were four organic farmers.
5. Maintenance of genetic resources of local animal breeds: In Poland most traditional breeds of farm animals have been protected since many years. From the year 2000, the Ministry of Agriculture started with conservation programmes for 75 breeds and varieties of 14 farm animal species, e.g. cows, horses, pigs, sheep, hens, ducks, geese, rabbits and bees. From 2002, all activities for the conservation of genetic resources of farm animals have been coordinated by the Institute of Animal Husbandry in Kraków which cooperates with the FAO within the framework of the World Strategy for the Maintenance of Genetic Resources of Farm Animals. Until 2005, these measures were covered by the national budget. From 2005 onwards, they will partly be covered by EU funds under the agri-environmental programme (for breeds of cows, horses, sheep), but the remaining farm species will still be covered by the national budget.

More AEP measures will be available from 2005 onwards. Applications for the rest of the agri-environmental packages can be submitted from the beginning of 2005. In 2004, farmers, supported by professional advisors, have started to prepare agri-environmental plans for their farms.

During the period 1998-2003, the Polish Ministry of Agriculture implemented 41 projects under the PHARE programme. These projects included: preparation for the implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy, agricultural advisory system, farm standards, organic farming, preparation for selected CAP instruments, training for CAP, preparation for implementation of European Agricultural Guarantee and Guidance Fund (EAGGF) programmes, and strengthening implementation of EAGGF programmes. Some of them were partly implemented in the Biebrza valley, e.g. the project concerning selected CAP instruments (grazing as a tool for nature conservation), and identification of necessary AEP measures for nature conservation in Environmentally Sensitive Areas (Biebrza and Narew valleys). Several training courses for advisors, farmers and national park employees were organised. The preparation of the agri-environmental measures' design, the preparation of monitoring methods of AEP effects, and the training for and promotion of AEP were supported by PHARE funds, but also from Dutch MATRA funds (IUCN and Avalon pilot project) and Norwegian funds (WWF Poland project). RDP measures were tested also in another pilot project, which was co-financed from European Union funds under the PHARE Programme: Rural Development Measures for the Warmia and Mazury and Podkarpacie Voivodships.

Hungary

ANDRÁS BANKOVICS

Rural Development Plan Measures for Protected Areas

In the Hungarian Rural Development Plan (RDP) there are horizontal and zonal programmes including measures for nature protection. Any land user can join horizontal programmes, as they are for the whole territory of Hungary. The programmes for High Nature Value Areas (zonal programmes), formerly called Environmentally Sensitive Areas, are for land users managing land in certain areas. There are 15 such areas in Hungary in 2004; one of them is situated in the Kiskunság National Park administrative area. Land management on High Nature Value Areas is partly controlled by national park staff on-site. The agricultural authority is in charge of providing information for farmers on available supports and subsidies, collecting and checking applications for funds, and conducts on-site and remote sensing control. Subsidies are paid on a territorial basis, ranging from 80 to 400 € per hectare. Unfortunately, the advisory system is not really efficient, a new one is hoped to be set up in 2005. The objectives of the measures are generally good, as in the preparation experts on nature conservation had also taken part. The greatest threat for the programme is the late payment, as it inhibits nature conservation land management practices to be disseminated and to become widespread.

The Agri-Environmental Programme is part of the RDP with the following measures:

A.1. Arable stewardship scheme (arable crops, vegetables)
A.2. Tanya farming system (arable crops, vegetables)
A.3. Apiculture cropping
A.4. Integrated crop management (arable crops, vegetables)
A.5. Organic farming scheme (arable crops, vegetables) (payment is differentiated for fields in conversion stage and already converted)
A.6. Long term environmental set-aside
A.7. Maintenance of rare plant varieties (arable crops, vegetables)
A.8. Arable schemes in High Nature Value areas
A.8.1. Arable farming for great bustard habitat development
A.8.2. Arable farming for bird protection
A.8.3. Alfalfa production for great bustard habitat development
A.8.4. Arable farming for habitat development
B.1. Grassland stewardship scheme
  a) maintenance of grassland habitats
  b) conversion of arable land into species rich grassland
B.2. Organic grassland management scheme
B.3. Grassland management schemes in High Nature Value areas
B.3.1. Grassland management for great bustard habitat development
B.3.2. Grassland management for corncrake habitat development
B.3.3. Grassland management for bird habitat development

B.3.4. Grassland development in HNV areas
C.1. Integrated fruit and grape production scheme
C.2. Organic fruit and grape production (payment is differentiated for fields in conversion stage and already converted)
C.3. Maintenance of rare plant varieties, permanent cultures
D.1. Extensive management of fishponds
D.2. Wetland creation
D.2.1. Conversion of arable land into wetland
D.2.2. Wetland creation for spawning areas
D.3. Maintenance of wet grasslands, bogs, marshlands
D.4. Reed management
E.1. Keeping endangered breeds
E.2. Organic livestock keeping
F.1. Erosion control
F.1.1. a) Water erosion control in permanent crops
F.1.1. b) Water erosion control on arable land (spring crop)
F.1.1. b) Water erosion control on arable land (winter crop)
F.1.2. Wind erosion control on arable land
F.2. Grass margin
F.3 Scrub control

A.8. and B.3. programs are mostly for protected areas.

LIFE-Nature Projects in Hungary

Though Life-Nature projects are not part of the RDP in Hungary, they play an important role in financing nature conservation efforts at Natura 2000 sites. Actually, there are ten running Life-Nature projects in Hungary. The largest LIFE-Nature project of Hungary, both in terms of financial volume and of complexity (4.3 Mio Euro, nine organisations involved), is run by the Kiskunság National Park.

The main objective of the 'Conservation of *Otis tarda* in Hungary' project is to reinforce the on-going national efforts to strengthen the populations of the Great Bustard, a globally threatened species included in Annex I of the EU Birds Directive. The Hungarian population of the species has decreased from 8,557 in 1941 to 1,100-1,300 individuals by 1988 after long stagnation in the 1970s. The sudden decline of the population in the mid-80s has proved that the population can be maintained only if it is able to compensate the heavy losses it may suffer during harsh winters. The current stagnation of the population imposes a high risk of further decline.

The purpose of this project is to create favourable conditions for the growth in the short-term and to achieve through this a steady growth of the Hungarian *Otis tarda* population after the measures taken in the project take effect.

The project will focus on habitat conservation measures in nine regions (Mosoni-sík, Kiskunsági szikes puszták, Solti-sík, Dévaványai-sík, Kis-Sárrét, Bihari-sík, Hortobágy, Borsodi Mezőség and Hevesi-sík), all to be classified as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) under the Birds Directive. In the framework of the project, management plans will be drawn up for these SPAs and some land will be purchased at key locations, such as display and wintering grounds, to complement earlier efforts of Hungarian nature conservation organisations. Preserved Zones will be created at these places, where the land will be managed in order to create favourable habitat structures (grassland restoration, alfalfa establishment, crop rotation systems) that provide good feeding opportunities all year round and reduce disturbances in the critical periods of the species life-cycle.

The project will also take actions to reduce key factors of mortality. This will involve the establishment of a national network of regional officers dealing with the safeguarding of nests threatened by agricultural works. The high mortality of eggs and chicks will be reduced through putting in place a joint national Predator Management Plan in collaboration with all stakeholders. The high mortality of adult individuals will be reduced through removing some dangerous sections of power lines crossing traditional display or wintering grounds. Winter mortality will be reduced through improving access to food in winter by growing oilseed rape and alfalfa in the Preserved Zones and clearing snow from foraging areas in emergency situations when the population would otherwise die from starvation. An intensive communication programme, targeting farmers, game managers and political decision-makers at local and national level, will increase awareness among the target groups and create support for conservation measures for *Otis tarda*, including the creation of Natura 2000 sites covering the whole area important for the species. A comprehensive monitoring programme will inform about the changes in population parameters, in habitats and in the numbers of key predator species. Personnel and technical limitations of carrying out necessary conservation actions will also be addressed in the framework of the project.

As a result of the project, the conditions for the conservation of *Otis tarda* will significantly improve in Hungary. It is expected that the productivity of the total population will exceed 0.7 chicks per female and adult mortality will be reduced to under 5%. This will allow an increase of population of about 10% during the project and 50% within 10 years. Overall, this ambitious, but carefully planned project will complement and reinforce on-going national efforts and enable the recovery of this majestic farmland bird.

Glossary of Acronyms

ADP	Agricultural Development Programme
AEP	Agri-Environmental Programme
BfN	Bundesamt für Naturschutz (German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation)
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy (EU)
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COP	Conference of the Parties
EAGGF	European Agricultural Guarantee and Guidance Fund
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EC	European Commission
EFF	European Fisheries Fund
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESA	Environmentally Sensitive Area
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
FIFG	Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance
GEF	Global Environment Facility
HNV	High Nature Value (farmland)
IEEP	Institute for European Environmental Policy
INTERREG	Community initiative for interregional cooperation financed under ERDF
IUCN	The World Conservation Union (International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources)
LAG	Local Action Group
LEADER+	Liaison entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale – EU initiative for rural development
LFA	Less Favoured Area
LIFE+	Financial Instrument for the Environment
LU	Livestock Unit
NAEP	National Agri-Environmental Programme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PHARE	Pre-accession instrument for the promotion of economic and social cohesion and preparation for adoption and implementation of EU legislation, financed by the European Union
PLA	Protected Landscape Area
PPP	Public-Private-Partnerships
pSCI	proposed Site of Community Importance (for NATURA 2000)
RDP	Rural Development Programme
RDR	Rural Development Regulation (1257/99)
RTD	Research and Technological Development
SAPS	Single Area Payment Scheme
SAPARD	Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (EU)

SPA	Special Protection Area (Birds Directive)
SSPA	Small-size Specially Protected Area (Czech Republic)
UAA	Utilised Agricultural Area
WCPA	World Commission on Protected Areas
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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Workshop Programme

Wednesday, October 27th 2004

Arrival of the participants at the Isle of Vilm

18.30 Dinner

21.00 Welcome of the participants, introduction to the workshop (C. Epple, Federal Agency for Nature Conservation - BfN)

Thursday, October 28th 2004

08.00 Breakfast

I Background and Interlinkages

09.00 **CORDULA EPPLE, Germany:**
Ongoing developments in the agricultural sector of the CEE new member states and their impact on nature and the environment

09.15 **TANJA DRÄGER DE TERAN, Germany:**
Introduction to EU Agricultural and Structural Policy – current situation and future perspectives

10.00 **OLAF OSTERMANN, Germany:**
Possibilities to support the tasks of protected areas under EU Agricultural and Structural Policy

10.45 Coffee/Tea break

11.15 **MARIJA MARKEŠ, Slovenia:**
Agriculture - an essential component of conservation

11.45 **VOLKER SPICHER, Germany:**
Cooperation between conservation and agriculture in the Müritz National Park

12.30 Lunch

13.30 Guided tour through the nature reserve "Isle of Vilm"

15.00 Break

II Case Studies from CEE Countries

15.30 **JÖRG HOFFMANN, Germany:**
What does the CAP mean for protected areas in the new member states? Results of a situation analysis in selected regions

16.00 **HELENA BARTOSZUK, Poland:**
Perspectives of agri-environmental programme implementation for biodiversity conservation of Biebrza National Park

16.30 **JOANNA GÓRECKA, Poland:**
The conservation of agricultural biodiversity in Wigry National Park

17.00 **ANDRÁS BANKOVICS, Hungary:**
A national agri-environmental scheme in practice in the Kiskunság National Park, 2002-2003

17.30 Coffee/Tea break

17.45 **MARTINA PILÁTOVÁ, Slovakia:**
Biodiversity protection and its practical realization including agricultural areas in the Protected Landscape Area - Biosphere Reserve Pol'ana

18.15 **KLEMEN ELER, Slovenia:**
Calcareous grasslands of the Slovenian Submediterranean Region – its biodiversity and conservation

18.30 Dinner

20.00 Short statements by protected area representatives on state of implementation of RDP measures in their regions
Plenary discussion

Friday, October 29th 2004

08.00 Breakfast

III Case Studies from Germany

09.00 **ARNO TODT, Germany:**
Experiences from the German Rural Development Pilot Programme "Regionen aktiv"

10.00 **THOMAS VAN ELSEN, Germany:**
Nature conservation advisory service for farmers - a new approach to integrate nature conservation on farm level

11.00 Coffee/Tea break

11.30 **JOCHEN LAMP, Germany:**
LEADER+-projects and their potential to contribute to conservation - experiences from the model region Rügen

12.30 Lunch

IV Elaboration of Recommendations

14.00 Working Groups: Elaboration of recommendations for the use of currently available instruments and for the further development of instruments and requirements at the national and international level

16.00 Coffee/Tea break

16.30 Plenary (presentations of group work results, discussion), final work on contributions to the workshop report, closure of the meeting

18.30 Dinner

20.30 Evening session (if necessary)

Saturday, October 30th 2004

07.30 Departure from Vilm

All-day excursion to the Biosphere Reserve Schorfheide-Chorin and model region of the pilot programme "Active Regions". Arrival in Berlin at about 20.00 h. Overnight stay in a hotel in Berlin.

Sunday, October 31st 2004

Departure from Berlin