

The Central and East European Working Group for the Enhancement of Biodiversity (CEEWEB) is an international network of non-governmental organisations dealing with nature conservation issues in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region.

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Newsletter

March 2005



From this issue...

- Dear Reader
- CEEWEB Academy I.
- Project launched on monitoring and mainstreaming the Convention on Biological Diversity into national policies in SEE countries
- NGO preparatory meeting for the Boreal Biogeographic Seminar in Riga
- Croatia Protest Against GMOs
- Wind storm in Tatra (Slovakia) and fight for environmental approach
- Species Disappearing through the Net
- Easter pilgrimage and nature conservation
- UNEP moves towards good governance
- Changes in the CEEWEB staff
- From the next issue

Dear Reader,

Climate change or not – the winter started late – and lasts long! Hungary is still experiencing winter-temperatures in these days. What will it bring – that spring will start very quickly with high temperatures – which will have all the insects awakening from their hibernation. And what flowers, plants will they find to feed on? Well, we will see if this extreme winter leads to another decline of biodiversity...



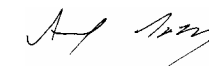
CEEWEB is also awakening from its “winter sleep” – what was actually no sleep for us at all! The past months were full of planning activities – to give a boost to our activities. Sára Orosz, CEEWEB's new network coordinator is trying her best to revitalize the true functioning of the Network and to build the cohesion. The information we are gaining from you will help us to create our long term strategy to become a really servicing network.

Besides network development we also had the “classical” CEEWEB activities in the international arena. One of the most important news is, that CEEWEB was officially elected to the Bureau of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy on its 10th anniversary on the 17th of March. CEEWEB hosted the Board Meeting of CERI, the Carpathian EcoRegion Initiative on the 24th of February. CERI is just about to be legally registered in Slovakia and thus becoming the youngest network in Central and Eastern Europe – focusing on the implementation of the Carpathian Convention.

Still in February we also had a successful workshop, dealing with the issue of sustainable development this time. This was the first event of the new program serial called “CEEWEB Academy” – providing high level training to CEEWEB members on specific issues. Soon you will hear more about the initiative – and we are counting on your active participation.

With this I wish you a happy reading – and as always – should you have some important news to share with us, please do not hesitate to contact the Office and your article will probably be included in the next issue of the Newsletter.

Friendly yours,



Andras Krolopp
General Secretary

CEEWEB Academy I.

As it was reported about in the latest CEEWEB Newsletter (January, 2005), CEEWEB member organisations agreed at the last Annual Meeting in November, last year on some concrete ways of cooperation.

These included the organisation of joint workshops (so called *“CEEWEB Academies”*) on different topics interesting for more organisations and joint publications with the results of several NGOs. These publications would focus on common thematic recommendations (so called *“CEEWEB Strategy”*), the scientific results of the NGOs from their nature conservation activities on the field (so called *“CEEWEB Science”*) and the assessment of the performance of countries in nature conservation (so called *“CEEWEB Watch”*). These joint activities however require some common level of understanding in the perception, goals and strategies of the cooperating NGOs, for which aim the first *“CEEWEB Academy”* was organised between 17-19 February, 2005, in Gömörzölös, Hungary.

The three-day-long Academy I. focused on sustainability, realising that the issues of environment, society and economy interrelate with each other. This means that no profound positive change can be attained without a holistic approach and the full consideration of sustainability even in the field of nature conservation.

The Academy provided an insight into the topic, such as the general principles of sustainability and the characteristics of a sustainable society. Besides the theoretic presentations held mainly by Iván Gyulai (President of CEEWEB, and director of the Ecological Institute for Sustainable Development in Hungary), the participants could test their acquired knowledge in some exercises, such as the sustainability ranking of some products, or seeking for a solution in a concrete case study. However, it was clear that further opportunities for workshops, discussions and trainings are greatly needed for developing a common level of understanding among member NGOs.

For a friendly and relaxed atmosphere an international evening with national drinks and sweets followed by a party was also part of the programme as usual, as well as an excursion in the surroundings and getting acquainted with the sustainable village project of Gömörzölös.

Decision on the topic and the venue of next Academy is anticipated on the following Board Meeting of CEEWEB.

Klara Hajdu
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Project launched on monitoring and mainstreaming the Convention on Biological Diversity into national policies in SEE countries



CEEWEB launched a one-year project in February related to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy in South East European countries with the support of the Swiss Agency for Environment, Forest and Landscape.

As the kick-off for the project, a meeting was held in February, back to back with the CEEWEB Academy I. on sustainability. This was not coincidence, as the project aims to mainstream the commitments and guidance under the CBD and its Pan-European arm, the PEBLDS into national policies and decisions, which cannot be successful on the long term without taking into account the principles of sustainability. The meeting was planned to provide training on CBD for all project partners, however due to the unexpected illnesses only half of them could be present. Thus the training was postponed to the end of March, while the meeting in February gave an introduction into the Convention and the project activities.

The kick-off training will aim to build a common level of understanding on the CBD and main nature conservation issues, as well as help NGOs find the connections between their own activities and the articles, guidance, activities, work programmes under the CBD. Individual and group work will aim to “simulate” how the Convention can be approached in the everyday NGO work, while presentations will outline CBD issues. The discussions are planned to explore the relationship between nature conservation issues (and the CBD) and sustainability.

Project activities at the national level will include in general terms the following:

- Monitoring national policy and decision-making relevant to nature conservation and sustainable use.
- Utilising public participation opportunities in national policy- and decision-making for mainstreaming the commitments and guidance (such as the articles, decisions and guidelines) accepted under the CBD and PEBLDS for nature conservation and sustainability interests.
- Formulating NGO assessments, positions, recommendations on current issues on the national agenda (e.g. legislative proposals, institutional changes, budgetary



proposals, national environmental and nature conservation programmes, infrastructural, environmental developments, etc. relevant to nature conservation,

even if it is done by other members of the national NGO community) and pointing out how much they are in line with the commitments and guidance of the international policy-making instruments.

- Seeking and utilising case studies, good and bad examples related to current issues on the national agenda in the mainstreaming and public participation activities.
- Communication and awareness raising through the own website of the project, press releases, presence in the media, national consultations, etc.,
- Preparing national assessments and a regional report on how much national policies and decisions are made in accordance with international commitments and guidance,
- Mid-term expert meeting and final workshop for exchanging experiences, sharing knowledge, multiplying positive effects.

National project partners are Green Action from Croatia, Makmontana from Macedonia, Biotica Ecological Society from Moldova and Young Researchers of Serbia, i.e. NGOs with whom we think real achievements can be made!

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NGO preparatory meeting for the Boreal Biogeographic Seminar in Riga



The meeting was organized by the Latvian Fund for Nature (as CEEWEB member organization), on behalf of the CEEWEB. The meeting was held in Riga in the Ministry of Environment (due to the coincidence that the office of the LFfN was just under construction) and took place on the 4th of February, since according to the previous information and expectations, the Boreal Biogeographic Region should have been the first in the process. However, not even after finding out the new dates of the organization process would it have made any sense to cancel the event. Another problem was that, despite of the "early" organization another meeting took also place in the Baltic region, which we had no information about previously.

There were representatives from Latvian Fund for Nature, from Estonian Fund for Nature, from WF Austria (Christoph Walder), and from the CEEWEB Policy Office itself, in the person András Krolopp and myself. Unfortunately, Lithuania was not represented at all.

During the event, CEEWEB and WWF described the current situation of the preparatory work for the biogeographic seminars – which we were informed about, according to the news we received and what more or less was also described technically in the recently issued Biogeographic Booklet. Participants from the Baltic States also described their finished tasks about the designation process, making a shadow list about their activities. Unfortunately, about the current Lithuanian situation we did not receive any further news. NGOs of the other two countries did quite a good job about the site designation process - more in Latvia, while less but still significant in Estonia, due to the fact that NGOs were also present among the scientific bodies of the above process. Accordingly, they have nearly complete shadow lists in the cupboard.

After talking about shadow lists, Christoph talked about the experiences gained from previous seminars. Afterwards, the meeting transformed into a catechetic form, through which the following lessons were learned:

- DG Environment is our friend
- European Topic Center is also our friend

- Cross boundary cooperation may be useful in certain cases
- There are some useful rules for the participation on biogeographic seminars (in order to keep up with a good and formal connection towards the very British Nick Henley...)
- Desk officers are important persons
- Be prepared for the seminars

And finally, here we are some comments from the representatives:

- “Discussing the reference list (with facilitation) would be a good exercise for these meetings.”
- “More NGOs should participate - and maybe not only NGOs, but academic personnel as well.”
- “Taking care of the different regions (different countries may have different characteristics...)”
- “Habitat interpretation would need more care to take.”
- “Choosing the date of kick-off meetings should be luckier (especially considering the different ongoing meetings...)”

After all, Christoph Walder may be a good and appropriate key person for the ongoing meetings, especially for having been present on previous biogeographic seminars. But prospectively, the preparation for the next meeting dedicated to the Alpine Region, will take place on 23rd March, Bratislava. (Looking forward...)

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Croatia Protest Against GMOs



Proposal of new Law on GMOs came to the national Parliament and the protests against GMOs is spreading. Famous anti GM expert prof. dr. sc. Marijan Jost released new book "Does Croatia Need GM Crops" which is comprehensive overview on failure of GM crops worldwide.

Yesterday, the book was promoted in the city of Osijek – centre of agricultural region of Slavonija. The meeting was organised by environmental NGO Osječki zeleni (Osijek Greens), who announced initiative for expanding GMO-free movement in the country.

Prof. dr. sc. Jost presented Croatia's opportunities to become organic agriculture oasis which is only realistic future for small local farmers and independence of national agriculture and economy.

He gave his new book to all delegates in the Parliament to explain the importance of bringing a law, which respects the precautionary principle of the Cartagena Protocol. Jost claimed that «there are too much influence from the GM lobby in the process of bringing the new law». Also, Jost demands more legal rights for countries to declare themselves GMO free ones, which is not mentioned in the new Law on GMOs.

Today, Zelena Akcija (Green Action) protested in front of the Parliament urging delegates on the new Law on GMOs and giving their comments on the law proposed. They gave appeals to the delegates with the following signs: "I want to know, I want to decide!" and "Our food – our decision!"

According to the activists from Green Action "the new law on GMOs doesn't respect public participation in decision making process of approving particular GMO". So, the activists demand returning the law to the ministry for better finishing. Also, Green action considers that "Croatia doesn't need to produce GM food and breed GM crops. It's strategic decision supported by all relevant political parties, so the new law must aim to ensure that".



Environmental NGO Eko Zadar conducted survey about public statement on the GM issue. Up to 90% of citizens of the city of Zadar said they "would not by GM food for their family". Even more, 96,2% of the citizens supports Zadar to go GMO-free.

The majority of the associations of experts and farmers supports resistance of using biotechnology in croatian agriculture. New book of prof. dr. sc. Marijan Jost collected signatures, which include Croatian Agronomist' Society, Croatian Bioethical Society, Croatian Philosophy Society, Croatian Seed, Croatian Farmers' Society, Slavonija and Baranja Farmers' Community, Society of Agricultural Producers, Society for Consumer Protection, Osijek Greens, BIOS – Union for organic-biological economy, BIOPA and many others.

Activists and experts consider this wide coalition as a real resistance against the contamination of the environment with GMOs and a unique chance for an organic agriculture, for which Croatia has got all necessary resources.

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Wind storm in Tatra (Slovakia) and fight for environmental approach

On November the 19th of 2004, the strongest storm in Slovakia in 70 years hit the Tatra National Park. It literally cleared a forest area of 12,000 hectares and severely damaged another several thousand hectares. The flattened spruce forests correspond to at least 90 % of the annual felling of coniferous wood in the country.

In the next days almost all politicians abused this situation to declare it as a chance to increase the tourism intensity and infrastructure in the area. It even included a famous Prime Minister sentence "Concrete is not an enemy." All the politicians ignored the fact, that High Tatra is a national park, protected by Slovakian Laws, as well as that



about 70 % of the Tatra National Park has been proposed by the Slovakian government for the designation as a Natura 2000 site (64 % of the Park's area are proposed Sites of Community Importance according to the Habitats Directive, and 51.4 % are proposed to be Specially Protected Areas according to the Birds Directive). Tatra National Park is home to many endangered and protected species, including wolf, lynx, brown bear, lesser-spotted eagle (*Aquila*

pomarina) and lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*), which are listed in the Habitats Directive and Birds Directive respectively. Animals, plants or biotopes in the area are also protected according to many international agreements like Convention on Biological Diversity, Carpathian convention, IUCN criteria for national parks, and is declared as international biosferic reserve.

In addition to their own intrinsic value, the extraordinary natural features of the Tatra Mountains are an important basis for the long-term sustainable development of the region, including e.g. tourism; and provide important ecosystems services, e.g. flood control and management of the hydrological regime as well as ecological stability, that is of importance for the great region as a whole.

As a response to the political interests, a wide opposition has risen up. On November 28, ten NGOs published the appeal "New Tatra", which contains three basic requirements:

March 2005

Newsletter

- to approve so-called zonation of the national park, submitted by the State Nature Conservation, in order to define zones of acceptable forest management and fully non-managed zones,
- to avoid any use of pesticides and/or other chemicals in the national park, connected to the measures taken against bark insects,
- to leave a part of the fallen trees on site (all of them in the core zone) and prefer nature restoration of the forests.

Finally, 83 NGOs and over 1 200 people had signed it. On December the 1st, 38 personalities of cultural and social life had come with "Storm over Tatra" initiative (its name is taken from the Slovak hymn), which declares similar points to the "New Tatra" appeal and adds the requirement of transparent public information and wide public participation.

Finally, the initiative was undersigned by 200 people more.. Third part of the opposition comes from the scientific society. e.g., the Academic Senate of both Faculty of Natural Sciences and Faculty of Medicine of the Comenius University published their supportive statements. Other scientific and expert institutions, such as Slovakian Ecological Society, the conference of top ecologists and biologists "10. Feriancove dni", etc. also published their similar positions.

Finally, on December the 13th, the Non-governmental Committee Our Tatras (NGC OT) was designed, based on the three streams of the opposite movement. The NGC OT position was later supported by the Academic Senate of the Comenius University, and by the Concilium of Slovakian Academy of Science (which is the most important scientific institution in Slovakia). At the same time, the Governmental Committee for Restoration and Development of High Tatra was established. Its task is to help High Tatra after the storm, but its members are only politicians, mostly ministers of the government. The activities of the Governmental Committee again ignore the priority of the environmental point of view.

In this political point of view, the Tatra restoration has been so strongly non-environmentally, but economically oriented, that WWF International and Greenpeace wrote letters to José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission concerning the official requirement of the Slovakian Government for money from the EU Solidarity Fund, to restore the Tatra region. The NGOs asked the Commission to provide this money only if it is used in the environmentally acceptable way, according to the sustainable development of the region as a whole, which should comply with the natural importance of this area. The WWF letter was also undersigned by NGC OT and ten Slovakian NGOs. Some of the most important principles from the letter are the following:



March 2005

Newsletter

- For a protected area like Tatra National Park, the storm must not be seen as a disaster, but as a natural disturbance phenomenon which is part of the dynamism in a forest ecosystem.
- In the core zone (A zone) of Tatra National Park, all fallen and snapped off trees should be left as deadwood. Also in the B and C zones as well as in the Park's buffer zone, a significant share of deadwood should be maintained.
- Bark beetle outbreaks, which will inevitably occur after the storm, must be seen as a natural phenomenon, which is part of the forest ecosystem. No interventions should be taken against bark beetles in the core zone of the National Park. In zone B and C and in the Park's buffer zone, low-impact intervention without any use of pesticides should be applied.
- Nature-friendly tourism with its socio-economic benefits is to be supported and inappropriate development of mass tourism is to be avoided.
- Any restoration initiative must be consulted with all relevant stakeholders and submitted to public discussion and participation processes before their implementation.

Unfortunately, by implementing these principles in practice in the Tatra, environmentalists have to face strong economical and also political pressures, including intensive forestry activities to remove all the fallen trees, plans for intensive building of the sport and recreation infrastructure within the national park as well as complete lack of public participation in decision-making. That is why the hard fight for the full nature protection in the national park and sustainable development of the Tatra region still continues and obviously, will take quite a long period of time.

Martin Valentovic, Lubica Trubiniova

BROZ - Regional Association for Nature Conservation and Sustainable Development

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Species Disappearing through the Net

Trade is both an important and inevitable aspect of civilisation, with results both positive and negative. Sadly, economic necessities are all too often given precedence over those of nature, and trade harmful to both animals and plants is carried out with alarming enthusiasm.

Over the last few decades this fact has been increasingly recognised and a system of regulations introduced around the world in an attempt to stem the damage. The best known is undoubtedly CITES.

Unavoidable Abuse

Within the last few years a new way to trade these animals has become available; it presents an opportunity to combine large markets with anonymity that has not been possible before. The internet has transformed trade in many different sectors, animal trafficking included.

In Poland a number of auction sites have become very popular, including with those people wanting to buy and sell animals. The auctions, along with other websites and chat forums, provide a plentiful supply of information on the purchase of animals. Inevitably, amongst the legitimate merchants are those who abuse the internet to make illegal

transactions – and it's the threatened species that suffer. The true nature and extent of this industry was unknown until the Polish Society for Nature Conservation 'Salamandra' initiated a project to find out just what was going on. The results do not make happy reading.

Depressing Findings

For the sample investigated in detail, 95% of transactions were illegal and only 1% probably carried the necessary documentation (the legality of the remaining 4% couldn't be determined).

The calculated annual rate is nearly 3500 illegal offers, 86% of which were for live animals. It must be remembered that not all offers could be found, and that many offers involved a lot of animals, so the actual number of animals involved in this trade is very much higher. One offer for invertebrates contained several hundred individuals.

Unsurprisingly, invertebrates and reptiles made up the largest portion of these animals (about 1/3 each), but by value mammals and birds dominated. In total the monitoring uncovered annualised deals worth more than €0.5 million.

The two main sources of these offers were internet auction sites and specialist discussion forums, representing almost 50% each. The remainder (about 6%) were found as adverts on other websites, or on private, dedicated sites.

Different Opinions

Salamandra also set out to document the attitudes to this trade of a number of institutions and authorities, such as the police, the courts and the internet sites as well as the traders. They did this by conducting part of the monitoring in secret, before then announcing publicly their actions.

Reaction to the project varied, both between and within the different groups involved.



The police response was characterised by lack of experience, lack of resources and, quite probably, lack of enthusiasm. In several cases, the policemen did not even have access to a computer, let alone the internet, and the 'investigation' was based on the printouts sent to the police by Salamandra.

Where houses were searched, expert help was not used in the majority of cases, resulting in the confiscation of species not covered by the regulations. In cases involving snakes or spiders, the police were concerned the animals may be dangerous and so left them (i.e. the evidence) with the suspected illegal trader. In others, the animals were placed with zoos or shops, some of whom were also suspected of illegal trade.

Some police did take up the mantle and conducted their own research on the internet – in one case phoning Salamandra to report the crime!

The Public Prosecutor's Office fared little better. The Society received from them official notification on seven cases, six of which were to be dropped. Their reasoning ranged from the disappointing, 'insignificant harm of the action' to the apparently misinformed, 'an attempt to register the bird was made'. In the latter case, this is irrelevant to the case of illegal trade, as the seller did not possess a document proving

the parrot's legal origin. The Office confirmed its apparent lack of familiarity with the law in another case where the leading prosecutor contacted Salamandra and asked to be sent the regulations.

The Society was officially informed about 13 cases being taken to court. All of these ended with a guilty verdict. The total of the fine imposed, damages and court costs ranged between €50 - €200. In one case the items offered for sale were also confiscated. The punishments were soft as most offenders were unaware of the requirements for the relevant documents, which seems fair, but equally, there is a real danger that the message being sent is that the courts do not take these crimes seriously.

The main auction site agreed to cooperate with Salamandra, taking down a number of dubious auctions and informing the trader as to why. However, they would not agree to an amendment of their regulations which would require that, where necessary, the vendor would have to state in their description all the documents required and those that would be included in the sale.

Traders produced the most varied reactions, mostly on internet discussion forums, but also by telephone and post to Salamandra, and even visits to the office. Some suggested methods for clarifying the situation and cooperating with Salamandra and similar organisations, while others tried to offer advice on how to evade the legal responsibility for the trade (the advice was generally misguided). Some criticised the work of the Society, even resorting to invectives and threats against Salamandra and its staff.

In summary, the study has provided a solid basis for future work on controlling the illegal trade in endangered animals. It has also exposed a number of gaps in the legal framework, which interested parties can now work on closing. Finally, it has also raised awareness of the regulations amongst the animal trading community, and will help prevent at least some of them from breaking the law in the future.

*Report review by
Andy Churchard*

The project took place during the 5 months from 1st May 2004, coinciding with the first 5 months of Poland's membership of the EU, and with Poland's compliance with EU regulations.

Further information is available from:
cites@salamandra.org.pl
www.salamandra.org.pl (in Polish)

Easter pilgrimage and nature conservation

Among the peaks of Hungary, Zengő is only around the hundredth on the list considering its altitude, nevertheless is undoubtedly incomparable from the ethnographical and historical point of view, and also regarding the aspect of nature conservation. Additionally, it's a certain kind of Mecca for the green movements.

Looking around from the top of the hill, located on the south of the country, the ridges of Badacsony and the volcanic mountain system along the Balaton-bank are equally visible in clear weather. Both the Balaton Highlands and the East-Mecsek surroundings – including Zengő as well – are considered to be country-wide protected nature conservation areas. It has not only been a well-graced outcrop for a long time, but is also sustaining remarkable historical and cultural heritage.



By the way, more legends and religious folkways pertain to Zengő, among which the most particular one, the local men's pilgrimage called 'Bárányles' (lamb-ambush), evokes the ancient, pre-Christian roots. In the small village of Hosszúhetény, counting 3000 inhabitants altogether, this folkway is keeping on being cultivated at Easter twilight. Now the spot of the mythological Bárányles is signed

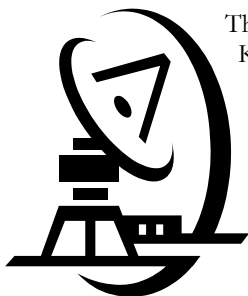
by a cross on the northern side of the hill, near to the Zengő-peak. But how does this local pilgrimage exactly look like? On Easter Eve, still in the dark before sunrise, Hetény's men set forth towards Zengő in order to ascend the hill one by one, incidentally fathers and sons together. Reaching the Bárányles – that's where the cross stands - it's time of prayer and devotion, which leads to a certain catharsis.

Everybody prays by himself, and afterwards, going down the hill, picks up a dry branchlet. One single stick each. Then, on the near-by glade, a faint light is stroked by the first man to arrive, followed by the others, throwing their twigs on the fire one after the other. Then, by sunrise, after the lonesome prayers and meditations, a cheerful community of celebration is formed by all, and the pocket-flasks also appear at once.

As a matter of curiosity, the priest of the village doesn't take part in this particular pilgrimage, although during the toughest times of the world wars also the clerks used to climb up. Finally, as it was probably brought along by the XX. century, going down the hill after the collective celebration, the men are gathering flowers in order to decorate the 'bunny's nest' - made for the kids from fresh grass - with them. Nowadays not only the priest joins the community again, but women are also joining the pilgrims furthermore. Now it is not the country to drift into war, but the war is waged for Zengő itself.

Since 1994 the Hungarian Ministry of Defense has been planning to build a NATO radar locator on the 682 m high Zengő top, also known as "sacred hill", of the

Eastern-Mecsek Nature conservation area that was called into being in 1977. It is not only the people of Hosszúhetény who take part in the protest. If a circle is drawn with a radius of 35 kms around Zengő, 220 small towns fall into it! So the protection of Zengő has already become a symbol of the protection of our precious natural and cultural heritage in Hungary.



The first public protest was organized by Pécsváradi Várbarát Kör in May 1996 and was accompanied by widespread national and international support and sympathy as well as legal actions. The documentation of this tug-of-war is in one continuous stream. In the meantime it was announced several times - in autumn 2001 and in winter 2004 - that building had started... The struggle for the protection of our heritage drew both locals and activists together, many different organisations made a united, pronouncedly apolitical effort.

In February 2004, local residents and environmentalists were guarding the hill day and night. They managed to prevent the felling of trees in the nature reserve. Doctors, teachers, skilled workers, pensionary coal-miners, university students and lecturers alike came from the area to shield the trees with their own bodies by climbing and chaining themselves to them. Greenpeace activists said that they had never experienced such social support in an environmental issue. It was the first time in Hungary that myriads of people took an active role in environmental case.

There was another "Zengő battle" in 2004 that was accompanied by an incredibly great and apolitical social support and - even in the apolitical circles - by an atmosphere of "it is good to live in this country after all". It remains a big question: when will the Hungarian Ministry of Defence win a battle? When the notion of national defence is extended in a way that heritage and nature conservation can fit into it! An acknowledged and independent expert advisory panel had been called upon by the Hungarian government, which established and put down in a report that there were other suitable places for having the locator been built.

The nature conservation area in question already enjoys European protection. So choosing this place is not only incompatible with the spirit of Hungarian Nature Conservation Law but also with the norms of the European Union.

A picture calendar for the year 2005 in Hungarian-English-German-Dutch covers the grounds of the internationalised conflict and joining of forces thoroughly, which is the story of the protection of Zengő so far. In the course of events there were public figures, who signed the protest and took on the symbolic adoption of highly protected plant species that had got into danger on the hill, public figures who have perhaps never been on the same opinion of anything - apart from this case - for decades. No doubt that this kind of finding each other for the sake of a good cause is a great feeling of catharsis.

Traditions can serve a preserving power. So the conservation of our heritage is the noblest national defence and respect for the European norms at the same time.

How many years can pass by, how many times can the rituals at Bárányles, having deep roots in the past, pass off until it can finally be stated: the real values have been preferred to short term political and economic interests: saving and leaving in peace the Zengő hill, which is situated in a nature conservation area.

H.T.- R.T.

UNEP moves towards good governance



The recently concluded Global Civil Society Forum and Governing Council shows UNEP may be integrating all good forces of civil society into its operational as well as policy levels. As such, UNEP may be in the process of harnessing unused potential in the realm of implementing its programmes

There is an abundance of references to civil society in all UN documents. The Secretary General of the UN, Mr. Kofi Annan just released a report called “In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all.” The report is an ambitious attempt to shed new light on the importance of the UN in an effort to reform and recreate it as a globally responsible, necessary and indispensable vehicle to create precisely development, security and human rights for all. Mr. Annan goes on to state that: “Civil society organizations have a critical role to play in driving this implementation process forward to “make poverty history”. Not only is civil society an indispensable partner in delivering services to the poor at the scope required by the Millennium Goals but it can also catalyse action within countries on pressing development concerns, mobilizing broad-based movements and creating grass roots pressure to hold leaders accountable for their commitments...”¹

Background

Historically UNEP was among the first UN entities to allow the NGO community to participate in its many official proceedings. NGOs were present at the very making of UNEP at the Stockholm conference in 1972. NGOs are and will always be important to UNEP. In the suggested Programme of Work for UNEP for the period 2006 - 2007, there are almost 70 references to NGOs and Civil Society in the implementation of the programme.

The fact that NGOs and other representatives of Civil Society may still be barred from some key processes and proceedings of UNEP's Governing Council is neither in tune with UNEP's historical legacy nor with the global calls for better transparency and good governance. In responding to the recent Cardoso Report on Civil Society², UN Secretary General Kofi Annan makes it a priority for the UN to be inclusive in its relationship with Civil Society.

¹ §38, p.13 from In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all, A/59/2005, March 21, 2005

² Fifty-eight session, Agenda Item 59 “Strengthening of the United Nations System” (A/57/387 and Corr.1) The report is titled: “We the peoples: civil society, the United Nations and global governance. Report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations,” also known as the Cardoso Report.



Stressing the importance of Civil Society at the implementation level, Governments – in decision GC/SS/VII.5 adopted in 2002 – decided that UNEP's Civil Society strategy should “*provide clear direction to the secretariat to ensure that all programmes take into account opportunities for multi-stakeholder participation in design, implementation, monitoring, and dissemination.*”

A new approach

As the UN itself pursued innovative efforts as well as established routines in bringing various stakeholders into various processes, UNEP came up with a plan in 2004 whereby it was able to utilize its well-established regional approach to maximise the involvement of civil society. Six regional civil society conferences³ were organised with an average of some 60 organisations participating in this process. Each of the conferences ended up with a consensus statement to be brought to UNEP. Thus UNEP was able to solicit the interest and viewpoints of some 350 organisations. During an intensive two days in December 2004 these 6 statements were married into one statement by representatives from the 6 stakeholder meetings. This statement that was later accepted as the one representing a truly civil society view point on a number of issues significant to both UNEP, to civil society as well as to the Environment. This statement formed the basis for civil society work both at the Global Civil Society Forum as well as for the Governing Council at UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi in February 2005.

Civil society major concerns at the Governing Council 2005

Not surprisingly, civil society was concerned about three clusters of issues on the Governing Council agenda: the UNEP work programme, the chemical issues, and in particular the concern over mercury and finally the international environmental governance. The concerns voiced by civil society were by no means new:

A few excerpts from their concerns: ⁴

On the budget and work programme:

- The UNEP budget of US\$ 239m for 2006-07 is simply too low, in light of UNEP's broadening mandate, to meet the needs of dealing with the increasingly complex and growing list of global environmental challenges;
- Civil Society urges governments to re-commit themselves at this year's Governing Council to cooperate at all relevant levels in support of UNEP's

³ Using the six UNEP regions: Europe and Central Asia, West Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, Central and Latin America, North America, Africa.

⁴ For the entire civil society document, please see http://www.unep.org/DPDL/civil_society/GCSF/index.asp



mission, and for donor governments to provide the necessary financial and technical resources that such cooperation will entail;

The civil society organisations also noted that while UNEP repeatedly underscores the importance of civil society involvement in its programmes and activities, the financial and logistical support for such participation is not clearly reflected in UNEP's Programme Of Work and the budget of UNEP. Support for civil society participation in UNEP activities should be made explicit in these basic documents. Additionally, civil society also recommended that the work programme of UNEP must:

- Clearly reflect cross-cutting issues, such as poverty alleviation, sustainable livelihood, food security, health, etc.;
- Clarify the relationships and synergy in the inter-departmental concerns within UNEP to avoid overlaps and duplication; and
- Visibly include gender as a cross-cutting issue.

On the international environmental governance:

Several of the interventions focussed on the importance of international environmental governance (IEG). In summary, the following reasons were highlighted for having a strong IEG system:

- enhance environmental protection through the sustainable use of resources; mainstream environmental considerations into economic and social decision-making at all levels and secure the effective implementation of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs);
- meet the challenges of the Twenty-first Century, including globalization and the broadening role, mandate and power of the World Trade Organization (WTO) as well as monitor these challenges;
- contribute towards the realization of all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially Goal 1 on reducing poverty and hunger and Goal 7 on environmental sustainability; and
- ensure effective accountable environmental governance to help strengthen democracy and human rights, promote economic prosperity and social cohesion, and thereby deepen the confidence in governmental and global institutions.

On the chemical issue and in particular mercury:

Mercury is highly toxic, causing damage to the nervous system and is particularly harmful to the development of unborn children. It collects in human and animal bodies and can be concentrated through the food chain, especially in certain types of fishes. Mercury travels long distances through the atmosphere, and has contaminated

the global food supplies at levels posing a significant risk to human health. This is clearly recognised by the conclusion of the UNEP Global Mercury Assessment (2003).

With respect to the Draft Decisions on Chemicals Management, section on the Mercury Programme (document 18/2/2005) proposed for this year's Governing Council, all Civil Society Organisations agreed on all preamble points as well as on points 1 and 2, including the need for measures that will reduce or eliminate releases of mercury and its compounds to the environment. They also agreed on the need for technical assistance and capacity building to support the efforts of countries to take action regarding mercury pollution, including efforts to disseminate important health messages and develop methods for determining human exposure.

Civil Society Organisations (apart from Businesses and Industry) call for the adoption by the Governing Council of the "Proposed Governing Council Decision Submitted by the NGOs" on mercury (see annexed (c) of the Civil society report reference footnote 4), including taking immediate concrete actions to substantially reduce mercury demand and releases, the adoption of meaningful targets, and the development of a new global binding instrument to address mercury.

A civil society mainstay claim:

Most civil society units have been fighting to preserve the precautionary principle as a serious effort to fight for sustainable development. They repeated this call again at this Governing Council by saying that:

- As the precautionary principle combines political and scientific concerns in a unique way, none of the above bullet points, nor any of the proposed text before the Governing Council should be used to undermine this principle. Where paradoxes might exist, they need to be solved in a sensible manner. A consensus feeling among the participants expressed the need to develop coherence in this context.

First UNEP, then the entire UN?

Finally all interventions at the Governing Council by civil society representatives emphasised and stressed the importance of good governance at all levels to be able to successfully promote environmental sustainability. This year's process, ranging from the 6 regional meetings until the Governing Council, clearly regenerates UNEP in relationship to civil society. Such a move by UNEP also re-establishes the faith of civil society in the UN system. However, as many pointed out, a most important arena for civil society, the review session of the Millennium Goals at the UN in September is still closed to civil society. Thus they pointed out that:

“The Millennium Declaration and its operational system as expressed through the 8 MDGs, their targets and indicators, were created to serve “we the peoples” of the United Nations. Civil Society has become a central partner with the United Nations and its various member nations to implement these goals. To be excluded from genuine participation at the first five-year review of these goals makes a travesty of the principles of good governance, i.e. inter-alia, transparency, participation and accountability. The Global Civil Society Forum at the UNEP GC therefore sends a strong message to the United Nations Member States to open the five-year review to full access for civil society. “

If UNEP can show the way to successful integration, perhaps the General Assembly could follow?

Jan-Gustav Strandenaes



About the author:

Jan-Gustav Strandenaes is Senior Policy Adviser for ANPED, the Northern Alliance for Sustainability, an NGO network headquartered in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, working for organisations working on sustainability issues in developed nations. He first participated in the first ever UNEP process in Stockholm in 1972 and recently followed the entire process leading up to the Global Civil Society Forum February 2005. While doing part-time lecturing at the University of Oslo, he also helps facilitate NGO input into the CSD process (the Commission for Sustainable Development) at the UN in New York.

Changes in the CEEWEB staff

Sára Orosz – the new Network Coordinator

I was graduated in the Budapest University of Economic Sciences and Public Administration, Faculty of International Relations, majoring in Foreign Policies and European Studies.



Before starting to work for CEEWEB I used to sail on the Danube as a guide (which means that you are welcome on the sightseeing boat any time you visit Budapest ☺) but since it didn't seem to be sustainable at all (neither for me nor for the Danube I am afraid...), I decided to leave it off and to search for something elevating. And this is how I found CEEWEB...

As for my experiences, neither the atmosphere of NGOs is completely unexplored for me anymore, since having been the vice-president of a non-governmental student organization during my academic years, I have had the chance to take part in quite a couple of NGO-events and also coordinated more of them. Nevertheless, committing myself to the environmental issue, now I am facing a new challenge, and look forward to work for it with (and among) you.

Fortunately, I dropped into a cheerful team of colleagues here in the policy office, who took me into their confidence immediately and facilitated my 'jump-start' (as it was anticipated by András..) in the work, which made me easier start up with the networking and turn to the sustainable tourism working group as well.

Looking forward to meet you...

Sára Orosz
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From the Next Issue...

- Going Ahead with the Project Launched on Monitoring and Mainstreaming the CBD into National Policies in SEE Countries
- Report on the 3rd Ad Hoc Expert Meeting of the Carpathian Convention
- Statement of the PEBLDS Meeting in Strasbourg
- Keeping up with the Lectures under the aegis of the Academy
- Advancements of the DOEN project
- Building Up the CEEWEB Network
- Preparatory meetings for the biogeographic seminars proceeding
- And let's see what else...

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