

Minutes of the Meeting

2nd Annual Meeting of WG 3 Nature Protection Sub-Group

Regional Environmental Network for Accession (RENA)

Date: 12 December, 2012, Podgorica, Montenegro

Place: Best Western Premier Hotel

Time: 09:30 – 14:30

Participants:

Beneficiaries/WG 3 Coordinators

1. **Ms. Silvamina Alshabani**, *WG 3 Nature Protection contact person, Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Water Administration (Albania)*
2. **Ms. Azra Korac Mehmedovic**, *WG 3 Nature Protection contact person, Federal Ministry of Physical Planning and Environment (B-H)*
3. **Ms Petra Mihalic**, *Ministry of Culture, Nature Protection Directorate (Croatia)*
4. **Ms Biserka Vistica**, *Director, Kopacki Rit Nature Park (Croatia)*
5. **Ms Ruzica Marusic**, *Kopacki Rit Nature Park (Croatia)*
6. **Ms Daniela Kamceva**, *Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning (FYROM)*
7. **Ms Dejana Naumcevska**, *Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning (FYROM)*
8. **Mr. Ismail Hetemaj**, *WG 3 Coordinator, Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning (Kosovo under the UNSCR 1244/99)*
9. **Ms Ana Lekic**, *Environmental Protection Agency (Montenegro)*

European Union

- Ms. Madalina Ivanica, DG Environment, European Commission

Environment Forum Project

- Mr. Natasa Kovacevic, Environment Forum representative

Project Team

- Mr. Imre Csikos, WG3 Nature Sub-Group Leader
- Mr. Eddie Idle, Short Term Expert
- Mr. Tim Bines, Short Term Expert
- Ms. Ivana Mijatovic, Short Term Expert

RENA Secretariat

- Mr. Ruza Radovic



Official welcoming and approval of the agenda

The meeting was opened by Mr. Csikos, Nature Working Group Leader by thanking all participants for coming to the Second Annual meeting of WG 3 Nature Sub-Group to approve the work plan for 2012, and to discuss ideas for the RENA II project. Mr. Csikos outlined in brief the main elements of the agenda and asked Ms Lekic, the representative of the host country, and Ms Madalina Ivanica to greet the participants. Furthermore, the participants were invited to briefly introduce themselves.

The proposed agenda was unanimously approved.

Status of Project Implementation in RENA WG 3 Nature (*Imre Csikos*)

Mr Csikos discussed the RENA nature activities that were implemented, according to the RENA Work plan, in 2011. Three trainings were carried out: Kopacki Rit-Gornje Podunavlje (9-11 May, Croatia), Dojran Lake (6-8 Sept., FYROM) and NP Djerdap (1-3 Nov., Serbia). Mr Csikos summarised the results of the training and presented lessons for the future. He also talked about the economic impact of nature values and ecosystem services of the environment. As a conclusion Mr Csikos mentioned that it would be ideal to ensure continuity of the training by enabling the same people to come. Also, RENA experts can assist in development of cross border nature projects. However, initiative is needed from beneficiaries on this issue. In case of cross border nature project development a more pro-active involvement of national Ministry requested because of international dimension.

During discussion, Ms Ivanica stressed that the momentum of the project should be used to continue with further activities in RENA II project. Ms Kovacevic informed about the biodiversity research in Serbia, Montenegro and Albania and emphasised the need for a greater stakeholder involvement in nature projects. Also, developing project proposals should be encouraged by the national governments as the level of capacity for drafting projects in Montenegro is quite low. She sees Taix as a great tool to assist in this. Furthermore, she hopes Environmental Forum will be part of the RENA II. Ms Ivanica assured her that NGO participation would be more than welcomed.

Ms Csikos suggested that in the next RENA project, 2-3 protected sites could be selected for a detailed preparation of management plans. These plans would be result of a 2-year process with strong stakeholder involvement. Mr Bines mentioned the case of Poland where some 50 management plans were drafted within the same time frame. He also mentioned that a mechanism for stakeholder involvement needs to be in place. Mr Csikos commented that economic interests are high on the agenda in the entire region. Mr Bines explained that Natura 2000 is perceived as a reason for concern for economic stakeholders. Mr Csikos stressed the importance of raising public awareness, especially at the policy level, which also implies the involvement of the European Commission. Ms Kovacevic mentioned that it would also be a good idea to carry out impact assessment of climate change in the region.

The work plan for the next year was unanimously approved.

Managing Kopacki Rit Nature Park (*Biserka Vistica, Director, Kopacki Rit Nature Park*)

Ms Biserka Vistica's first presentation focused on the Nature Park Kopacki Rit and its ecosystem services. She also talked about plan and animal species which are characteristic for the Park and the monitoring methods used to improve the Park management. The second presentation centred on communicating methods used in Kopacki rit, target audiences and the message. She also talked about communication media, the staff skills and training which has been provided to enable the staff to successfully tackle the various management issues.

Stakeholder Involvement in Management Planning (*Tim Bines*)

Mr Bines talked about the importance of stakeholders in the management planning process. He presented identification and categorisation of stakeholders and stressed the significance of the messages, the medium and the process.

Round Table Discussion

Mr Csikos provided information about the impact of previous trainings: articles and photos on the websites of Kopacki rit Nature Park, National Park Djerdap and the Turkish Ministry of Environment. Also, Nature Park Kopacki Rit and the National Park Djerdap initiated informal cooperation during the 3rd regional training in Serbia



Ms Ivanica stressed the importance of hearing opinions from the beneficiary countries on what is relevant to them in terms of nature protection activities for the period after March 2013 when the current RENA project will end.

Ms Vistica stressed that networking and financing from the EU is always welcomed. However, she feels that lessons on how to manage better is crucial for people in the field. The Kopacki Rit management submitted 4 project proposals for the EU financing this year but she thinks that training on preparing good project proposals is still lacking. Therefore, training on how to manage better could be organised. She believes link with economy should be present (figures should also be provided).

Ms Ivanica mentioned that Kopacki rit is a good example to follow and emphasised that the EC counts on Croatia to share their experience and provide leadership.

Mr Bines mentioned that the centre for excellence could also be established to provide with the best practice approach for all the protected areas in the beneficiary countries.

Ms Mihalic commented that Croatia has just established its first regional Mura-Drava protected area, but feels that there is an increased role for the stakeholders and the media in this process. The stakeholders should be explained how they can benefit and how the process and the protected area can be in their interest too.

Ms Madalina Ivanica recapped the ideas provided by the beneficiaries for the next RENA:

- Drafting complete management plans
- Nature Impact Assessment
- Dorjan Lake as a pilot project
- Small projects in the Parks (promotional activities, producing info materials, etc.)
- Economic analysis of the Sites
- Stakeholder involvement

Mr Csikos believes that the good cooperation between the Parks which has started in the RENA should be continued in the next RENA with the more official networking of Parks. So far very little contact between park managers in different beneficiary counties (even in cross-border areas) has been observed so far. However, all duplication of activities should be avoided.

Mr Csikos also proposed that the next project could also focus on regional cooperation at the Natura 2000 sites with a special emphasis on big mammals (such as wolf, lynx and bear).

Mr Ismail Hetemaj commented that appropriate assessments of Natura 2000 sites are very important but manners of dealing with it must be established. Ms Radovic reminded participants that all activities must be within the regional framework. She also suggested that a regional guidebook on the issues mentioned so far might prove to be useful for the countries. Additionally, there might be less trainings but with longer duration (5 days). Ms Lekic proposed that training on the process of issuing nature permits/permitting could be provided. Ms Naumcevska suggested that Mr Csikos's proposal on the drafting of management plan for Dojran Lake is taken into account while drafting the project proposal for the next RENA project. Mr Csikos commented that this would require a lot of proactive involvement of the fYRoM Ministry of Environment as well as their Greek counterparts. Mr Bines mentioned that training on the conflict management could also be useful in such sensitive situations as the Dojran Lake.

Ms Alshabani stressed the importance of proper management of the parks, restoration of some plants/sites and involvement of stakeholders. Ms Korac Mehmedovic suggested that as the management plan for the UNA National Park (participants in the NP Djerdap training) was sent into governmental procedure the project might assist with its implementation.

Mr Csikos emphasised the importance of continued networking between the parks. Furthermore, Mr Csikos commented that the RENA can assist in resolving the crisis of biodiversity by explaining the benefits of the Natura 2000 to the regional governments and particularly to the economic stakeholders. Also, training could be given on legal aspects of the Natura 2000, and particularly Art. 6 of the Habitats Directive. He also suggested that some 3 cross-border sites could be selected within the Inception period but that the national governments on both sides of the border must be in an agreement over this.

Ms Radovic reiterated that if regional network of park managers is to be established within the next RENA it would also mean certain responsibilities for the beneficiary: regular meetings, conclusions and recommendations



issued while RENA can assist in printing of the promotional materials, drafting of documents on common issues/problems, case studies: best practises, etc.

Mr Tim Bines also mentioned branding as one of the issues that could be the focus of one of the trainings: develop a branding set on the site. This could be combined with the regional network. Additionally, cross-ministries and cross-government working could also be addressed in order to bridge this gap. Mr Csikos stressed again that the RENA can assist governments in implementing the Natura 2000 by rationalising benefits on sustainable tourism, forestry, branding. The main point is that the message should go to the sufficiently high level.

Ms Madalina Ivanica concluded the meeting by saying that the European Commission will take into consideration all these suggestions during the preparation of the project proposal for the next RENA II.

Closure of the meeting

The follow-up points resulting from the meeting are:

Follow-up points	By whom	Deadline
Ideas for the next RENA project proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drafting a complete management plan • Nature Impact Assessment • Dorjan Lake as a pilot project • Small projects in the Parks (promotional activities, producing info materials, etc.) • Economic analysis of the Sites • Stakeholder involvement • Park Managers’ Network • Regional cooperation at the Natura 2000 sites with a special emphasis on big mammals (such as wolf, lynx and bear). • Training on the process of issuing nature permits/permitting • Assist with implementation of NP UNA national park • Drafting of guidebooks on common issues/problems, case studies: best practises, etc • Branding • Training on Standardised Monitoring Methods for different types of Parks 	European Commission	-

