

Minutes of the Meeting

1st Annual Meeting of WG 3 Nature Protection Sub-Group Regional Environmental Network for Accession (RENA)

Date: 28 October 2010, Zagreb, Croatia
Place: Ministry of Culture, Directorate for Nature Protection
Time: 09:00 – 17:00

Participants:

Beneficiaries/WG 3 Coordinators



Ms. Elvana Ramaj, *WG 3 Nature Protection contact person, Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Water Administration*



Ms. Azra Korac Mehmedović, *WG 3 Nature Protection contact person, Federal Ministry of Physical Planning and Environment*



Mr. Josip Hren, *WG 3 Nature Protection contact person, Ministry of Culture, Nature Protection Directorate*



Mr. Daniel Springer, *Ministry of Culture, Department for Protected Areas*



Mr. Zrinka Domazetović, *Ministry of Culture, Biodiversity Department*



Ms. Daniela Schneider, *Croatian State Institute for Nature Protection*



Ms. Biljana Ivičić, *Croatian State Institute for Nature Protection*



Ms. Daniela Rendevska Stefkova, *WG 3 Coordinator, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning*



Mr. Sasko Jordanov, *WG 3 Nature Protection contact person, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning*



Mr. Ismail Hetemaj, *WG 3 Coordinator, Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning*



Mr. Novak Čađenović, *WG 3 Coordinator, Ministry for Spatial Planning and Environment*



Ms. Ljiljana Veljković, *WG 3 Coordinator, Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning*



Mr. Nikola Maravić, *Advisor, Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning*

Mr. Erdogan Erturk, *WG 3 Nature Protection contact person, Ministry of Environment and Forestry*

European Union

- Ms. Joanna Fiedler, DG Environment, European Commission

Environment Forum Project

- Mr. Miodrag Dakic, 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 by thanking all participants for coming to the first annual meeting of WG 3 Nature Sub-Group to discuss the work plan as proposed by the RENA Team, emphasising that the intention of the project is to involve to the largest possible extent the beneficiaries, enabling regional networking and exchange of experience through one regional mechanism such as RENA. Mr. Csikos outlined in brief the main elements of the agenda, and invited the participants to briefly introduce themselves.

The proposed agenda was unanimously approved.

On the intervention of Mr. Dakic it was agreed that the Environment Forum should receive the draft work plan from RENA Secretariat in order to be able to distribute it to their representatives prior to the RENA meeting to which they will participate.

Nature and biodiversity - EU policy and legislation (*Joanna Fiedler*)

Ms. Fiedler presented EU policies and legislation in the field of nature and biodiversity with specific focus on:

Nature Directives – Birds and Habitats directives, where EC is currently assessing the effectiveness of both, at the same time putting more accent on the monitoring and reporting as increasingly important part of the policy cycle.;

Natura 2000 network – with the main role being the identification of high biodiversity areas within the EU, using management planning as a key tool for achieving the objectives. At the moment there are 26000 protected sites or 18% of the total EU area under Natura 2000. The percentage might be increased since there are still sites (mostly overseas) that are not fully accepted. Management of Natura 2000 sites has to be designed in such manner that damaging activities are avoided and positive measures are taken in order to ensure that the species and habitats types reach «favourable conservation status». It has to be kept in mind that the fact that the project was initiated before the accession of a Member States to the EU does not mean that the MS have no obligations under the Directive. Current priorities when it comes to Natura 2000 are: final establishment of the network, enabling long-term management and good management practices; promotion of Natura 2000 as a part of climate change adaptation;

Reporting under Art.17 Conservation Status Assessment – new MS are eligible to the period of 6 years from the date of accession for identification of Natura 2000 sites on their territory in order to complete the network. However they are obliged to fulfil the reporting requirements in accordance with the Article 17. The reporting outputs are: MS Reports; National Summaries; Technical Reports and Composite Reports.

State of biodiversity - The results based on the reports are not very favourable, having 25% of European animal species facing risk of extinction and 65% of habitats and 52% of species covered by Habitats and Birds Directives in a poor conservation status. Based on the assessment of the Article 17 of the Habitats Directive and other reports (EEA, BAP), the EU target has not been reached. The EC Communication on halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 - and beyond has been prepared but it was published rather late, in 2006, leaving not much time for taking proper actions. Mid-term assessment produced in 2008 confirmed that it is highly unlikely for targets to be achieved by 2010.

New EU biodiversity policy – setting the targets to be achieved by 2020 and development of new vision for 2050. The developed EU post-2010 biodiversity strategy is setting 6 specific targets. The strategy and the targets were subjected to comments to all MS and the deadline for consultations and comments has expired in October 2010. In Nagoya Conference the EU targets will be compared to global targets in order to assess how the EU targets should be modified in order to better correspond to the global targets.

Ms. Stefkova raised the question on the completion of Natura 2000 network within EU. Ms. Fiedler answered that most of the sites are identified but for the two MS that have recently entered the EU the process is still ongoing. For Candidate countries it is however important to start with the preparation of proposals for Natura 2000 sites that will be later on processed and evaluated so at the moment of accession the country has to be able to submit the list of proposed sites.

Mr. Cadjenovic added that the countries should receive further assistance in preparation of the list of possible N2000 sites. Ms. Fiedler replied that there are numerous initiatives on national and regional level supporting the countries with this and similar issues, but from the financial point of view there is only one financial instrument available to the countries and these are IPA funds.

Ms. Domazetovic commented that in the presentation the reporting requirements based on the requirements related to strictly protected species were not mentioned. She wanted to know what are the deadlines for these



since countries are mostly focussed on N2000 while these are also the requirements to be fulfilled. Ms. Fiedler will check these with the Nature unit and inform on the deadlines.

General description of RENA Network and status of project implementation (*Imre Csikos*)

Mr. Csikos presented the established structure of RENA and gave the overview of RENA implementation status, adding the information on recently held Ministerial Meeting, outcomes of that meeting and strong support of the EC and devotion to RENA activities expressed by the country representatives during the meeting. Additional details were provided on the methodology applied during the inception missions and preparation of the Inception Report and work plan and comments received on the first draft IR.

Regarding RENA website, Mr. Dakic proposed that some more tags should be added so the website could be more easily found when searched through popular search engines.

Natura 2000 Implementation in Croatia (*Daniela Schneider, Biljana Ivicic*)

Implementation of N2000 and related activities in Croatia are presented by Ms. Schneider and Ms. Ivicic.

Ms. Schneider presented the details about Natura 2000 proposal in Croatia. As mentioned before at the time of its accession to the EU, Croatia will have to propose sites for the NATURA 2000 Network and the EC will decide if the designated sites are sufficient to form a coherent network for the protection of the vulnerable and migratory species. Croatia has 4 biogeographic regions, with the request for omission of Pannonian region since it does not belong to it neither in terms of vegetation, floral elements nor climatic conditions, with the exception of a very small area at the easternmost part of the country – proposition has already been accepted by the Bern Convention Standing Committee, waiting for the EC to accept. Croatia will make significant contribution to the N2000 network proposing additional species and habitat types to be added to the annexes of the HD.

Phases and project implemented before Natura 2000 proposal were the following:

1. Emerald Network project - network that includes areas of particular ecological significance for threatened species and for habitat types protected pursuant to the Bern Convention. This phase resulted in: drafting of the list of ASCI sites (Areas of Special Conservation Interest) of the Emerald Network sites —more than 90% of the area of the future NATURA 2000 proposal; compilation of the Emerald database for proposed ASCI sites; definition of digital borders in GIS for all processed ASCI sites; creation of a web based application with an overview of the map of the ASCI areas and accompanying data from the Emerald database. (<http://www.cro-nen.hr/map/>)
2. CRO-NEN project – focused on training of nature protection authorities related to EU legislation, NATURA 2000 commitments and building up of ecological network and establishment of the National Ecological Network - system of ecologically important areas and ecological corridors with conservation objectives and guidelines for conservation measures which are aimed at maintaining or establishing a favourable status of threatened and rare habitat types. (www.cro-nen.hr/nem)
3. Phare 2005 “Institutional strengthening and implementation of the NATURA 2000 ecological network in Croatia” - completing the NATURA 2000 proposal and consultation process with all relevant stakeholders.

Natura 2000 consultation process has started with institutional and public awareness raising, creating the positive image of the changes that will be introduced. In order to provide basic information the N2000 website was established (www.natura2000.hr) where the most important part is the interactive map where users can easily search through proposed NATURA 2000 sites in their region. The consultation process was divided into three phases on stakeholders and regional workshops. The N2000 website also contains all the workshops, presentations and conclusions made during the consultation process. In the period from 2006 to 2010 Croatia worked on systematic field data gathering, mobilisation of the scientific, expert and NGO sector, with researches specifically directed for completion of the NATURA 2000 database

The following steps are implementation of two projects: “Identification and setting-up of the marine part of NATURA 2000 network in Croatia” – starts on 8th November 2010 (IPA 2007) and “Natura 2000 management and monitoring — (MAN-MON)” - starts in 2011 (IPA 2009).

The Habitats Directive recommends developing management plans for NATURA 2000 sites to help establish a dialogue between all interested parties and agree on pragmatic management solutions. At the moment Croatia has 13 management plans prepared in the framework of several international projects, 10 are in preparation, and 6 are planned.

Croatia will designate NATURA 2000 network by the day of the accession to the EU but already Regulation on the proclamation of Ecological Network has transposed all main requirements of the Habitat Directive into the



national legislation. Potential NATURA 2000 sites have been proclaimed and Nature impact assessment has been carried out in accordance with Article 6.

Ms. Ivicic provided more details on the Nature Impact Assessment in Croatia. National Ecological Network has been proclaimed in 2007 by the Government. Current institutional framework on national level has the Ministry of Culture, Nature Protection Directorate responsible for administrative affairs in the field of nature protection; State Institute for Nature Protection responsible for experts work and Public Institutions for management of national parks and nature parks responsible for management of protected areas. Nature Impact Assessment (NIA) is mandatory procedure for assessment if the project, plan or programme has a significant negative impact on target features of the specific EN sites. NIA in Croatia is divided into three phases: screening; main assessment with the assessment of other feasible options; establishment of overriding public interest and compensation measures. Protection measures within EN can be excluded or modified if the project has an overriding public interest when the compensation measures can be defined. Currently through “Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in the Dalmatian Coast through Greening Coastal Development” – COAST project, Croatia is working on integration of nature conservation measures into spatial plans and introduction of NIA practices in coastal areas.

Mr. Erturk had several questions in the following order:

1. What would be the percentage of proposed Natura 2000 sites within Croatia. Ms. Schneider replied that this percentage is still under determination since proposal is not final yet, but it would be approximately 35%.
2. What format was used for preparation of the existing management plans in Croatia? Ms. Schneider advised Mr. Erturk to contact department for protected areas responsible for this part in order to get more information.
3. What is the percentage of existing protected areas within proposed Nature 2000 sites? Ms. Schneider responded that all nature parks and national parks are included in the proposal.
4. If EIA is necessary, NIA is prepared within the context of EIA, which might not be the best solution since these two assessments are not the same and NIA should be done separately. Ms. Ivicic agreed, but explained that kind of system was adopted at the state level and as such is approved.

Regarding management plans Mr. Idle added that in some countries MP is a legal document and as such has to go through procedure of adoption and approval by the Parliament. In other countries it is not legally binding but it is however very useful. Regarding compensation measures, Mr. Idle quoted the example from UK, where the Government enacted legislation for calculation of compensation measures paid to farmers in designated sites. Eventually, farmers received such a large sum for doing nothing that the UK scheme was revised to pay farmers for positive works of benefit to nature conservation. The conclusion is that each and every country has to be very careful when it comes to compensation. Tim Bines commented on the need for efficient and effective monitoring and reporting systems so that there is a process in place from the outset to meet the six year reporting cycle on Natura 2000 sites that each country is required to achieve.

Presentation of Nature activity Scheme in RENA (Imre Csikos)

Mr. Csikos presented the planned activities under Nature Sub-Group of RENA. Cross border projects approach under this WG has been selected in order to strengthen regional cooperation and to establish dialog among SEE countries. In order to avoid overlaps the information on ongoing cross-border nature protection projects has been collected. During the inception missions 6 possible cross-border sites has been selected. Training needs assessment for selection of topics to be covered during trainings was also done based on the information collected during the Inception missions resulting in four topics to be covered in this sub-group. The initial proposal placed to the this group coordinators was whether to have one site on which all the trainings on selected training topics will be done, or to chose 4 different pilot sites out of 6 sites proposed during the Inception Missions. Each training topic was supposed to be covered by two days training. At least two follow-up projects on selected sites will be identified and project fiches or project identification sheets (format depending on donor) ready for submission to donor will be prepared. The request for selection of training participants is that the same people should be involved in our trainings so one consistent group can be formed to work on project fiches. Each country should nominate 3 persons to attend the training. Participants should come from the ministries but also from the institutions managing the sites (local level). One of the conditions for selection of sites is availability of infrastructure for facilitation of trainings.

Ms. Fiedler added that the outputs of activities, i.e. the success of the activities or added value of the project have to be related more to the selection of sites on which the training will be provided.



After the presentation of the training topics and possible sites on which the training will be provided, the following was agreed to be entered into the revised work plan of this sub-group:

1. The training will be provided on all 6 proposed cross-border sites;
2. Six training topics will be provided instead of initial four selected;
3. The trainings sessions will be done in three days, on a different level and to a different stakeholders (participant from the ministries, local site managers and local community);
4. Nature Impact Assessment that was proposed as one of the 4 training topics will be organised as a separate regional workshop (possibility of organising it in Croatia as a learning experience from Croatian authorities).
5. The project team will suggest 6 different training topics.
6. The activities of this Sub-Group will be coordinated with those under Investment Planning Sub-group in order to attract possible donors for project fiches that will be prepared as the outputs of the Nature Sub-Group.
7. The prepared project fiches will not be focused on possible financing by IPA funds alone due to the fact that it will be ready only end of 2012, when the planning for year 2014 is already done, which makes too long period for planning. Project fiches for those project for which the possible donors are not identified will be more general, while those for which donors are identified will be more specific and in accordance with the requirements of identified donor.
8. Preparation of database of finance recourses for regional nature projects.
9. The following annual meetings will be organised in such way that half of the day is used for discussion of implemented and planned activities and second half of the day is used for invitation and discussion of achievements and possible cooperation with related initiatives, IFIs and other donors.

Implementing Nature Management Plans and creating business and employment opportunities (*Eddie Idle/Tim Bines*)

Mr. Idle and Mr. Bines gave presentation on Natura 2000 & Threats; People & how to involve them; Management & Planning. Universal reaction everywhere in Europe was to oppose Natura 2000. Some threats that are occurring in most of the countries and that are more or less the same as for RENA countries are: road development, intensive agriculture, seaport development; uncontrolled housing; forest exploitation. Once the country becomes MS, and starts with implementation of Natura 2000, it has to be aware of the penalties if features for which the N2000 sites were selected are damaged. The penalty consists of a minimum fixed lump sum and a daily penalty payment. In addition withdrawal of structural funding may be applied which would be applied in Rospuda case in Poland if this was not solved by the country. They stressed that the important element in nature management is identification of stakeholders and their involvement in the preparation of the MP process. Two categories for involvement of stakeholders are: Sustainable use of Protected Area resources and use of Protected Area status to enhance marketing. Management Plan is: “an easily understood set of principles in an accessible form by which a defined area (small or large) may be managed.” Management plans are used by Protected Area managers; Protected Area ‘parent’ organisations; stakeholders and politicians. The management plan preparation process is organised in several stages as follows: identification and involvement of stakeholders; identification of facilitator for the preparation process; establishment of ground rules and identification of timescales and implementation of “team-work”.

RENA Secretariat - Role and function (*Ruza Radovic*)

Ms. Radovic presented the roles and functions of RENA Secretariat including the rules for utilisation of the Incidental Expenditures in line with the project ToR. As explained under the rules for utilisation the IE per diems are not to be paid to beneficiaries instead of provision of meals and accommodation since the project is financed under IPA, therefore no reimbursement in cash is allowed to be made to the beneficiaries.

Closure of the meeting

The follow-up points resulting from the meeting are:

Follow-up points	By whom	Deadline
Revised version of the Inception Report and work plan to be sent to the beneficiaries.	RENA Secretariat	Mid of November (approximately)



Follow-up points	By whom	Deadline
Revised version of the nature work plan to be sent to WG 3 coordinators	RENA Secretariat	In two weeks

